JOY AND HOPE IN THOMAS HARDY'S POETRY

by

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ABSTRACT

Hardy's poems function as individual but sustained thought acts, enabling him to emphasise moods that are not merely pessimistic but joyous and hopeful. These optimistic examples are not anomalies. Rather, pleasures such as dancing, music, eating and drinking perform a significant balancing function across Hardy's poetry. They highlight the importance for Hardy of enjoying such moments because, in an uncaring universe, things may take a turn for the worse. My thesis seeks to elucidate three main tendencies of joy and hope in Hardy's poetry, and discuss why they are important. I will also demonstrate how they are representative of the wide cultural conversation Hardy participated in with the writers he was reading, and will highlight the thematic connections between his well-documented sources and other, less-discussed but equally important influences.

I will first examine the way in which Hardy's poetry demonstrates a part-realistic, part-imaginative enjoyment of, and a hopeful affinity towards, the natural world. This first chapter of my analysis will draw upon Hardy's scientific and aesthetic sources such as Charles Darwin, George Romanes, John Ruskin and William Burgess. Hardy's poetry further emphasises intensely experienced moments, which range from erotic desire to mutually enjoyed experiences, such as love, familial companionship and communal pleasures. Both these aspects will be examined in the second chapter of my thesis, and will be connected to some of his important local and classical reading sources such William Barnes, Lucretius, Sappho and Algernon Charles Swinburne. Finally, my third chapter will

evidence how Hardy's poems celebrate the works of past architects, poets and musicians, while becoming part of a developing artistic process. This poetic aspect was stimulated by a number of writers whose works connect to late-nineteenth century idealism, such as Matthew Arnold, William Wordsworth, John Keats, Walter Pater and Arthur Symons. Together these three aspects give us a more optimistic view of Hardy's work. My thesis therefore aims to offer a new way of reading Hardy's poetry and enrich our sense of what it offers us. While unflinchingly addressing the reality of the human condition, Hardy's poetry affords us a way of appreciating and enjoying its most vital aspects.

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ABBREVIATIONS

All works referenced by Thomas Hardy in this thesis are cited parenthetically using the following abbreviations:

AN Hardy, Thomas, *The Architectural Notebook of Thomas Hardy: Revised Edition* (Dorchester: Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, 2007).

CL I Hardy, Thomas, *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy: Volume One 1840-1892*, ed. by Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1978, reprinted 1979).

CL II Hardy, Thomas, *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy: Volume Two 1893-1901*, ed. by Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

CL III Hardy, Thomas, *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy: Volume Three 1902-1908*, ed. by Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

CL IV Hardy, Thomas, *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy: Volume Four 1909-1913*, ed. by Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

CL V Hardy, Thomas, *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy: Volume Five 1914-1919*, ed. by Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

CL VI Hardy, Thomas, *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy: Volume Six 1920-1925*, ed. by Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

CP I Hardy, Thomas, *The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hardy: I*, ed. by Samuel Hynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

CP II Hardy, Thomas, *The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hardy: II*, ed. by Samuel Hynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

CP III Hardy, Thomas, *The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hardy: III*, ed. by Samuel Hynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

CS Hardy, Thomas, *Thomas Hardy: The Complete Stories*, ed. by Norman Page (London: J.M. Dent, Orion Books, 1996).

DR Hardy, Thomas, *Desperate Remedies* ed. by Mary Rimmer (London: Penguin, 1998).

DY Hardy, Thomas, *The Dynasts* (London: Macmillan, 1978).

FMC Hardy, Thomas, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, ed. by Rosemarie Morgan (London: Penguin, 2000, reprinted, 2003).

HE Hardy, Thomas, *The Hand of Ethelberta: A Comedy in Chapters* (London: Penguin, 1995).

JO Hardy, Thomas, *Jude the Obscure* (London: Penguin, 1998).

LD Hardy, Thomas, *A Laodicean or The Castle of the De Stancys,* ed. by John Schad (London: Penguin, 1997).

LIFE Hardy, Thomas, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Michael Millgate, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1984, reprinted 1989).

LN I Hardy, Thomas, *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy: Volume 1*, ed. by Lennart A. Bjork (London: Macmillan, 1985).

LN II Hardy, Thomas, *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy: Volume 2*, ed. by Lennart A. Bjork (London: Macmillan, 1985).

MC Hardy, Thomas, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, 2nd edn, ed. by Keith Wilson (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

PBE Hardy, Thomas, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, ed. by Pamela Dalziel (London: Penguin Books, 1998).

PMN Hardy, Thomas, *Thomas Hardy's 'Poetical Matter' Notebook,* ed. by Pamela Dalziel and Michael Millgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

PN Hardy, Thomas, *The Personal Notebooks of Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Richard H. Taylor (London: Macmillan,1978).

PV Hardy, Thomas, *Thomas Hardy's Public Voice: The Essays, Speeches, and Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. by Michael Millgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).

RN Hardy, Thomas, *The Return of the Native*, ed. by Tony Slade (London: Penguin Books, 1999).

SSN Hardy, Thomas, *Thomas Hardy's 'Studies, Specimens &c.' Notebook,* ed. by Pamela Dalziel and Michael Millgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1994).

TD Hardy, Thomas, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, ed. by Tim Dolin (London: Penguin Books, 1998, reprinted 2003)

TT Hardy, Thomas, *Two on a Tower: a Romance* (London: Penguin Books 1999, reprinted 2012).

WB Hardy, Thomas, *The Well-Beloved*, in *The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved and The Well-Beloved*, ed. by Patricia Ingham (London: Penguin, 1997), pp.169-336.

WL Hardy, Thomas, *The Woodlanders*, ed. by Patricia Ingham (London: Penguin Books, 1998).

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Hardy's work has often been seen by critics as pessimistic in tone. Peter Allan Dale, for example, described it as expressive of nineteenth-century 'philosophical pessimism […] of which Thomas Hardy becomes the preeminent English spokesman'. [1] In Hardy's oeuvre, however, we can also frequently encounter a celebration of life's pleasures, from accounts of musical performances and dances to detailed descriptions of food and drink. While these episodes exist, critics have often seen such aspects of Hardy's work as whimsical and of little importance. Philip Larkin conceded that Hardy's work contained 'buoyancy' and 'relish' but argued that 'it surely cannot be denied that the dominant emotion in Hardy is sadness'. [2]

While sadness and suffering are important factors at play in Hardy's work, they are not always employed for negative purposes. This is exemplified by a quotation from John Galsworthy's essay 'Some Platitudes Concerning Drama', which Hardy deemed important enough to place near his writing desk at Max Gate. Galsworthy's quote explains that:

> The optimist appears to be one who cannot bear the world as it is, and is forced by his nature to picture it as it ought to be; and the pessimist one who can not only bear the world as it is, but loves it well enough to draw it faithfully. [3]

[1] Peter Allan Dale, *In Pursuit of a Scientific Culture: Science, Art and Society in the Victorian A*ge (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p.219.
[2] Philip Larkin, 'Wanted: Good Hardy Critic', *Required Writing: Miscellaneous Pieces 1955 – 1982* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), pp. 168-174 (p.172).
[3] Cited in F.B. Pinion, *A Hardy Companion: A Guide to the Works of Thomas Hardy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1968), p.179.

Hardy represents life's harsher moments with unflinching detail, but his enjoyment of its more appealing aspects is also evident. These qualities perform an important balancing function in his work. He highlights the importance of human love and kindness in an uncaring universe, his work illustrating the necessity of enjoying precious moments because things may take a turn for the worse. Hardy's poetry is naturally more condensed than his fiction, and his poems function as individual thought acts. Hence these brighter examples appear more pronounced and sustained. The use of such aspects plays an important role in creating different effects, enabling him to emphasise moods that are not just joyous but hopeful. Despite the presence of pessimism in Hardy's poetry, life's more precious aspects are enjoyed and replicated by successive lovers and human communities, or through works of art, or the creative powers of the imagination, giving us the hopeful sense that such pleasurable things will endure.

My objective in this thesis is twofold: to elucidate the function of joy and hope in Hardy's poetry and to demonstrate how it participates in a wider cultural conversation with the authors Hardy was reading. Hardy drew inspiration from a wide range of sources, and many of these works were life-affirming and optimistic. More significantly, I will examine exactly why this aspect of Hardy's poetry is important, and what it can give us. By continually being juxtaposed with transience, the vibrancy of existence is emphasised in Hardy's poetry, including the power of youth and beauty, and the importance of enjoying pastimes such as dancing, parties, eating, drinking and sex. Further, in poems where happier times have passed, Hardy offers us a space where, through memories crystalised in art, joy is still enduringly possible. His secular and effacing poetic speakers demonstrate

how, when faced with loneliness and sadness, it is possible to imaginatively recall and enjoy memories or artistic experiences. Further, Hardy's poems contain the hopeful sense that all lifeforms, and indeed human cultural works such as art, literature and music, are part of a vital continuum. Hardy's poetry therefore, while addressing life directly, gives us an important mental coping mechanism which can sustain and cheer us.

This introductory chapter is comprised of five subsections. In the first section I examine three general positions critics have adopted when discussing Hardy's pessimism, while also addressing some of the ways in which brighter examples have been identified in specific works. In the next section I identify and outline the three specific routes to joy and hope in Hardy's poetry which will go on to form the subjects of my main chapters. These three aspects, being Hardy's enjoyment of the natural world, his celebration of romantic and familial human relationships, and his creative interaction with the art of historical and contemporary figures, contrast with the earlier referenced critical positions. This discussion is broadened in the next sub-section, where I discuss some of the main sources of Hardy's joy and hope in relation to what he eventually described as 'evolutionary meliorism'. In the following sub-section I then contrast Hardy's fiction with the freer and more wide-ranging ways in which his poetry represents these optimistic aspects. In the final subsection I will discuss the ways in which Hardy's main sources connect to further important figures who have been less well-discussed by previous scholars, and how this combined group influences Hardy's three aspects. After outlining the methodology of the thesis, I then give an overview of the three chapters which will discuss the aspects of Hardy's optimism in depth.

1. HARDY'S POETRY AND THE CRITICS

Donald Davie argued that 'in British poetry of the last fifty years (as not in American) the most far-reaching influence, for good or ill, has not been Yeats, still less Eliot or Pound, not Lawrence, but Hardy'. [4] Yet in adding the caveat 'for good or ill' Davie implied that Hardy's legacy had cast a negative pallor upon twentieth-century verse. Negative readings of his poetry can be divided into a number of different groups, but three common approaches recur. The first of these holds that all living things in Hardy's verse lack individual freedom, are imprisoned by natural laws, and that this perceived lack of freedom is further traceable to the influence of Charles Darwin. A second general response holds that in his work, Hardy views human love and sexual relationships as essentially unfulfilling and disappointing. The third approach argues that Hardy, in his remembrance of past artifacts, and his usage of graves and churchyards, is fundamentally obsessed with death, which continually overshadows his work.

For a number of Hardy's critics, his vision of the natural world is pessimistic, humans and animals appearing bound by natural laws that cannot be overcome. Hardy saw nature as being analogous to an immanent Will, whereby all living things were impelled forward by unseen forces. Several scholars, therefore, have connected Hardy's view of the Will to the influence of Arthur Schopenhauer.[5] Christopher Janaway describes Schopenhauer's

[4] Donald Davie, *Thomas Hardy and British Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p.3.
[5] Mary Ann Kelly, 'Hardy's Reading in Schopenhauer: Tess of the D'Urbervilles.' *Colby Quarterly*, 18 (3) (1982), 183-198 < https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2492&context=cq> (accessed 25 June 2019); Dan Jacobson, 'Thomas Hardy: The Poet as Philosopher', *The American Scholar*, (65)1 (1996) 114-118. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41212448> (accessed 25 June 2019).

concept of the Will as 'fundamentally "blind" and found in forces of nature which are without consciousness at all'. [6] Hardy, however, denied that the German philosopher's ideas were a significant influence on his work (*CL VI*, p.260), and Robert Schweik has also noted that 'Schopenhauer's influence on Hardy's writings appears to be limited'. [7] Further, Hardy did not totally eschew the idea of free will, explaining in a 1907 letter to Edward Wright regarding *The Dynasts* (1904-06-08) that 'whenever it happens that all the rest of the Great Will is in equilibrium the minute portion called one person`s will is free' (*CL III*, p.255). In the same letter, moreover, Hardy wrote that he saw the Will as becoming 'conscious thereby; & ultimately, it is to be hoped, sympathetic' (p.255).

Other scholars, such as Dale, have attributed the greatest source of Hardy's perceived melancholic view of nature to the influence of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) which undermined the Biblical conception of plants and animals as created by God. [8] Studies examining Darwin's literary influence have been increasingly prevalent since the 1980s, and Adelene Buckland notes that for such critics there has been 'a genuine connection between […] such writers as Eliot, Dickens, and Thomas Hardy, and the entangled, complicated, and lateral interrelations among species in Darwin's *Origin of Species*'. [9] Scholars such as Roger Ebbatson, Gillian Beer, Peter Morton, and Andrew Radford have examined Hardy's novels and selected poems in terms of how they have been

[6] Christopher Janaway, 'Schopenhauer' in *German Philosophers: Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsch*e, 2nd edn, ed. by Keith Thomas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, reprinted 2010), pp.215-338 (p.227); Mark Asquith, *Thomas Hardy, Metaphysics and Music* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), p.37.
[7] Robert Schweik 'The Influence of Religion, Science, and Philosophy on Hardy's Writings', *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy*, 3rd edn, ed. by Dale Kramer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.54-72 (p.69).
[8] Dale, p.234.
[9] Adelene Buckland, *Novel Science: Fiction and the Invention of Nineteenth-Century Geology* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p.24.

influenced by Darwinian ideas such as competition, the role of chance in natural selection and deterministic heredity. [10] As I will address further on, however, Darwin's work can also be seen as an important source of optimism for Hardy.

When in 1920 Vere H. Collins told Hardy that he had classified his poems into types, Hardy apparently exclaimed, 'I see there are most poems on "Love and Marriage"'. [11] Unsurprisingly, Hardy's treatment of love has been the focus of continual attention by a wide range of different scholars, several discussing his poetry in terms of its cyclical pessimism, solipsism or sense of disappointment. J. Hillis Miller and Michael Irwin have examined Hardy's structural representation of sexual love in terms of how listlessness continually replaces infatuation. [12] Marion Thain has observed that much of Hardy's poetry 'seems to be about a failure to connect with other people […] "you" appears always "there" and not here; always out of the frame'. [13] Jane Thomas has argued that relations of his characters culminate not in satisfaction but 'at best, indifference and, at worst, bitter disappointment and the troubling resurgence of desire for someone or something else'. [14] While it cannot be denied that disappointment pervades Hardy's work as a tangible quality, this is not the only emotion present in his treatment of love. In a number of poems where his male speakers are

[10] Roger Ebbatson, *The Evolutionary Self: Hardy, Forster, Lawrence* (London: Harvester, 1982); Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 3rd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Peter Morton, *The Vital Science: Biology and the Literary Imagination, 1860-1900* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1984); Andrew Radford, *Thomas Hardy and the Survivals of Time* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2003).
[11] Cited in James Gibson, ed., *Thomas Hardy: Interviews and Recollections* (London: MacMillan, 1999), p.139.
[12] J. Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970); Michael Irwin, 'From Fascination to Listlessness: Hardy's Depiction of Love', *Reading Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Charles P. C. Pettit (London: Macmillan, 1998), pp.117-137.
[13] Marion Thain, *The Lyric Poem and Aestheticism: Forms of Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016, reprinted 2018), pp.164-165.
[14] Jane Thomas, *Thomas Hardy and Desire: Conceptions of the Self* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.72.

ignored or rejected by women, they imaginatively idealise them, while elsewhere marking the importance of mutually enjoyed acts of passion. In addition, many of his poems concern another type of love, celebrating human companionship and familial affection.

Hardy's poetic focus upon deceased figures and past artifacts has again been discussed by critics as evidence of his pessimism. Critics such as Tim Armstrong and Catherine Robson have discussed Hardy's poetic focus upon the dead. [15] Claire Tomalin has argued that his poetic response to Emma's death signified 'the moment when Thomas Hardy became a great poet'. [16] More recently, Galia Benziman has argued that Hardy 'revises traditional elegy' in his focus upon people's unsteady remembrances of the deceased.[17] Benziman contends that Hardy shows the elegy itself to be 'inconsistent, contradictory and guilt-ridden', his own elegies being 'aware of the guilt and limitations of the writing it critiques'. [18] It is true that Hardy's elegies can function as a source of guilt and anxiety for his self-aware speakers, but his poems about the deceased also open up possibilities. A number of Hardy's poems which deal with dead figures, such as artists, musicians and poets, creatively draw upon their image in brighter ways. This places Hardy's poetry within a more hopeful and enduring artistic tradition.

Countering the prevailing emphasis on Hardy's pessimism, a growing number of critics have identified brighter examples in some of his works. An influential text in this process was Roy Morrell's 1965 work *Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way*, which shifted

[15] Tim Armstrong, *Haunted Hardy: Poetry, History, Memory* (London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2000); Catherine Robson, '"Where Heaves the Turf": Thomas Hardy and the Boundaries of the Earth', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 32 (2) (2004), 495-503 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150304000622>.
[16] Claire Tomalin, *Thomas Hardy: The Time-Torn Man* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p.xvii.
[17] Galia Benziman, *Thomas Hardy's Elegiac Prose and Poetry: Codes of Bereavement* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p.2.
[18] Benziman, p.31.

analysis of Hardy's plots and characters away from focus upon deterministic pessimism, such as the Will, towards the role of social structures upon individuals' lives. Morrell argued in the introduction to his work that Hardy 'did not believe, for instance, that the worst *must* happen, but that it *could* happen: and so could the best. Anything could happen; and even what did happen could change'. [19] Jane Thomas has noted that, since the 1990s, due to 'an increasingly sensitive and complex response […] It is now anachronistic to label Hardy as a crude pessimist'.[20] Subsequent scholars have therefore placed Hardy's worldview in a less pessimistic context. Angelique Richardson, for instance, has observed that while he draws upon the theories of Eduard Von Hartmann 'Hardy rejects von Hartmann's bleaker views that the world is governed by the unconscious in favour of the idea that consciousness is gradually increasing'. [21] Further, Suzanne Keen has argued that while his worldview 'might be described as skeptical and materialist (pointing towards Schopenhauer), Hardy's poetic ontology is infused with fervent feeling, not limited to the despair that pessimism regarded as the consequence of the human organism's plight'. [22] Subsequent Hardy criticism has also increasingly identified brighter aspects in his fiction. Juliette Berning Schaefer, for instance, has discussed the ways in which a number of Hardy's short stories use humour to 'provide both entertaining and enlightening views of mankind'. [23]

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[19] Roy Morrell, *Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1965), p.xi.
[20] Jane Thomas, *Thomas Hardy, Femininity and Dissent: Reassessing the 'Minor' Novels* (London: Palgrave, 1999), p.1.
[21] Angelique Richardson, 'Hardy and Science: A Chapter of Accidents', *Palgrave Advances in Thomas Hardy Studies*, ed. by Phillip Mallett (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp.156-180 (p.172; p.173).
[22] Suzanne Keen, *Thomas Hardy's Brains: Psychology, Neurology, and Hardy's Imagination* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2014), pp.102-103.
[23] Juliette Berning Schaefer, 'Hardy and Humor: the Mores of Wessex', *Thomas Hardy's Short Stories: New Perspectives*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2019), pp.105-122 (p.120).

The existence of happiness in Hardy's novels has been examined by George Levine who has contextualized them within a Darwinian framework. [24] Elsewhere, John Holmes has examined a number of Hardy's poems, discussing them within the context of Darwinism. In his analysis of several poems, such as 'At Castle Boterel', Holmes has located strains of imaginative optimism within the verse. [25] Nonetheless, while Hardy criticism has over the last few decades identified brighter aspects in his poetry, no study has as yet developed these observations fully. In this project, therefore, I will seek to align my research to such critical observations, while building more broadly and rigorously upon them in ways that encompass and yet also transcend Hardy's reading of Darwin. In doing so, I intend to establish in much greater detail the overarching argument that Hardy's poetry exemplifies, in tandem with an awareness of life's sorrows, a marked sense of joy and hope.

2. THE ROUTES TO HOPE IN HARDY'S POETRY

Hardy's enjoyment of life is noticeably apparent when we examine his large collection of letters and autobiographical notes. In his correspondences with family, friends and acquaintances, his appetite for fun and the desire to enjoy life's potential pleasures comes through strongly. He repeatedly records his impressions of playful or enjoyable experiences. In an 1863 letter to his sister Mary, Hardy suggests that their forthcoming Christmas holiday should be 'a "bit of a lark"' (*CL I*, p.5). This capacity for enjoying larks was still in

[24] George Levine, *Reading Thomas Hardy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2017).
[25] John Holmes, *Darwin's Bards: British and American Poetry in the Age of Evolution* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 2009, reprinted 2013), p.129.

evidence in his fifties. In an 1892 letter thanking Edward Clodd for hosting J. M. Barrie, Walter Besant and himself, Hardy writes, 'An image of you as *the skipper* (your best character on any stage) often rises before my eyes', further remembering 'Barrie with his black nightcap, & Besant with a Rabelaisian gleam now and then' (*CL I*, p.254). This aspect of Hardy's character is also evidenced by his notes, such as his criticism, dated 1890, of the sober J.H. Middleton, Slade Professor of Fine Art at Cambridge. Hardy, in quoting Sir Toby Belch's rebuttal of the puritanical Malvolio, found 'fault with Middleton as having no sense of life as such' and possessing 'an earnest, serious, anxious manner, as if there were no cakes and ale in the world, or laughter' (*LIFE,* p.237). In 1891 he further noted, disapprovingly, witnessing a friend of his at a ball 'waltzing round with a face of ambition, not of slightest pleasure', before concluding 'We are all inveterate joy-makers: some do it more successfully than others' (p. 244). What is noticeable about Hardy's view of life, therefore, though it has not often been the main focus of attention by scholars, is his awareness of the fundamental importance of enjoying it.

What we can similarly locate, if we examine Hardy's collected poetry in its totality, is an undercurrent of hope which connects to his general enjoyment of life. This is demonstrated in his poetry in three particular ways. In examining these recurring aspects, I will counter the three general groups of critical arguments for Hardy's pessimism listed in the previous section of this chapter. We can find these three examples of Hardy's optimism in many of his poems. In particular, these interconnected aspects are outlined in the first three stanzas of 'Let Me Enjoy' (1909) (*CP I*):

I

Let me enjoy the earth no less

Because the all-enacting Might

That fashioned forth its loveliness

Had other aims than my delight.

II

About my path there flirts a Fair

Who throws me not a word or sign;

I'll charm me with her ignoring air,

And laud the lips not meant for mine.

III

From manuscripts of moving song

Inspired by scenes and dreams unknown

I'll pour out raptures that belong

To others, as they were my own.

(ll.1-12)

F. B. Pinion has argued that the poem is an aberration within the Hardy canon, contending that 'The opening reveals an attitude all too rare in Hardy. As it progresses, the poem seems

less authentic and more "impersonative"'. [26] But the themes of these first three stanzas are certainly not impersonative or alien to Hardy. The first stanza's desire to 'enjoy' echoes Hardy's comment in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) on the two forces of life, one of them being the 'inherent will to enjoy' (*TD*, p.286), while all three quatrains echo aspects of cheerfulness found in Hardy's autobiographical notes.

These first of these three main aspects, in the initial stanza, is an enjoyment of the earth, or perhaps, put more exactly, the desire to strive to enjoy the 'loveliness' of the natural world, and its details, in the face of a perceived lack of design for his benefit. Thus, while various critics have examined Hardy's treatment of the natural world in Darwinian terms such as competition, the role of chance in natural selection and deterministic heredity, nature can also be seen as functioning as a source of enjoyment for Hardy. He makes a number of references to the vital singularity of the natural phenomena he sees; this is often documented empirically, but he also observes the interconnected state between humans and animals which he sometimes develops metaphorically. This aspect of Hardy is demonstrated in his notes in an 1889 passage, where he documents listening to birds in the Dorchester fields. He remarks, 'The birds are so passionately happy that they introduce variations into their songs to an outrageous degree – which are not always improvements' (*LIFE*, p.229). The mood here appears playful rather than aggrieved, especially if one reads it within the context of the paragraph; Hardy is described as having 'ran down to Dorchester for a day or two' from a season of 'picture-galleries, concerts, French plays' (p.229) in the city. Unlike the London entertainment, the bird-song is not created for human

[26] F. B. Pinion, *A Commentary on the Poems of Thomas Hardy* (London: Macmillan, 1976), p.75.

benefit but displays a unique natural power. The bird-song is not sophisticated and recherché, but it is 'passionately happy', offering an unpredictable and enjoyable contrast to metropolitan entertainment.

The second aspect is illustrated by an enjoyment of intense experiences, specifically of human presence or companionship, which can be traced in an arc from imaginative solipsism to more substantial, mutually enjoyed instances. What connects the poems of this general type is their focus upon the value of specific moments, whether, as in the case of the 'lips' of a 'Fair' from the second stanza, Hardy's speaker is merely recounting idealized beauty, or memorializing a more powerful, romantic experience enjoyed between two people. As discussed earlier, some critics have seen Hardy's treatment of romantic relationships in terms of how listlessness continually replaces infatuation. Yet in the most powerful of these poems Hardy also recaptures and relives the memory of romantic moments. Hardy's poetry shows couples who through acts of passion are imaginatively consecrated, their natural life-force and sexual energy being connected to the landscape upon which they make love. Such aspects reflect Hardy's physical representation of sexual attraction in his novels. For example, in the Talbothays dairy section of *Tess,* Hardy blends the growth of Tess's sexual feelings for Angel Clare, and her developing happiness, with descriptions of the birth of natural life, relaying how the morning mist 'hung, too, upon Tess's eyelashes, and drops upon her hair, like seed pearls' (*TD,* p.131). Tess appears to take as much pleasure in her sexual feelings for Angel as he does for her, while both respond equally to their natural impulses, so that 'All the while they were converging, under an irresistible law, as surely as two streams in one vale' (*TD,* p.129). Hardy's notes

also demonstrate his recognition that women take as active a role and as much pleasure in love-making as men. An 1869 entry recounts his membership of a dancing class at Wemouth, 'the so called "class" being, in fact, a gay gathering for dances and love-making by adepts of both sexes' (*LIFE*, p.66). In several of Hardy's most optimistic poems, these intense moments of mutually experienced romance between two people are celebrated. In addition, not addressed in the second stanza, but concomitant to it, Hardy's poetry also marks the importance of other forms of shared love such as familial affection, hearth, home and the cheerfulness of community warmth. Such poems show how families and community traditions endure, individuals passing away but leaving their legacy through reproduction.

Finally, the third aspect involves Hardy's celebration of the power of art, with its 'scenes and dreams unknown', as an imaginative means to creatively enjoy the lives of others. While several scholars have discussed Hardy's poetic emphasis upon artifacts which remind us of dead people, his poems also reimagine the lives and works of deceased artists and historical figures in participatory and hopeful ways. In his notes dated 1890 Hardy gives his 'Reflections on Art', arguing that 'Art is a changing of the actual proportions and order of things […] "realism" is not Art' (*LIFE*, p.239). For Hardy, therefore, it is the uniqueness of the artist, and not the thing observed that fuels the work. In drawing upon such figures, and their works, Hardy creatively interacts with them, not just bringing such things to life, but giving colour to his own present experiences. Moreover, his poetry does not merely sound with the echoes of the past but engages in an ongoing artistic conversation, demonstrating an active, evolving quality.

These examples of Hardy's enjoyment of nature, love and art are not merely restricted to his autobiographical notes or 'Let Me Enjoy'. They can be found spread across his collected poems. These three joyful and hopeful aspects of Hardy's poetry form the basis of the three main chapters of my thesis.

3. THE INTELLECTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF HARDY'S POETIC HOPE

The joy and hope in Hardy's work can be connected, I will argue, to what he eventually called his evolutionary meliorism, which combines two distinct ideas. The latter term, meliorism, denotes the idea that human life can be improved by endeavour. Hardy's meliorism therefore is evidenced in the ways in which his poetic subjects can, through struggle and turmoil, find ways to create happiness. The former evolutionary aspect is concerned with the ways in which individual human skills can have a wider impact on communities and later generations, and thus effect incremental social improvements. This connects to how Hardy's poetry can offer the possibility of future hope, often in ways which may transcend the speaker. In his later years, Hardy employed the expression 'evolutionary meliorism' in his letters and essays. In the 'Apology' to *Late Lyrics and Earlier* (1922) (*CP II*), for example, Hardy referred to his writing as 'the exploration of reality, and its frank recognition stage by stage along the survey, with an eye to the best consummation possible: briefly, evolutionary meliorism' (p.319).

According to J.O. Bailey, Hardy's development of the term 'evolutionary meliorism' mapped on to three gradually less negative stages in his poetry. The first stage, Bailey

argues, in the 1860s, was pessimistic. [27] This aspect of Hardy's early poetry, which was influenced by a loss of faith and what appears to have been the end of a promising love affair, has also been noticed by Robert Gittings, who argued that there is a 'concentrated gloom that seems to gather over all Hardy's doings in the year 1866'. [28] For Bailey, Hardy's second stage did not begin until 1886, when he developed his concept of the Will, while the third stage of Hardy's poetry commenced after the publication of *The Dynasts* in 1908, when he finally developed his idea of evolutionary meliorism.[29] This view has been supported by Kenneth Marsden, who holds that Hardy's evolutionary meliorism became 'Hardy's belief during the last twenty years of his life'. [30]

As I will argue in this section, however, while Hardy did not use the term 'evolutionary meliorism' until later in life, it appears to represent the final articulation of a long-established position. Hardy consulted various philosophical, scientific and aesthetic sources throughout different stages of his life. In his literary notebooks, which likely commenced in 1876 (*LN I,* p.xxi), he recorded optimistic as well as pessimistic passages from different philosophical, artistic and scientific sources, belying any expectation that his reading focus was consistently negative. Examining the way in which Hardy records such passages can give us a wider understanding of the more life-affirming as well as negative ways his sources, such as Darwin, may have influenced him. Keen notes that 'the record of Hardy's annotations of Darwin's work remains frustratingly scanty' and, furthermore,

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[27] J. O. Bailey, 'Evolutionary Meliorism in the Poetry of Thomas Hardy', *Studies in Philology,* 60 (3) (1963), 569-587 (p. 570) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4173431> (accessed 25 June 2020).
[28] Robert Gittings, *Young Thomas Hardy*, 2nd edn (London: Penguin Books, 1978), p.141.
[29] Bailey, p.570.
[30] Kenneth Marsden, *The Poems of Thomas Hardy: A Critical Introduction* (London: University of London: Athlone, 1969), p.49.

Hardy's readings of *The Origin* are not recorded in his assorted notes. [31] However, Hardy's notebooks contain quotations sourced from different writers who make use of Darwinism to support negative but also more optimistic points. In terms of the former, a short segment from Carl du Prel's *Philosophy of Mysticism* was likely chosen by Hardy because of its reference to the suffering of life, the quote relaying how 'As the fundamental Cause of all earthly suffering we find Darwin's struggle for existence' (*LN II*, p.95). Several pages further on in the same volume, however, Hardy logged a quotation from Egan Mew that compared Ibsen's spiritual challenge with the good-natured way that Darwin had popularized his theory; that is to undertake mankind's 'reforming' (*LN II*, p.120). Placed together, these two quotes indicate Hardy's awareness of the pessimistic implications of Darwin's natural selection but also, in the face of this, its role in progressive reform.

Therefore, while Bailey has argued that Hardy's early poetry was pessimistically influenced by figures such as Darwin, in this section I contend that such sources also contributed to a more hopeful stance which can be located across his body of work. [32] While outlining two aspects of Hardy's thought, which he later defined as evolutionary meliorism, I will also briefly discuss the influence of several of his most important artistic and scientific reading interests. In the former group, John Addington Symonds, Matthew Arnold and Walter Pater can be seen as important influences on Hardy's meliorism, while the latter group, Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer and Edward Clodd, helped shape the evolutionary aspect of his thought.

Hardy described his 'practical philosophy as distinctly meliorist' in a 1901

[31] Keen, *Thomas Hardy's Brains: Psychology, Neurology, and Hardy's Imagination*, p.24.
[32] Bailey, p.570.

interview, which was published in the *Pall Mall Magazine*. [33] Meliorism was a belief which was particularly prevalent during the nineteenth century, and the term may possibly have been coined by George Eliot. [34] Certainly she claimed in 1877 that 'I don't know that I ever heard anybody use the word "meliorist" except myself'. [35] Hardy's meliorism, as Lance St John Butler observes, held 'that things were not of themselves inherently bad or good but that, however bad they were, they could be improved by human effort'. [36] This is illustrated by Hardy's 1918 letter to Arnold Bennett, in which he declined to sign a Manifesto for the prevention of future wars, remarking 'I think better of the world, as a meliorist (not a pessimist as they say). The instinct of self-preservation, & an ultimate common-sense at present obscured, will I think hinder the evils foretold from arising' *(CL V,* p.278).

The idea that the world could be improved was also an important part of Auguste Comte's *System de Politique Positive*, published in English in four volumes between 1851-4. Hardy later credited Comte as an important influence on his thought (*CL VI,* p.259) and in his literary notebooks made copious notes from *Vol III (LN I,* pp.67-78). Further, in the 'Apology' Hardy cited Comte's observation that even backward steps might presage future advancement, so that 'advance is never in a straight line, but in a looped orbit' (*CP II*, p.325). Hardy's view of meliorism functioned, as Larkin observed of his work in general, as a medium for 'asking man to grow up', associating 'awareness of the causes of pain with

[33] Cited in Gibson, p.70.
[34] Simon Blackburn, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 3rd edn, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p.299.
[35] Cited in Lance St John Butler, 'Bosh' or: Believing Neither More Nor Less — Hardy, George Eliot and God' in *New Perspectives on Thomas Hardy,* ed. by Charles P.C. Pettit (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1994), pp.101-116 (p.111).
[36] Butler, 'Bosh' or: Believing Neither More Nor Less — Hardy, George Eliot and God' p.111.

superior spiritual character.' [37] Larkin's use of 'spiritual' in this context, and its importance for Hardy, can perhaps best be understood as being synonymous with morality, maturity, sensibility and an empathy with the real world. Hardy's view of humanity striving to grow up through overcoming suffering can therefore be placed in a practical and hopeful context.

John Addington Symonds's views on the possibilities for human advancement also influenced Hardy. He copied passages from Symonds's 'The Philosophy of Evolution' (*LN II*, p.32-33) into his notebooks. Symonds argued that there could be 'some satisfaction surely in contributing to the advance of humanity' and that for humankind, 'Without being Positivists, we may learn this lesson from the church of Auguste Comte'. [38] Hardy believed that such advances could be enhanced by the ennobling power of art, being influenced here by Matthew Arnold's 1869 *Culture and Anarchy* and recording the importance of Arnold's '"imaginative reason"' (*LIFE*, p.151). Like Arnold, Hardy saw art as something which could nourish humankind. Critics such as Suzanne J. Flynn have traced this aspect of his thought to his reading of Walter Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), which attempted to stress how art could capture the most important and vital moments of human life. [39] Hence, we can trace the examples of joy and hope in Hardy's work to a number of his influences, and connect these to his meliorism.

The evolutionary aspect of Hardy's meliorism is complicated, and reflects a combined Darwinian and Lamarckian influence. Hardy's work should not be seen as

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[37] Larkin, 'Wanted: Good Hardy Critic', *Required Writing: Miscellaneous Pieces 1955 – 1982*, p.172.
[38] John Addington Symonds, 'The Philosophy of Evolution', *Essays Speculative and Suggestive*, 2 vols (London: Chapman and Hall, 1890), vol. I, pp.1-41 (p.39) <https://archive.org/details/essaysspeculati01symogoog/page/n11/mode/2up> (accessed 3 Jun 2020).
[39] Suzanne. J. Flynn, 'Hardy in (a Time of) Transition', *The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Rosemarie Morgan (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 87-99 (p.95).

wholeheartedly Lamarckian, however, in the sense that it does not seek to re-institute teleology of will. The term Neo-Lamarckianism was first used in 1884, and, as James R. Moore notes, was later shortened to neo-Lamarckism, 'to designate a movement which had been forming since 1866'. [40] Writers influenced by Neo-Lamarckianism such as George Bernard Shaw, whom Kirsten Shepherd-Barr connects to Henri Bergson and Samuel Butler, demonstrated an extreme position, insisting on humankind's teleological impetus. [41]

Hardy's evolutionary position can be distinguished from the works of these more extreme Lamarckians. He critiqued Bergson's creative evolution in 1915, remarking that 'his is rather an imaginative and poetical mind than a reasoner's, and that for his charming and attractive assertions he does not adduce any proofs whatever. His use of the word "creation" seems to me loose and vague' (*LIFE*, p.399). Just as Hardy's evolutionary meliorism can be distinguished from Bergson's creative evolution, it can also be differentiated from Samuel Butler's *Evolution, Old and New* (1879), which prioritized Lamarck's theories over Darwin's natural selection. Butler asserted a Lamarckian position in relation to evolutionary processes, where 'Plants and animals are living forms of faith, or faiths of form', and criticized Darwin's 'profound ignorance, concerning the causes of those variations which, or nothing, must be the fountain-heads of species'. [42]

Hardy's view of evolution has instead been positioned by scholars as distinct from

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[40] James. R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America* 1870-1900, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp.9.
[41] Kirsten E. Shepherd-Barr, ''I'm Evolving!': Varieties of Evolution on the Victorian Stage', *Evolution and Victorian Culture*, ed.by Bernard Lightman and Bennett Zon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 149-172 (pp.159, p.163.
[42] Samuel Butler, *Evolution, Old and New* (Salem: S.E. Cassino, 1879), p.339. <https://archive.org/details/evolutionoldand01butlgoog> (accessed 2 Apr 2018).

such beliefs. Larkin, for example, criticized attempts by the critic Roy Morrell to turn Hardy into 'a kind of crypto-Shaw' and to 'link his evolutionary meliorism with the Lamarckism of Samuel Butler'. [43] Instead, Hardy's understanding of evolution is specifically influenced by Charles Darwin, and is based on competition and natural selection. Hardy noted that he was 'among the earliest acclaimers of *The Origin of Species*' (*LIFE*, p.158) and the influence of Darwin is often encountered in Hardy's work. The competitive impulse of the natural world, described by Darwin in *The Origin* as 'the struggle for life', is mirrored by the natural competition sometimes found in Hardy's work. [44] For example, in *The Woodlanders* (1887), the descriptions where 'the lichen ate the vigour of the stalk, and the ivy slowly strangled to death the promising sapling' (*WL*, p.52), appear to symbolise the competition that exists between Giles and Fitzpiers.

At the same time, we can connect Darwin's influence upon Hardy to his use of the expression 'loving-kindness,' articulated in 'A Plaint to Man' (1914) (*CP II*, l. 31) and elsewhere. Hardy used the term to signify altruism, being, as he saw it, the highest and most empathetic of moral positions. The expression reminds us of Hardy's idea of a developing Will, referenced in 1907, and its implied manifestation in human form, describing his hope that it was becoming conscious and possibly sympathetic (*CL III*, p.255). The expression 'loving-kindness' has been traced by Peter Coxon to *The Book of Common Prayer* and implies a quality which Ralph Pite has described as going 'against the

[43] Larkin, 'Wanted: Good Hardy Critic', *Required Writing: Miscellaneous Pieces 1955 – 1982*, p.171.
[44] Charles Darwin, *On The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, Or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, 3rd edn (London: Penguin Books, 1985), p.115.

grain of evolutionary self-interest'. [45] Yet, this reading of loving-kindness is not strictly true as Hardy saw it. While Hardy's notion of loving-kindness draws on a particular Christian quotation, such ethics are also compatible with (and can be traced to) the general influence of Darwin's evolutionary theory on his thought. As Angelique Richardson points out, Darwin in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) approached, as he claimed, 'the question of the moral sense "exclusively from the side of natural history"', stressing that human morality developed out of the social instincts of animals.[46] The work reached a wide and varied audience, ranging 'from philosophers and men of science to ordinary men and women' and 'the romance of novels'. [47] In 1910 Hardy wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Humanitarian League in which he appeared to refer to this aspect of Darwin's thought, noting that:

> Few people seem to perceive fully as yet that the most far-reaching consequence of the establishment of the common origin of all species is ethical; that it logically involved a re-adjustment of altruistic morals by enlarging as a *necessity of rightness* the application of what has been called "The Golden Rule" beyond the area of mere mankind to that of the whole animal kingdom. Possibly Darwin himself did not wholly perceive it, though he alluded to it. (*LIFE*, p.376-77)

[45] Peter W. Coxon, 'Hardy's 'Loving-Kindness'', *The Hardy Society Journal*, 14 (2), (2018), 56-60 (p. 56) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48561870> (accessed 22 May 2020); Ralph Pite, *Thomas Hardy: The Guarded Life* (London: Picador, 2006), p.474.
[46] Angelique Richardson, ''The Book of the Season': The Conception and Reception of Darwin's Expression', *After Darwin: Animals, Emotions, and the Mind*, ed. by Angelique Richardson (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013) pp.51-88 (p.57).
[47] Richardson, 'The Book of the Season', p.69.

While Hardy's evolutionary meliorism can be linked to Darwin, and does not possess a strong teleological impetus, some aspects of his treatment of evolutionary themes also seem commensurate with a less extreme Lamarckian position. Moderate Lamarckians included men who were a major influence on Hardy, such as Herbert Spencer, Edward Clodd and Darwin himself. Moore, for example, notes that the ideas of Spencer were distinct from other Neo-Lamarckians, holding that 'natural selection may account for a large part of the phenomena of evolution' but also claiming 'a much larger role for environment and habit'. [48] Reading Hardy's work as containing aspects of a Darwinian and Lamarckian evolutionary influence is not necessarily paradoxical, as Darwin's later works incorporated aspects of the French evolutionist's position on inheritance. While Darwin placed sole primacy on natural selection in *The Origin*, by the time he wrote *Variations of Plants and Animals Under Domestication* (1868) he had slightly shifted his position to also attribute some importance to the role of acquired characteristics, which he explained through a hypothetical process he termed 'pangenesis'. In an 1867 letter to Charles Lyell regarding *Variations*, he described being 'particularly pleased that you have noticed Pangenesis', further positing that 'if it be admitted as a probable hypothesis it will be a somewhat important step in Biology'. [49] Darwin, in his later *The Descent of Man* (1871), included his theory of pangenesis or hereditary inheritance alongside both natural and sexual selection as the three central components in evolution.

Writing in *The Descent*, Darwin further explained his 'hypothesis of pangenesis',

[48] Moore, p.175.
[49] Charles Darwin, *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, 3 vols, ed. by Francis Darwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), vol. III. p.72.

and wrote that 'According to this hypothesis, every unit or cell of the body throws off gemmules or undeveloped atoms, which are transmitted to the offspring of both sexes'. [50] Pangenesis therefore allowed Darwin to address and incorporate the issue of acquired characteristics, so that, as Moore notes, 'The effect of pangenesis was to provide a physiological mechanism for the inheritance of characters acquired by the different parts of an organism'. [51] While Darwin's pangenesis was imagined as a biological process rather than a teleological act of will, it can still be seen as drawing from aspects of Lamarckian thought in the sense that successful offspring are more than just survivors that are naturally suited to an environment. They are also the individual inheritors of skills and abilities that, as they are handed on, can slowly improve the species and the society to which they belong. This combined Darwinian quality also informs the hopeful, social evolutionary aspect of Hardy's evolutionary meliorism.

We can encounter early examples of Hardy's evolutionary meliorism in his novels, through the ways in which his characters participate in forms of pleasure, perform acts of kindness, function as important abettors of change and affect incremental social improvements. In an 1889 letter to John Addington Symonds, Hardy expressed how 'the study of tragedy in fiction may possibly here & there be the means of showing how to escape the worst forms of it, at least, in real life' (*CL I*, p.190). In a number of cases, Hardy's characters explicitly demonstrate these aspects themselves. For example, individual acts of altruism and kindness are exemplified by figures such as Clym Yeobright,

[50] Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), vol I. p.280.
[51] Moore, p.178.

Giles Winterbourne and John Loveday. As Richardson notes, in *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872) the weak and sickly Thomas Leaf is given a vital role in the Mellstock choir, as 'Hardy depicts a community underpinned by co-operation and inclusion'. [52] In *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876), as the protagonist socially advances through her intelligence she financially provides for her family and relations. In *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874), Gabriel Oak's patient, emotionally intelligent approach is of benefit to both Bathsheba and the Weatherby farming community. Oak also embodies a number of other attractive values: he is sociable but also, perhaps most importantly for Hardy, he is forgiving and demonstrates loving-kindness.

Hardy's novels also demonstrate the formation of wider social processes. Donald Farfrae, in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), personifies the same social and altruistic qualities as Oak, but his personal success has wider social implications. Farfrae's seeding machine, which, he explains to Elizabeth and Lucetta, 'will revolutionize sowing hereabout' (*MC*, p.168), is beneficial for the people of Casterbridge. Thus, Hardy's work shows that while an agent is not explicitly driving an evolutionary process, particular characteristics can have broader social consequences. Hardy's notes include a quotation by Leslie Stephen on Darwinism possessing as important a 'bearing upon sociology as in its bearing upon natural history' (*LN I*, p.132). This, Stephen notes, allows one to 'recognise in society, as in individuals, the development of an organic structure by slow secular processes' (p.132). In this sense Farfrae seems representative of a wider idea than himself, which is somewhat Lamarckian as well as Darwinian. Hence, Hardy's later definition of his evolutionary

[52] Angelique Richardson, 'Hardy and Biology', *Thomas Hardy: Texts and Contexts*, ed. by Phillip Mallett (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp.156-179 (p.166).

meliorism connects to the importance he placed in his earlier fiction on the value of altruism, its extension towards both humans and animals, and its role in fostering examples of joy and hope.

As I will argue in this thesis, a greater number of such examples, which anticipate and parallel Hardy's use of the term evolutionary meliorism, can be located broadly across his collected poetry, In this study, however, I will not specifically refer to such examples from Hardy's poems as embodying evolutionary meliorism, but will instead discuss them more generally as containing examples of joy and hope. Many poems identified as written before *The Dynasts*, which Bailey saw as preceding Hardy's more optimistic third stage, appear to manifest similar examples of joy and hope to those composed afterwards. [53] Some of these are dated during the 1860s, when Hardy is deemed to have been at his most pessimistic, such as 'Domicilium' (1857-60), 'In a Vision I Roamed' (1866), 'The Musing Maiden' (1866), 'At a Lunar Eclipse' (1869) and 'Eunice' (1869). [54] While Bailey saw Hardy's later poetry as becoming brighter, it should also be noted that it experienced dips in mood, influenced by personal and international events such as the Boer War, the death of his first wife, Emma, and the outbreak of the First World War. The latter event presented a substantial challenge to Hardy's philosophy of life, and yet, in the following decade he outlined his evolutionary meliorism in the 'Apology'. When read in this way, Hardy's body of poetic work appears to represent less a smooth progression than a series of ups and downs.

[53] Bailey, p.570.
[54] Dennis Taylor, 'The Chronology of Hardy's Poetry', *Victorian Poetry*, 37 (1) (1999), 1-58 (pp. 36-38) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40003647> (accessed 25 June 2019).

Despite these fluctuations, Hardy's collected poetry is underpinned by a general enjoyment of life's pleasures and a sense of hope. As I discussed in section 2, we can group these aspects, which range across his poetic oeuvre, in terms of the natural world, human relationships and art. His earliest known poem, 'Domicilium', for example (*LIFE*, p.8-9), celebrates the natural flora and fauna which surrounded his family home. Hardy's awareness of the importance of human companionship and love is demonstrated in 'In a Vision', but also the 1909-10 composed 'A Plaint to Man' (1914) (*CP II*). Hardy writes of:

> 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)

Human love, compassion and community were important for Hardy in the absence of faith in God. Hardy was brought up with High Church principles, and ardently defended them in youthful debate (*LIFE,* p.33) but during the mid-1860s, as Harold Orel notes, he underwent a 'spiritual crisis', so that, as Ralph Pite further argues, Hardy 'no longer accepted religious

dogma without question'. [55] Love and kindness are represented in his poetry as essential and hopeful qualities within a secular worldview.

The same is true of Hardy's attitude towards art, such as music, which helps his poetic speakers to strive for brighter moods. In a 1901 poem, 'To Life' (*CP I*), Hardy's speaker attempts to replace pessimism with optimism through the creative powers of the imagination. He appears worn down by knowledge 'Of Death, Time, Destiny –' (l.6) but, in the final stanza, creatively draws upon the metaphor of music as he states:

> I'll tune me to the mood,
>
> And mumm with thee till eve;
>
> And maybe what as interlude
>
> I feign, I shall believe!
>
> (ll.13-16)

In such poems, while faced with the harsh realities of life, Hardy frequently refuses to close the door on the possibility of things becoming better. Indeed, by choosing to look on the bright side of things this may yield benefits for Hardy, potentially having the effect of bringing about a happier state of being which is no longer just mumming or pretense. This poem illustrates something significant and hopeful about Hardy's attitude towards life; by choosing to strive for happiness, rather than be depressed, this can increase his chances of actually achieving such a mood in reality. By contrast with his novels, Hardy's poetry

[55] Harold Orel, 'Hardy and the Developing Science of Archeology', *Thomas Hardy Annual No 4*, ed. by Norman Page (London: Macmillan, 1986), pp.19-44 (p.21); Pite, p.125.

contains a more imaginative and pleasure-seeking quality, which, in the examples I will later discuss, can appear abidingly hopeful.

4. HARDY'S POETRY OF IMPRESSIONS

In this thesis, I will argue that Hardy's sense of joy and hope is demonstrated more powerfully in his poetry than in his prose fiction. Hardy separated his novels into three groups, his 'Novels of Character and Environment', 'Romances and Fantasies' and 'Novels of Ingenuity', and across all three groups we can find examples of characters who overcome challenges to wed at the summation of the plot. A number of these marriages promise to be happy and successful, such as Edward Springrove and Cytherea Graye in *Desperate Remedies* (1871), Christopher Julian and Picotee Petherwin in *The Hand of Ethelberta*, Gabriel Oak and Bathsheba Everdene in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Diggory Venn and Thomasin Yeobright in *The Return of the Native* (1878), and Elizabeth Jane Henchard and Donald Farfrae in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. In such works, the tragedy experienced by some characters is counterbalanced by the fulfilment felt by others.

The potential for joy and hope is illustrated by specific characters in Hardy's novels, but they are often compromised by the forces of change. Gillian Beer has argued that 'Plot in Hardy is almost always tragic or malign', further observing 'Life in Hardy never falters, but the individuals who live it barely survive the book's length'.[56] This certainly reflects the conclusion of a number of Hardy's short stories – 'To Please His Wife' and 'An

[56] Beer, *Darwin's Plots,* p.223; p.239.

Imaginative Woman' are examples – which, as Suzanne J. Flynn observes, Hardy used as 'the appropriate genre for his sad and ironic tales of "marital divergence"'. [57] In many of Hardy's stories, such as 'On the Western Circuit' or 'A Changed Man', romance ends in disappointment or the death of a lover, while in his novels a number of his most vital characters, such as Jude Fawley, Tess Durbeyfield and Eustacia Vye, meet tragic ends.

The role of sadness and death in Hardy's narrative structure can generally be seen as analogous to those real moments of disappointment and mourning which human beings must encounter during a life's natural timespan. Hardy noted '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' (*LIFE*, p.210). For many of the characters in Hardy's fiction, joy often appears to fade and hope is not sustained, but this may well reflect a matter-of-fact view of human existence rather than a pessimistic stance.

In some cases, however, a sense of tragedy is more pronounced, such as the conclusions of *Tess* and *Jude the Obscure* (1896) where the protagonists endure greater than normal suffering. This aspect of his fiction was influenced by Greek tragedy, Hardy, in 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction', noting Aeschylus among 'the old masters of imaginative creation' (*PV*, p.79). As I have already argued in section 3, Hardy's treatment of tragedy can also be seen as part of his meliorism, wishing to fulfill a productive social purpose. Hardy can be understood as highlighting these tragic aspects in order that his readers might collectively be inspired to reconsider the conditions which helped to create

[57] Suzanne J. Flynn, '"Getting Life-leased at all Cost": Marriage in Hardy's Late Short Stories', *Thomas Hardy's Short Stories: New Perspectives*, 2nd edn, ed. by Juliette Berning Schaefer and Siobhan Craft Brownson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), pp. 53-67 (p.65).

them. *Tess,* for example, contains a number of social criticisms, such as attacking the patriarchal conventions which allowed men such as Alec to have sexual relations outside of marriage but condemned women such as Tess for doing so, even when they were the victims of rape. Further, Hardy is critical of organized Christianity in the novel, such as when Tess's child by Alec is refused a Christian burial. Tess's sufferings, therefore, point Hardy's readers in the direction of the causes, and indicate specific societal injustices. While Hardy's fiction demonstrates discrete aspects of optimism, these moments are set within a more pessimistic general narrative structure which often ends for his protagonists in sadness and tragedy.

This is not so often the case in Hardy's poetry, where joyful moments are demonstrated more powerfully and enduringly, recorded in a series of thought acts. Again, this may be because Hardy's fiction is partly influenced by the tragic themes and structure of Greek drama. Virginia Woolf notes this, recording a July 1926 meeting between the pair, in which Hardy remarked on pre-Modernist writers, 'We used to think there was a beginning & a middle & an end. We believed in the Aristotelian theory'. [58] In his poems, conversely, Hardy carefully preserved perceptions and thoughts rather than structured tragic drama. Hence the passing moments of happiness experienced by the characters in Hardy's novels are captured and sustained in his poetry. Seen through the eyes of his speakers, animals, human beings and works of art can function as unchanging poetic symbols of joy as well as pessimism. Here, youthful passion and happy relations between families and lovers do not necessarily deteriorate or end in death, while enjoyments and future hopes appear

[58] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, 3 vols*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell (San Diego: A Harvest Book, 1981), *vol III: 1925-1930*, p.101.

perpetually possible.

Such examples, however, do not always follow the same structure and pattern, and this may be indicative of his creative preference for poetry. Having written verse since the late 1850s, Hardy saw himself more as a poet than as a novelist. [59] The public disapproval towards works such as *Tess* and *Jude* saw him turn his writing back towards poetry, thus resuming 'openly that form of it which had always been more instinctive with him' (*LIFE*, p.309). Many of Hardy's poems are more personal than his novels, and adopt a free-ranging treatment of emotions and ideas in a large number of different lyric, elegiac and ballad forms. This broader and more creative expression of ideas encountered in Hardy's poetry sees examples of joy and hope used in a more varied fashion than in his novels.

In Hardy's verse, optimism and pessimism can often be encountered juxtaposed together in the same line or rhyming couplet, such as in 'A Private Man on Public Men' (1928) (*CP III)*, where Hardy describes 'Tasting years of moderate gladness | Mellowed by sundry days of sadness' (ll.15-16). The time distinction between years and days here is key, emphasising that the periods of gladness are sustained, while the moments of sadness are briefer. Hardy's juxtaposition of 'mellowed' and 'sadness', moreover, creates an effect which implies a sense of possible pleasure in remembering these moments of sorrow, such as in looking back at them distantly from afar. This way of combining expressions to create mixed moods can be encountered in a diverse range of scales in Hardy's poetry. Many poems that end pessimistically often contain moments of hope or joy, while a number of poems that address pessimistic themes conclude on an optimistic note. This mixed quality is

[59] Dennis Taylor, 'The Chronology of Hardy's Poetry', p. 36.

explained in a note dated 1917, in which Hardy documented how it was 'the mission of poetry […] to record impressions, not convictions' (*LIFE,* p.408). Many of Hardy's novels, and especially *Jude* and *Tess,* can be seen as novels of conviction, but the variation in mood found in Hardy's verse is indicative of his intention to represent the different responsive data or impressions he encountered. The traces of hope and joy that underpin Hardy's verse can thus be seen as a mixture of different impressions and influences.

Others have challenged this interpretation: Dale's reading of Hardy's 'impressions' is that they reflect the message of modern science, being namely 'the impossibility of wholeness', maintaining that Hardy's purpose embodies a 'coming universal wish not to be' exploring 'how that wish might best be "structured"'. [60] This negative reading does not chime with Hardy's own comments on the stylistic reasons for his use of disconnected ideas. During 1875 Hardy reread a number of writers to research matters of style, which led him, as he puts it, to be 'more and more confirmed in an idea I have long held, as a matter of commonsense' (*LIFE,* p.108). This idea was that art and artistic style should appear spontaneous while actually being the product of carefully thought-out work. Hardy punctuates this point in his notes by quoting Robert Herrick's 'A sweet disorder in the dress' (p.108) and this seemingly careless quality was, Hardy observed 'the whole secret of a living style' (p.108). Rather than Hardy's poetry of impressions embodying, as Dale argues, a pessimistic 'wish not to be', it instead, Hardy maintains, 'brings wonderful life into the writing' (p.108).

Hardy's varied and vital impressions also possess thematic qualities, having a

[60] Dale, p.278.

socially progressive purpose. As Hardy noted, his intention was to 'express more fully in verse ideas and emotions which run counter to the inert crystallized opinion – hard as a rock – which the vast body of men have vested interests in supporting' (*LIFE*, p.302). Moreover, in the 1897 poem 'Lausanne: In Gibbon's Old Garden: 11-12 p.m.' (*CP I*), a verse composed in honour of Edward Gibbon, Hardy suggested how his poetry relayed such 'ideas and emotions' in the face of potential hostility. Hardy's speaker imagines Gibbon enquiring of him 'How fares the Truth now?' (l.9) while further asking, 'May one not speed her but in phrase askance?' (l.11) This significant term, and its connection with telling 'truths', indicates Hardy's more cautious approach. Hardy had already employed the phrase in this latter context in *Tess*: when Angel Clare calls her 'Artemis, Demeter and other fanciful names', Tess requests that he 'Call me Tess', and yet this request 'she would say askance' (*TD*, p.130), avoiding directly hectoring him. Indicative of Tess's shyness and lightness of manner, her request for him to respect her own reality is relayed to Angel gently and 'askance', perhaps so that he will notice and self-adjust without the need for direct conflict.

Hardy's poetry can be read as directed towards his readers in the same way; it embodies a desire for change which is truthful and does not obfuscate or deceive the reader, but, in moderate phrase askance, challenges societal beliefs without direct confrontation. Achieving this moderate and askance effect saw Hardy offer a varied range of thoughts and opinions, some more critical, others less likely to offend, but arranged in 'a sweet disorder'. As discussed, Hardy's evolutionary meliorism was not underpinned by teleological impetus and was not directly politically radical, and it is this softly progressive, zig-zagging and yet

meliorist quality which perhaps gives us the best understanding of what Hardy means by his 'poetry of impressions'. It relays in Hardy's own words a wide range of darker and brighter 'ideas, and emotions'; some of these impressions serve gently to challenge or critique truths his readers may hold dear. In a number of his poems, it is true, he affirmed a loss of faith, leading G.K. Chesterton to accuse him of being 'a sort of village atheist brooding and blaspheming over the village idiot'. [61] Yet generally, despite such examples, if we take the corpus as a whole, it is evident that Hardy's poetry is more subtly progressive.

Moments of brightness therefore play an important role in Hardy's work, serving to lighten a mood or alternatively to add emphasis to darker thoughts. He compared his poetry to Gothic architecture, noting that 'in architecture cunning irregularity is of enormous worth, and it is obvious that he carried on into his verse […] the Gothic art-principle' (*LIFE*, p.323). The influence of the Gothic saw Hardy stylistically shape 'his poetry accordingly, introducing metrical pauses, and reversed beats' (*LIFE*, p.323), but the influence of such 'cunning irregularity', or emphasis upon change and contrast, is also demonstrated thematically in the way Hardy juxtaposes moods. He appears to play such light and dark aspects against each other for specific effects, like the painters whose command of chiaroscuro technique he admiringly documents in his 'Schools of Painting Notebook'. Da Vinci offers 'shadow and contrast' (*PN*, p.105), Caravaggio is skilled in 'darkness & clouds' (p.107), Correggio possesses 'great knowlge. of lights & shades' (p.109), Girolamo Mazzuoli excels in 'fine light & shade' (p.109), and Rembrandt's work exhibits 'an uncommon light' (p.112). Masolino da Panicale, meanwhile, is criticized for his 'errors in light and shade'

[61] G.K.Chesterton, *The Victorian Age in Literature* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1913), p.143 <https://archive.org/details/victorianageinli00byuches> [accessed 24 October 2019].

(p.105). Hardy's poetry, like the painting of Caravaggio or Velasquez, uses very careful slivers of light and brightness that are set against the darker background in patterns of 'cunning irregularity'.

These brighter qualities can be identified as lying in three general scales and performing recurring functions in Hardy's poetry, enhancing moods that are pessimistic, bittersweet or joyous. Firstly, the brief inclusion of such aspects can serve to accentuate a concluding mood of pessimism. In such examples, a promised, fleeting hope appears to emphasize a mood of disappointment as the poem ends sadly. The 1899 composed 'A Wife in London' (*CP I*) offers an example of this technique. Here a widow receives a letter from her deceased soldier husband, 'Page-full of his hoped return, | And of home-planned jaunts by brake and burn' (ll. 17-18). The inclusion of the word 'hope' here appears purely negative; it is a hope that kills, emphasizing the past that is lost, and the hope that can never be. Yet at the same time I would argue that this verse is not utterly bleak, and that the word 'hope', trapped in poetic amber, and functioning merely as an idea, at least exists in Hardy's world. It may be thwarted, yet this is hope nonetheless, which inhabits a space between past achievement and future possibility. In the 'Apology' Hardy wrote that, in order to advance, mankind may 'be doing it *pour mieux sauter*, drawing back for a spring. I repeat that I forlornly hope so' (*CP II*, p.325). Hardy's use of the French expression *pour mieux sauter* here, meaning a strategic withdrawal in order to make a better advancing jump, indicates his perception that progress is at least possible. This aspect of Hardy's poetry is also relevant for many of his novels. The existence of hope, even if forlorn, also again connects with Hardy's evolutionary meliorism, implying that, through suffering and strife,

progression is still possible or at least desired.

Secondly, brighter aspects can accentuate a bittersweet mood, where images of light and darkness are juxtaposed and intertwined. In such examples, Hardy's poetry represents the sadness of beauty, and the beauty of sadness. Past enjoyment is often remembered, providing painful memories for an individual, but lingering happy memories can also provide a form of succour and serve to keep the darkness at bay. In 'Beeny Cliff' (1914) (*CP II*), the deceased Emma is mourned by Hardy in the poem's concluding stanza, as he laments that she is gone. But the first three stanzas celebrate and cherish her memory, and the imagery is striking. Hardy's speaker evokes 'O the opal and the sapphire of that wandering western sea' (l.1), the poem's mood being conflicted. Emma is dead, and yet the memory possesses an abiding beauty which is deeply enriching. With the memory of departed beauty comes pain, and yet the sadness also reminds Hardy's speaker that those moments of beauty existed. These aspects are life-giving, bringing past vibrancy briefly, but brightly, into the present. In this sense, joyful memories serve to function in Hardy's work as a type of positive reinforcement that cannot banish sadness but can offer balance and compensation.

Thirdly, and in marked contrast to most of his novels, a number of Hardy's poems end hopefully, where brightness appears to enjoy some kind of victory over darkness. 'The Night of the Dance' (1909) (*CP I*), for example, proceeds on an upward thematic curve, as Hardy's speaker begins by describing 'The cold moon' and then later replaces this with scenes of human companionship, 'Of sally, song and cheer;' (l.1; l.15). Significantly, such poetic examples seem to afford some kind of reward, where the attainment of enjoyment is possible, and where hope may actually be realized. These moments illustrate, as already

discussed elsewhere, Hardy's tendency towards striving to enjoy life's pleasures, such as 'cakes and ale', 'larks', and aesthetic experiences. They also indicate a romantic energy that is encountered in Hardy's collected exchanges with his various female correspondents such as Florence Henniker, Agnes Grove and Florence Dugdale.

5. RESEARCH METHODS, SOURCES AND STRUCTURE

As I have argued so far in this thesis, discrete examples of optimism have been identified in Hardy's works by other critics. I seek to build upon this work in a much broader and more sustained way. I intend to focus upon how Hardy's poetic representation of joy and hope is demonstrated in three particular contexts: in his poems of the natural world, human love and art. Having discussed some of the ways in which Hardy's reading interests influenced brighter facets of his writings, I have argued that such aspects are encountered more powerfully and enduringly in his poetry than in his novels. To further pursue this argument, and to establish a more rigorous understanding of Hardy's poetry, it is necessary to examine his reading influences in more detail.

In this final methodology section, therefore, I will discuss my research sources and methods and outline the structure of this thesis. In particular, I will establish the connections between Hardy's well-known and less discussed reading sources, and how these texts exercised an important influence on his brighter poetry. Hardy's different influences, while abundantly referenced by him, were recorded in a number of different texts. These records include his *Literary Notebooks* 1 and 2 (1985), initiated in 1876, and

his *'Studies, Specimens &c Notebook'* (1994) and his *'Poetical Matter' Notebook* (2009), begun much earlier during the 1860s. These sources collectively contain references taken from a vast number of texts, from poetry and philosophy to scientific works. Additional assorted notes such as 'The "Memoranda" Notebooks' and the 'Schools of Painting Notebooks' are collected in the volume *The Personal Notebooks of Thomas Hardy* (1978), while further references to Hardy's readings are also noted in the seven volumes of his *Collected Letters* (1978-1988). In addition, a number of Hardy's collected essays, speeches and thoughts on literary and social topics are located in the volume *Thomas Hardy's Public Voice* (2001). And finally, Hardy comments on the works of writers, artists, philosophers and scientists in his autobiographical records, collected together in *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* (1989).

I will draw on these various notebooks, letters, speeches and biographical entries as a combined resource in piecing together the most significant influences upon the examples of enjoyment and hope which permeate Hardy's poetry. These collected reading influences can also aid us in thematically grouping such aspects, and support my chapters on the natural world, human companionship and art. In addition, this will aid the establishment of connections between Hardy's well-documented sources and other important figures who have been overlooked or neglected by previous scholars. This will then lead us to understand how these grouped sources and the ideas that their texts embody specifically affect Hardy's thought, and will ultimately afford a brighter view of his poetry which sits alongside his pessimism.

Hardy's notes reveal a balanced interest in markedly different areas and writers. This characteristic of Hardy's reading was noted by T.E. Lawrence in a letter to Robert Graves; Lawrence described Hardy as 'a man to whom Homer and Scott are companions […] He feels interest in everyone'.[62] While Hardy's readings are wide-ranging – his coverage providing evidence that he was a man of broad ideas, a freethinker operating outside of a particularly established position or, as Norman Page notes, 'in a real sense an intellectual' – the examples of joy and hope in his work can be seen to have been influenced by a common, if wide-ranging, party line of mainly secular thinkers. [63] As I have discussed in section 3, Hardy's gradual articulation of evolutionary meliorism was influenced by, in the case of the latter term, the work of philosophical and aesthetic figures such as John Addington Symonds, Matthew Arnold and Walter Pater. Further, we can understand Hardy's use of the term 'evolutionary' as influenced by scientific writers such as Charles Darwin and Lamarckian thinkers such as Herbert Spencer and Edward Clodd.

As well as examining the above well-tilled sources, however, I hope to reveal a more complex web of Hardy's influences. For example, earlier texts which influenced brighter aspects of Hardy's poetry, such as Darwin's *The Origin* (1859), can be traced through to later published works, such as George Romanes' *Animal Intelligence* (1882). In this way, my analysis will extend beyond more famous sources to examine the influence of other related figures whose connections to Hardy have not necessarily been the focus of great examination by scholars. In each chapter, therefore, while examining a specific aspect

[62] Cited in Gibson, p.183.
[63] Norman Page, 'Art and Aesthetics', *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy*, pp. 38-53 (p.42).

of Hardy's poetic joy and hope I will also show the interconnected influence of his well-known and less-well-known reading sources.

In the first chapter I will discuss the ways in which Hardy's poetry represents the natural world in hopeful terms. The influence of Darwin's work upon Hardy is well established, but he also read the works of a number of Darwin's contemporaries, and those who followed in his wake, who helped shape his own readings of Darwin. I will show how later interpreters and supporters of Darwin such as T.H. Huxley and George Romanes were as significant as Darwin himself in shaping Hardy's representation of natural lifeforms. At the same time, non-Darwinian natural historians such as John George Wood were also an important influence on Hardy's depiction of the natural world. I will examine the creative influence of Wood upon Hardy's representation of nature and will demonstrate how this connects to his interests in the aesthetic ideas of John Ruskin and the paintings of J.M.W. Turner, along with the designs of the neo-Gothic artist William Burgess. In this chapter, I will reveal how Hardy draws upon these scientific and aesthetic sources as his poetic speakers demonstrate a part realistic, part-imaginative sense of joy in and hopeful affinity towards the natural world.

In the second chapter I will discuss how Hardy's poetry illustrates an enjoyment of attraction and mutual love. Again, I will examine the importance of Darwin's influence, and in particular *The Descent of Man* (1871), upon Hardy's representation of sexual attraction and mating, but will also more broadly evidence the influence of non-scientific works upon this aspect of his poems. I will show, for example, how Hardy's comic representation of the ways in which women could outwit men drew upon the work of

George Meredith. I will also discuss how Hardy's poetic celebration of mutually enjoyed passion and romance was influenced by poets such as Sappho, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Robert Browning and Algernon Charles Swinburne.

Following this, in the second part of this chapter I will illustrate the ways in which Hardy's poetry celebrates the durability of more mundane forms of human love, from community values and friendly customs to familial affection. The influence of Hardy's poetic mentor, William Barnes, upon his poetry is well known, but in this section I will reposition Barnes' work as a key influence upon Hardy's joyous representation of human relations. Moreover, I will examine how some of Hardy's classical influences, such as the poetry of Lucretius and Horace, emphasised these aspects, and how several of his key contemporary sources, such as A. E. Housman and the already mentioned Matthew Arnold, John Addington Symonds and Edward Clodd, further influenced Hardy through disseminating these earlier classical works. In connecting these sources, I will discuss how they jointly influenced Hardy's own poetic treatment of life's simple but significant pleasures.

Finally, in the third chapter I will evidence Hardy's celebration of the power of art. Hardy's poetic speakers continually illustrate an enjoyment of the lives and works of past artists, architects, poets and musicians. I will highlight how this aspect of Hardy's poetry was informed by what he termed an 'Idealism of Fancy' (*PV*, p.210) which drew upon several artistic positions. The first part of this term was influenced by the high cultural tradition of Matthew Arnold, Hardy's own poetry celebrating the importance of art as an elevating force. At the same time, Hardy was alienated by Arnold's elitist cultural position,

his work being significantly affected by the provincial subject matter of William Wordsworth's poetry and similar writings by different writers such as George Eliot and Leo Tolstoy, who each championed the role of art in essaying universal ideas. Moreover, I will show how the second part of this term, Hardy's poetic fancy, draws upon the poetry of John Keats, with his focus upon beautifying specific instances in time. This aspect of Hardy's poetry is, I argue, also influenced by the works of contemporary figures who were influenced by Keats such as Walter Pater and Arthur Symons. In this chapter, therefore, I will show how Hardy draws upon the aesthetic ideas of such figures in order to access their inspirational faculties and, in writing poetry, become part of a developing and perpetual artistic process.

In these three chapters I will demonstrate how such sources helped shape the important and rather overlooked aspects of Hardy's thought identified in section 2 above: a joyous and hopeful affinity towards the natural world; an enjoyment of passionate moments but also of familial and communal forms of love; and a celebration of the universal and enduring properties of art. Across the three chapters, I will assess these poetic aspects of Hardy's joy and hope in different ways. More broadly, I will illustrate how each of these groups can be placed within a general scale which ranges from less powerful forms of optimism, such as imaginative escapism and consolation, to more joyous and hopeful moods.

Hardy composed fewer poems on his observation of natural creatures than on the topic of human relationships and works of art. In addition, while Hardy's poems from the former group contain examples of joy and hope, such aspects are less immediately evident.

Unlike Hardy's treatment of human relations or created works, which are more emotionally direct, Hardy's sense of hopeful affinity towards natural lifeforms requires more substantial analysis to demonstrate. This means that in the next chapter I will discuss a narrower selection of Hardy's poems in more focussed depth. As examples of Hardy's poetic joy and hope function in three general ways, accentuating moods which are darker, bittersweet or joyous, in the first chapter my analysis will concentrate principally upon the poems, 'The Later Autumn' (1925) (*CP III*), 'The Darkling Thrush' (1901) (*CP I*) and 'An August Midnight' (1901) (*CP I*), which exemplify these different trends. In the following chapters on human relationships and art I will then broaden the discussion, proceeding to demonstrate how Hardy's joy and hope is amplified more powerfully in different ways across a wider range of poetry.

CHAPTER 1. THE ENJOYMENT OF THE NATURAL WORLD

1. INTRODUCTION

Hardy's poetry reveals a profound empathy for nature and also a consistent awareness of how natural lifeforms enjoy their existence. The first stanza of 'Let Me Enjoy' (1909) (*CP I*) expresses the speaker's intention to strive to enjoy such 'loveliness'. This wish is expressed in the full knowledge that such a world came into being without any consideration for his or indeed anyone's pleasure:

> Let me enjoy the earth no less
> Because the all-enacting Might
> That fashioned forth its loveliness
> Had other aims than my delight.
> (ll.1-4)

Through personifying nature as an 'all-enacting Might', particularly in the absence of any belief in God, Hardy's poem gives form to something which has no palpable agency. This is no contradiction, as Robert Langbaum has observed, analyzing Hardy's treatment of nature as indicating 'how utterly non-anthropomorphic nature really is. Only the self-

referentiality of Hardy's artificial rhetoric can convey the meaning of meaninglessness'. [1] At the same time, by using the words 'other aims', Hardy's speaker also gives the 'all-enacting Might', or nature, the effect of an agency independent of him, creating the sense that 'loveliness' is continually occurring in some pattern external to his enjoyment of it.

Hardy's capitalized personification of nature in 'Let Me Enjoy' places ironical emphasis upon that which lacks meaning, serving to accentuate the sensation of things occurring regardless of the poetic speaker. Such irony is underpinned here through Hardy's use of language, as any definite meaning that can be attributed to the power of nature's 'Might' recedes as its double meaning becomes more apparent. Hardy's use of 'Might' is somewhat ambiguous, and is interpretable in two ways; firstly, it can be seen as a powerful and anthropomorphic conception of 'Might' as strength, but secondly it can also be understood very differently as an unconscious latency or potentiality which 'Might' initiate something. This second reading can also be considered 'all-enacting', as Hardy's speaker is talking in the past tense about what has already occurred. At the same time, this represents one potential outcome of what 'Might' have happened that actually did. This ambiguity encourages the sense that the 'Might' is an expression of the potential ways in which things might occur. This effect, coupled with Hardy's desire to strive to 'enjoy the earth' in this stanza, reflects his awareness of nature's 'loveliness' as an established fact to which no metaphysical meaning can be attributed.

[1] Robert Langbaum, 'Robert Langbaum on Hardy's Late Romanticism', *Thomas Hardy: Comprehensive Research and Study Guide: Bloom's Major Poets,* ed. by Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2004), pp. 33-35 (p.34).

At the same time, Hardy's enjoyment of nature's 'loveliness' cannot be taken as given, so his poem also takes the form of a poetic petition, a request, or indeed an imperative, that he also be allowed to enjoy such natural beauty. In this latter respect, it is uncertain whether Hardy's speaker will be successful. In the poem 'To Life' (1901) (*CP I*), as I already discussed, the speaker reveals a wish to believe that earth is a paradise, hoping that, by doing so, what 'I feign, I shall believe' (l.16). Hardy cannot persuade us that he will definitely achieve such belief, and it is similarly unclear whether the speaker of 'Let Me Enjoy' will achieve the personal enjoyment he strives for. What is significant about Hardy's stance is the importance he places upon trying. In 'Let Me Enjoy' he indicates that he is capable of striving to enjoy nature's 'loveliness', even though he is aware that it has not been shaped for him.

This striving is evident in poems where Hardy observes and artistically imagines the ways in plants and animals can experience moments of enjoyment. Hardy uses both his eye for detail and his creativity to imagine plants, for example, engaging in such enjoyment in tandem with humans. His notes document how, in 1888, when returning to Dorchester he:

> Thought of the determination to enjoy. We see it in all nature, from the leaf on the tree to the titled lady at the ball […] It is achieved, of a sort, under superhuman difficulties. Like pent-up water it will find a chink of possibility somewhere. Even the most oppressed of men and animals find it, so that out of a thousand there is hardly one who has not a sun of some sort for his soul. (*LIFE*, p.222)

Of course, Hardy cannot know that a leaf possesses the capacity for enjoyment, and must imagine that it does. What is important here is that Hardy's comment does not just display empathy for other lifeforms on different scales but also a deeper, less discussed aspect of his thought: the belief that what underpins all forms of life, despite the presence of obstacles, is not just the existence of pleasure but a drive to enjoy it.

This quality is more widely evidenced in Hardy's poetry than in his novels, although it can also be encountered faintly within the latter. In *The Return of the Native* (1878), Mrs Yeobright encounters 'the maggoty shapes of innumerable obscene creatures' which are described as 'heaving and wallowing with enjoyment' (*RN*, p.270). Anna West examines this passage and asks 'Can insects feel happiness? Can they wallow with enjoyment […] Hardy seems to be proposing that such "philosophizing" may not be unreasonable'. [2] As I will discuss, Hardy's creative interpretation of how natural lifeforms can endure difficulties and still possess a capacity for enjoyment is broadly located across his poetry. It frequently possesses a part-empirical, part-imaginative account of the 'determination to enjoy' that he assumes pervades all living things.

Hardy's treatment of the natural world is more deeply understood when traced to the texts that he read. Perhaps the most significant of these was Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), which Hardy claimed to have been one of the first supporters of (*LIFE*, p.158). Recently, George Levine has directly identified *The Origin* as an important influence upon Hardy's vibrant representation of plants and animals in his novels. When Hardy turns from human society towards nature his writing becomes more descriptive and Levine has

[2] Anna West, *Thomas Hardy and Animals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p.27.

argued that this conveys a 'sense of the value and meaningfulness of the world'. [3] While critics have connected Hardy's perceived pessimism to Darwin, Levine has argued that Hardy was 'more in love with life, and in Darwinian ways, than most typical Darwinian readings suggest'. [4] Certainly Hardy's novelistic interest in natural detail can be placed in the context of its time, and his prose connected to the kind of Victorian empirical engagement with the study of nature that Darwin most famously embodied.

At the same time, Levine's analysis of Hardy's prose becomes less persuasive where he refers to Hardy's descriptive passages of nature as possessing a 'poetic force'. [5] Connecting Hardy's natural description to Darwin's own writing, Levine further holds that 'Whatever befalls Hardy's characters, they are surrounded by a world recognizable in Darwin's prose'. [6] Yet, while it is possible to connect Hardy and Darwin's attention to natural detail, it is more difficult to link such passages in Hardy's prose to Darwin's style or vocabulary. In *The Origin*, for example, Darwin repeatedly used the word 'beauty' when cataloguing the characteristics of different species. This term is most famously employed in relation to the tree of life, when Darwin describes its 'ever branching and beautiful ramifications'. [7] In his descriptive passages of flora and fauna, Hardy rarely uses such language, and, further, while Levine argues that such instances are 'poetic' they should not be confused with poetry. Just as prose and poetry are different mediums, it is difficult to see Hardy's descriptive nature prose as 'poetic', and it is equally difficult to see his nature poetry

[3] George Levine, *Reading Thomas Hardy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2017), p.30.
[4] Levine, *Reading Thomas Hardy*, p.29.
[5] Levine, *Reading Thomas Hardy*, p.107.
[6] Levine, *Reading Thomas Hardy*, p.117.
[7] Charles Darwin, *On The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, Or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, 3rd edn (London: Penguin Books, 1985), p.172.

as primarily empirical. Hardy's poetic treatment of nature is not comparable, for example, to the highly descriptive work of George Crabbe or John Clare. Thus when Darwin's influence is felt in Hardy's poetry, something quite different to Levine's analysis of the novels appears to be happening.

The poetic connection between Hardy and Darwin can be more fruitfully examined in terms of the latter's creative legacy than his descriptive style. A number of scholars have investigated how evolutionary culture and poetry entwined during the course of the nineteenth century, as scientists read and wrote verse, and poets read and wrote about evolution. The poetry of Wordsworth delighted the young Darwin, while, in the wake of Darwin's death, his disciple, George Romanes, was moved to write a long poetic elegy. [8] Lionel Stevenson, in *Darwin Among the Poets* (1932), traced the waning of devotional poetry in the nineteenth century to Darwin. [9] Conversely, and much more recently, John Holmes has extensively demonstrated in *Darwin's Bards* (2009) how Darwin provoked a varied series of poetic responses to the problems posed by his theory of natural selection. The impact of Darwin's evolutionary theory upon nineteenth-century poetry is therefore complex, providing a substantively new but not necessarily pessimistic way of viewing the world.

Darwin's influence upon the poetic arts can be partly understood in relation to the complex implications his theory held for both religious belief and the culture of science. Alongside Ernest Renan's *Life of Jesus* (1863), which challenged the authority of the

[8] Robert. M. Ryan, *Charles Darwin and The Church of Wordsworth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p.13; J. David Pleins,, *In Praise of Darwin: George Romanes and the Evolution of a Darwinian Believer* (London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), p.18.
[9] Lionel Stevenson, *Darwin Among the Poets* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1932), p.14.

gospels, Darwin's theory was part of a new critical engagement with religious culture taking place during the middle of the nineteenth century. While for some, this model threatened a belief in Christianity, for others it merely recalibrated it. John Hedley Brooke notes that many scientists remained Christian while open-minded Christians held that Darwin's theory did not threaten the 'central thrust of their doctrine, which was that everything ultimately owed its existence and preservation to a power transcending the natural order'. [10] At the same time, Darwin's theory also provoked a schism within the sciences between natural theology and scientific naturalism, so that, as Moore notes, '*The Origin of Species* represented a new departure in scientific explanation'.[11] More specifically, in moving away from the inductive, Baconian method, Darwin's approach offered a new critical way of interacting with data. This probabilistic and less purely empirical approach to science, which, as Moore observes, 'set forth natural selection, not as a theory for which absolute proof had been obtained, […] but merely as the most probable explanation of the greatest number of facts', highlighted the way in which scientific theory was a human constructed tool of perception, thought, and the imagination. [12]

This sense of knowledge as a changing human construct, an artistic process, also imparted a legacy that is illustrated in the writings of later Darwinists. The zoologist and evolutionary biologist E. Ray Lankester outlined how scientific theory was guided by 'its most valued servant – its indispensable ally and help-meet – that which our German friends

[10] John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p.379.
[11] James. R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America* 1870-1900, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.195.
[12] Moore, p.195.

call “Phantasie” and we “the Imagination”’. [13] Hardy knew Lankester well, as both men were members of the Savile Club. [14] He documents several conversations with Lankester over 1893 to 1894 at the Royal Society (*LIFE,* p.270) and the Saville Club (p.269; p.283). Lankester’s awareness of the importance of the imagination in representation, but also in scientific knowledge, led him to note that science was ‘only probably true.’ [15]

Further, the mathematician Karl Pearson, in his *The Grammar of Science* (1892), identified scientists as ‘great artists’ with Darwin and Faraday as ‘the Englishmen who during our generation have had the widest imaginations and exercised them most beneficially’.[16] Hardy recorded a passage from Pearson’s ‘The Ethic of Free Thought’ (*LN I,* p.197) in his notebooks. In particular, Pearson, in his analysis of science, argued strongly in favour of the role of human ‘art’ in the scientific method. For Pearson, the imagination was a fundamental aspect of the initial stages of scientific formulation, so that the ‘discovery of law is therefore the peculiar function of the creative imagination’, which would then be perfected through critical rigour. [17] As Pearson concludes, ‘[it] is such criticism which is the essence of the scientific use of the imagination, which is, indeed, the very life-blood of science’. [18] Darwin’s theory of evolution thus helped provoke in cultural criticism, and very likely in Hardy’s own subsequent thought and art, a meta-understanding of how ideas which seek to explain the world were evolving constructs of the human imagination.

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[13] E. Ray Lankester, *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism* (London: MacMillan & Co, 1880), p.3 <https://archive.org/details/degenerationchap00lank> (accessed 18 July 2018).
[14] William Greenslade, ‘Thomas Hardy and Friendship’, *Thomas Hardy in Context*, 2nd edn, ed. by Phillip Mallett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.22-31 (p.24).
[15] Lankester, p.3.
[16] Karl Pearson, *The Grammar of Science*, 2nd edn (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1900), p.30 <https://archive.org/details/grammarofscience1900pear> (accessed 18 August 2018).
[17] Pearson, p.31.
[18] Pearson, p.31.

What was perhaps most culturally significant about Darwin's theory, therefore, was not the implications it had for the relationship between science and religious faith, which remained complex, but its role in opening up a more critical approach in intellectual culture towards essentialism. Through his mental creation of scientific forms, Darwin's model of perception reconfigured the idea of permanency and instead offered the idea of a world in flux. As Walter Pater saw it, this aspect of Darwin's work could be connected to the earlier ideas of the Pre-Socratic philosophers. His *Plato and Platonism* (1893) discussed Darwin's theory of evolution alongside the ideas of Heraclitus.[19] Darwin's theory, for Pater, displayed the same inherent idea of perpetual motion as the philosophy of the earlier Pre-Socratic philosopher.[20] Pater's ideas on flux, movement and philosophical theory were of interest to Hardy. According to his notes he met Pater in 1886, describing him approvingly as one who carried 'weighty ideas without spilling them' (*LIFE*, p.187), and later, likely around 1888, recorded fifteen entries in his notebooks from Pater's earlier *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), including the following passage:

> The philosophic mind might apprehend, in what seemed a mass of lifeless matter, the movement of the universal life, in wh. things, & men's impressions of them, were ever 'coming to be' alternatively consumed & renewed […] 'Perpetual flux' of minds & things. (*LN I*, p.206)

[19] Walter Pater, *Plato and Platonism: A Series of Lectures* (New York: Macmillan, 1893), p.14 <https://archive.org/details/platoandplatoni00pategoog> (accessed 15 Mar 2018).
[20] Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, p.15.

For Pater, theories such as evolution were analogous to the matter in perpetual flux that they themselves described. They drew on and evolved from earlier ideas, so that, as he argued in *Plato and Platonism,* 'there is nothing absolutely new: or rather, as in many other very original products of human genius, the seemingly new is old also, a palimpsest, a tapestry of which the actual threads have served before'. [21]

This idea of scientific perception as an imaginative construct, and its influence upon Hardy's poetic impressions, can also be connected to his interests in the arts. While Darwin was the most important scientific figure of the nineteenth century, perhaps the most comparably influential figure for the arts during the Victorian era was John Ruskin. In *Modern Painters* (1843-60), which Hardy was familiar with from at least 1862 (*CL I*, p.1), Ruskin preached an artistic adherence to a truthful representation of nature, and in 1881 Hardy recorded a segment from *World* which quoted Ruskin's views on Pre-Raphaelite art, which '"has but one principle, that of absolute uncompromising truth in all it does, obtained by working everything down to the most minute detail from Nature & from Nature only"' (*LN I*, p.137).

While demanding artistic truth to nature, Ruskin did not consider this as purely empirical in design, and nor was the artist to be considered a mere *tabula rasa*. Ruskin, as Patrick Conner notes, inhabited an ambiguous space between two traditions that he separately critiqued: style and simple truth. [22] Ruskin, in *Modern Painters*, discussed the important function of the artist in the empirical process. In *Volume III*, he explicitly detailed this role as both personal and creative, writing 'Great art is produced by men who feel

[21] Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, p.3.
[22] Patrick Conner, *Savage Ruskin* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p.24.

acutely and nobly; and it is in some sort an expression of this personal feeling.' [23] Hardy recorded a number of similar passages from *Volume III* in his notebooks, perhaps none more important that the following extract, in which he underlined key words as he discussed how 'The two great ends of landscape painting are the representation of facts, & the representation of thoughts […] the highest art, being based on sensations of peculiar minds, sensations occurring to them only at particular times' (*LN I*, p.173). For Ruskin, individual thought, in addition to fact, should play a part in each uniquely representational process, and Hardy's underlining here of the words 'facts', 'thought' and 'them' indicates his own views regarding these criteria.

Ruskin's 'sensations' remind us of Hardy's noted preference for poetic 'impressions' over 'convictions' (*LIFE*, p.408). These references to impressions were made several years after the 1913 publication of Ford Madox Ford's influential 'On Impressionism', in which Ford had written on the impossibility of objectivity. It is likely that Hardy was aware of the work, but he makes no record of Ford's use of the term, or indeed any reference to the French impressionist school of painting, in his various notebooks. Instead, Hardy's use of the term appears to thematically connect to his much older writings on art, and his references to Ruskin and the landscape painter J.W.M Turner. In his 1863 'School of Painting Notebook', Hardy critiqued Joshua Reynolds for his 'correct taste' but 'little imagination' (*PN*, p.113), and, like Ruskin, saw Turner as the antithesis to this problem. Around 1886, Hardy explicitly outlined how art should combine empirical observation with the creative imagination, and how he saw Turner as the apotheosis of this technique:

[23] John Ruskin, *Modern Painters, Volume III* (London, George Allen, 1906), p. 14 <https://archive.org/details/modernpaintersvo030028mbp> (accessed 28 Sep 2018).

> I don't want to see the original realities – as optical effects, that is. I want to see the deeper reality underlying the scenic, the expression of what are sometimes called abstract imaginings.
>
> The 'simply natural' is interesting no longer. The much decried, mad, late-Turner rendering is now necessary to create my interest. The exact truth as to material fact ceases to be of importance in art. (*LIFE*, p.192)

Hardy's definition of his poetry as recording impressions can thus be better understood when placed in context with his earlier writings on Turner's impressionistic technique and indeed Ruskin's theoretical definitions of this style. Impressions, in this context, relate to the personal and thus unavoidably creative representation of empirical phenomena rather than a perfect reproduction of the thing itself. It is this combination, or tension, between empirical and imaginative factions, between facts and thoughts, which define Hardy's poetry of impressions. He creatively draws on an acquired knowledge of the natural world derived from the legacy of Darwin's theory in concordance with ideas from the arts. Aware that Darwin's scientific argument is essentially a creative idea, Hardy represents the natural world in imaginative ways which can be connected to *The Origin*, but additionally to a number of other influences drawn from art and science.

In this chapter I will demonstrate through specific close readings how Hardy's poetry of nature draws on his readings from the sciences and the arts to achieve moods of counterbalance, comfort and comprehension. These three aspects connect to examples in

Charles Darwin, but also to contemporary and succeeding scientific writers such as J. G. Wood, T.H. Huxley and George J. Romanes, and to artistic figures such as John Ruskin, George Street, William Burges and John Keats. Firstly, Hardy's 'The Later Autumn' (1925) (*CP III*) illustrates a counterbalanced mood, as the aged and dying speaker demonstrates an awareness of nature's beauty and vibrancy despite an ostensibly pessimistic tone. Secondly 'The Darkling Thrush' (1901) (*CP I*) offers the personal speaker the enjoyable sensation that natural creatures offer the possibility of hope. This hope may not promise anything tangible, and may remain ambiguous in meaning, but in Hardy's poetry the act of hoping at least occurs. Thirdly, in 'An August Midnight' (1901) (*CP I*) Hardy's speaker appears to draw pleasure from comprehending different creatures' perspectives, even when they may be small or seemingly insignificant. Hardy's awareness of the unknowable but vital sentience of creatures aids his profounder appreciation of what such creatures are. These three aspects demonstrate how Hardy's poetry of nature functions on a general scale which ranges from awareness of nature's beauty to a brighter sense of hope and enjoyment

2. NATURE AND COUNTERBALANCE

Hardy's poetry, from his earliest known offering 'Domicilium' (1857-60), demonstrates his acute powers of natural observation, borne out of his sense of affinity with plants and animals on a variety of different scales. [24] Such attention to detail illustrates Hardy's empathy for different living things. Drawing on Henry James's 1874 review of *Far from*

[24] Dennis Taylor, 'The Chronology of Hardy's Poetry', *Victorian Poetry*, 37 (1) (1999), 1-58, p. 36. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40003647> (accessed 25 June 2019).

the Madding Crowd, in which he opined that 'the only things we believe in are the sheep and the dogs', Anna West has argued that this illustrates how the animals in Hardy's novels are 'engaging and believable'. [25] West further notes that Hardy's novels exemplify his 'sense of curiosity as to what the world might be like from another's standpoint'.[26] While Hardy's prose realistically demonstrates an understanding of how humans, animals and insects all exist upon the same plane, the artistic balance between them often functions differently in his poetry.

In this section I will discuss how Hardy's poetry of nature often evokes an artistic counterbalance between darker and brighter moods. In 'Domicilium' (*CP III*), for example, Hardy's speaker relays the vibrancy of the natural world, including 'Wild honeysucks' (l.3), 'Snakes and efts' (l.32), 'nightly bats' (l.33) and 'Heathcroppers' (l.34), which brighten the lonely location. In 'Childhood Among the Ferns' (1928) (*CP III*) Hardy's speaker bemoans having to 'grow to man's estate' (l.14) and takes refuge amongst the 'sweet breath | From the limp ferns' (ll.10-11). Lifeforms are imaginatively amplified in Hardy's poems through their actions and behaviour, and can in turn add life to quieter or more negative scenes. In 'A Bird-Scene at a Rural Dwelling' (1925) (*CP III*) the speaker relays how birds wake the human inhabitants of a cottage, noisily calling out, 'In their joy at being alive' (l.10), while in 'Proud Songsters' (1928) (*CP III*) the speaker describes birds singing and whistling as the sun sets. Elsewhere, such creatures also function as poetic speakers, relaying moments of pleasure, or the act of striving for pleasure in the face of transience. In 'The Robin' (1917) (*CP II*), a bird narrates its passage from life to death. While the final stanza notes

[25] West, p.47.
[26] West, p.84.

that, with its death, 'I get to feel | No grief at all' (ll.21-22), the first two stanzas are full of energy and movement as the bird describes its flight and declares, 'And a happy bird | Am I, am I!' (ll.1-2) In a number of Hardy's poems, creatures become characters who, in the face of transience, display a pleasure-seeking sense of vital energy.

Hardy amplifies these aspects through both empirical detail and a creative vision. This reflects his scientific and artistic influences: while Hardy's awareness of nature can be placed in an evolutionary context, the specific ways in which his poetry functions in bringing animals, birds and insects imaginatively to life reflect the ways in which they were depicted by nineteenth-century advocates of Gothic architecture. In this section I will discuss the ways in which Hardy's poetry empirically and creatively amplifies the importance of natural creatures. I will examine the influence of Charles Darwin upon Hardy's poem 'The Later Autumn' (1925) (*CP III*), while further connecting his representation of creatures to his Gothic architectural influences and reading interests, such as the ideas of John Ruskin.

As I have discussed above, Hardy's poetic use of natural creatures can balance pessimism, even in scenes that change from summer to autumn. One striking example of this is 'The Later Autumn', where three eight-line stanzas record the ending of summer and the coming of winter. The speaker, who avoids using 'I', giving the poem a somewhat impersonal and detached feel, records memories of an earlier summer, now ended, immediately earmarked in the first stanza by the very first word of the poem, 'gone', while the second and third stanzas record the autumn and the coming of winter. The first four lines of each stanza follow an ABBA pattern, the A rhyming lines being the longest, and

further increasing in length from the first to last stanza. The next four lines follow a CCDD pattern sharply decreasing in length, the juxtaposition giving the overall effect, stanza by stanza of what appears to be a tree slowly shedding its leaves to reveal bare branches. This effect matches the culminating subject matter of the final stanza, with ‘spinning leaves’ (17) falling to the ground:

Gone are the lovers, under the bush
Stretched at their ease;
Gone the bees,
Tangling themselves in your hair as they rush
On the line of your track,
Leg-laden, back
With a dip to their hive
In a prepossessed dive.

Toadsmeat is mangy, frosted, and sere;
Apples in grass
Crunch as we pass,
And rot ere the men who make cyder appear.
Couch-fires abound
On fallows around,
And shades far extend

Like lives soon to end.

Spinning leaves join the remains shrunk and brown

Of last year's display

That lie wasting away,

On whose corpses they earlier as scorners gazed down

From their aery green height:

Now in the same plight

They huddle; while yon

A robin looks on.

The poem is a late Hardy piece, and, like Keats's famous 'To Autumn', alludes to the topic of death. Published when Hardy was in his eighties, the poem likely addresses the poet's personal musings upon the finality of his own lifespan. Amongst the series of dark natural images that Hardy employs here, the apples 'rot', the toadsmeat is 'mangy', and the leaves are described as 'wasting away'. This poem's impersonal tone might imply the dearth of personal happiness, but could also stylistically indicate a lack of personal depression. In this case, the mood is conflicted and ambiguous. Juxtaposing the passive, degenerative imagery, Hardy bookends the poem with bees and birds. The sense of natural energy encountered in 'The Later Autumn' is therefore not provided by the speaker, but by the poem's descriptions of the bees and the robin. It is these, however, which in turn function as a synecdoche for the speaker's own past happiness, which appears genuine. In

performing this role they provide the poem's qualitative, if not quantitative, examples of optimism. Understanding the ways in which Hardy magnifies such creatures to convey a brief but often vibrant mood, even when the overall tone of a poem is darker, can reveal his own enjoyment of the natural world.

Before fully examining the ways in which Hardy uses these creatures in this poem, and the role that they perform, I will underpin this reading by consulting his more optimistic scientific and artistic reading interests. Chief amongst these, as already discussed, is the influence of Darwin. George Levine has discussed Hardy's descriptive prose of the natural world as Darwinian, containing 'something of Darwin's meticulousness of description'. [27] Such descriptions also transcended purely empirical accounts; the detail of every creature recorded was important because it was a part of Darwin's overall creative scheme. In *The Origin*, Darwin famously engaged with a wide range of different flora and fauna as he argued his case for evolution, and continually drew on example after example of natural activity and industry to support his points.

While Hardy's notebooks contain no quotations from *The Origin*, he did record several extracts from *The Life of Darwin*, including a passage from Darwin's 1849 letter to Charles Lyell on the subject of barnacles. Hardy documents, for example, Darwin's remark regarding unisexual cirripedes that 'Truly the schemes & wonders of Nature are illimitable' (*LN I*, p. 204). Darwin's use of the term 'schemes' has to be placed in context, as Lyell was committed to natural theology, so Darwin's language may have been especially couched for Lyell's benefit. At the same time, such schemes, if illimitable, cannot be seen as connected

[27] Levine, *Reading Thomas Hardy*, p.xii.

to a specifically unified telos. Darwin's expression therefore conveys the sense that such diverse flora and fauna possess an individual agency which is not mandated or strictly bound by an overarching plan. If this comment is read in the same context that Darwin tends to more generally discuss such fauna in *The Origin*, the term 'schemes' posits creatures such as barnacles and other cirripedes within the same human frame of reference as Darwin's readership, rendering them as active, creative, vital agents.

In discussing the schemes of nature in *The Origin*, Darwin frequently described the creatures involved in pursuing them as akin to skilled artists or craftsmen engaged on a particular project. Consider Darwin's discussion of the driver ant of West Africa, where he illustrates his reports by imaginatively comparing them to 'a set of workmen building a house' or his exposition on the cell-making habits of hive bees, where he describes 'the exquisite structure of the comb'. [28] These bees are also discussed as skilled workers, possessing a gift for craftsmanship that eludes the human watcher, so that, for Darwin, it 'seems at first quite inconceivable how they can make all the necessary angles and planes' (p.248). Darwin's study positions their actions as practical and creative, observing that 'bees have practically solved a recondite problem, and have made their cells of the proper shape to hold the greatest possible amount of honey' (p.248). In his discussion of nature's wide-ranging evolutionary 'schemes', Darwin's case-by-case analysis of different creatures' skills, often shown in anthropomorphic terms, serves to amplify them in powerful ways. They are therefore both imagined and indeed imaginative. Instead of being merely observed and detailed by Darwin, they are envisioned in his prose as active and mobile protagonists.

[28] Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, p.261; p.248. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Similarly, in Hardy's poetry, insects and animals are frequently mobile, actively functioning as more than observable phenomena or descriptive wallpaper patterns. They are frequently described mid-action, and their schemes impact upon and collide with the thoughts of Hardy's speakers. At the same time, Hardy's creatures are enlivened through his imaginative descriptions of them, so that they often become active protagonists. His working bird in 'I Watched a Blackbird' (1928) (*CP III*) resembles Darwin's worker bees. The vitality of the creature's 'crocus-coloured bill' (l.3) and 'trill' (l.4) complement the actions of its industrious 'building scheme' (l.6). While the bird is ephemeral and its 'scheme' appears potentially ill-fated, both its actions and appearance are intensely alive.

This effect is also felt strongly in 'The Later Autumn'. Here the impersonal speaker spends much of the first stanza focused upon the actions of the bees which are described as returning to their hive 'In a prepossessed dive', which implies that they are following an instinctive scheme. The bees are also brought alive as working characters; they 'rush' and 'dip', and they toil as they carry their pollen 'Leg-laden'. The alternating long and short lines which are employed when these creatures appear seem to further indicate the kind of ceaseless movement akin to the zig-zagging flight of bees. Their own schemes, conveyed in this energetic sensation, collide with the lives of the lovers, 'Stretched at their ease', the bees tangling themselves in their hair, so that in Hardy's poetry the actions of such creatures transcend themselves, and have physical and often deeply emotional resonance.

Hardy's magnified bees can be placed in a Darwinian context, but the specific ways in which his poetry functions in bringing such creatures imaginatively and pleasurably to life also follows another important artistic pattern which connects to Hardy's training and

experience as an architect. Darwin's descriptions of creatures as akin to craftsmen and artisans also reflects the ways in which animals, birds and insects were being depicted by architects, who, by the 1840s, were involved in church restoration. [29] Figures such as John Ruskin and George Street argued in their influential writings that such architects should follow the early Gothic style. In 'The Nature of the Gothic', published in *The Stones of Venice* (1851-3) which Hardy was familiar with, Ruskin championed the importance of creativity in architecture, while equating buildings as forms of entertainment comparable with books: '[We] may, without offending any laws of good taste, require of an architect, as we do of a novelist, that he should be not only correct, but entertaining'. [30] Geoffrey Tyack discusses how 'Ruskin's writings struck a chord with those of the younger English architects of the 1850s' who believed in 'the necessity for "development" in modern Gothic'. [31] George Street's 1853 'An Urgent Plea for The Revival of True Principles of Architecture in The Public Buildings of The University of Oxford' observed how:

> The architects of the 14th century […] took nature as their guide, with her they went into the meadows and the woods and culled all that was most beautiful in colour and in form, and applied it to the use of art. If they carved a figure it was a true

[29] Chris Miele, ''Their Interest and Habit': Professionalism and the Restoration of Medieval Churches, 1837-77', *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*, ed. by Chris Brooks and Andrew Saint (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 151-172 (p.156).
[30] John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, ed. by J. G. Links (New York: Da Capo, 1960), p.166.
[31] Geoffrey Tyack, 'Architecture', *The Cambridge Companion to John Ruskin*, ed. by F. O' Gorman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 100-115 (p.109).

> reproduction of a living form; not conventionalised so far as to be unlike nature, but just so far as to stereotype, as it were, nature's most perfect mood. [32]

This nineteenth-century use of nature as a decorative art also followed the philosophical credo of the French Gothic architects of the thirteenth century. Their decorative use of flora and fauna was influenced by the four-part *Great Mirror*, or *Speculum Majus* of Vincent of Beauvais which was completed around 1240-60.[33] In particular, Beauvais' 'Mirror of Nature', which detailed all natural phenomena as believed to have been created by God, was carved on the facades of a great number of the French Gothic Cathedrals. [34] Such decorative arts were therefore used to convey a sympathetic pleasure of nature, but one that reverberated with a deeper meaning. Such nature was seen as created by God, thus illustrating the importance of decorative natural beauty as a transformative force.

Hardy's more secular use of natural imagery was influenced by the many carvings of the Gothic restoration period, with animals, insects and plants again being used by architects to transform newly restored churches. As an architect's apprentice, Hardy was trained in the Gothic decorative style. He may have been familiar with the works of George Street, having sketched Street's Denchworth School, Berkshire, in his architectural notebooks. [35] Certainly Hardy read Ruskin's *Modern Painters* (*CL I* 1), and his employer Blomfield's architectural associations with Ruskin would have likely furthered Hardy's

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[32] George Edmund Street, *An Urgent Plea for The Revival of True Principles of Architecture in The Public Buildings of The University of Oxford* (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1853), p.12.
[33] Emile Male, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century*, trans. by Dora Nussey (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972), p.23-24.
[34] Male, p.27.
[35] Dennis Taylor, *Hardy's Poetry, 1860-1928* (London: Macmillan, 1981), p.50.

familiarity with his ideas. Blomfield gave an 1861 talk to the London Architectural Association, published later in *The Builder*, in which he praised his fellow member Ruskin's championing of Gothic art, affirming that 'his call has been answered by some at least.' [36]

Similarly, Hardy's abiding love for the medieval Gothic style is evident in a much later 1914 *The Daily News* article entitled 'Rheims Cathedral', in which he bemoaned its shelling. Hardy attributed his interest in the Gothic to his London employer, writing that 'Sir Arthur Blomfield, with whom I was working, first set me on the track of early French Gothic, of which he was a great admirer' (*PV*, p.351). Blomfield's influence upon Hardy's love of the Gothic style, with its 'selections from such traceries and mouldings as those at Rheims' (*PV*, p.351), is evident in other short articles written by Hardy, and is also illustrated in the poem 'Heiress and Architect' (1898) (*CP I*), with a dedication '*For A. W. Blomfield'*. What is also evident in the third stanza of this poem is how Hardy, similarly to a decorative artist, combines the ideas of the Gothic, with its representations of natural imagery, together with plants and animals. The Heiress requests of the architect that he:

> 'Shape me', she said, 'high halls with tracery
> And open ogive-work, that scent and hue
> Of buds, and travelling bees, may come in through,
> The note of birds, and singings of the sea.

[36] Cited in Michael W. Brooks, *John Ruskin and Victorian Architecture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1987; London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), p. 226.

(ll.13-16)

A number of Hardy's poems illustrate a sympathetic pleasure towards plants and creatures which reflects this early interest in Gothic decorative art. While such representations of flora and fauna resonate with religious implications, Hardy's pleasurable natural imagery, such as his representations of insects, for example, often reverberates with personal memories of youthful vibrancy. The ways in which he brings such creatures artistically to life, therefore, also powerfully revivifies the past within the context of the present. Such reverberation is accentuated by Hardy's manipulation of different creatures' sounds. For example, in 'If It's Ever Spring Again' (1922) (*CP II*), Hardy's speaker looks back with longing to the spring of youth, the final four lines of the concluding stanza reading:

We shall do as long we've dreamed to,
If it's ever summer-time,
    Summer-time,
With the hay, and bees achime.
(ll.15-18)

The word 'achime' has a phonetic and a literal utility, reflecting both the sound of bees and the way that their sound resonates, like the sounding of a chime, in the speaker's memory. The repetitive sound here matches the poem's meaning, as the schwa followed by the 'ime'

connotes the reverberating sound of the bees whilst also mentally reverberating. The bees here, and their juxtaposition with the hay, appear to symbolize the unshakable memory of youthful lovemaking, and this sensation is accentuated by placing a stress upon the word that describes their sound.

Hardy creates similar sensations in 'The Later Autumn', but here his poetry also serves to amplify the bees as well as the abiding memory of love. While the shorter lines are composed as anapaestic dimeter, in the third line, which tells the reader 'Gone the bees,' Hardy substitutes a monosyllable for the first anapaest. This helps emphasise a sense of finality, juxtaposed with the iamb and anapaest used in the longer second line where the lovers are remembered 'Stretched at their ease;'. Hardy's effect is also onomatopoeic, as the rhyming of the words 'ease' and 'bees' conveys the phonetic sense of insects humming, while the repetition of the word 'gone' reminds one of a gong sounding, and a sense of conclusion. Further, the truncated third line also increases the sensation of death, but this mood is immediately subverted by the longest line of the stanza, in which insect and human worlds collide, with the bees 'Tangling themselves in your hair as they rush'. In the fifth and sixth lines of the first stanza, moving from 'track, | Leg-laden, back' Hardy uses a caesura after an end-stopped line to emphasize a slowing mood, conveying a sense of tiredness, but also emphasizing a very human sense of character as the bees, like agricultural workers, stumble home from working in the fields. The bees, like Hardy's speaker, must face death as seasonal conditions change, and this is rather somberly emphasized by the caesura also used to preface and emphasize the word 'back'. Again,

however, this mood is changed, moving from a sense of oncoming death back to a mood of activity, as the bees return 'With a dip to their hive | In a prepossessed dive.'

Rather differently to how Hardy describes creatures more realistically in his prose, his verse imaginatively amplifies bees as individual, idiosyncratic characters that are anthropomorphic and yet animalistic. This sense is accentuated through the deliberate use of movement and change, and its connection to the Gothic is acknowledged by Hardy in his notes:

> He knew that in architecture cunning irregularity is of enormous worth, and it is obvious that he carried on into his verse, perhaps unconsciously, the Gothic art-principle in which he had been trained – the principle of spontaneity, found in mouldings, tracery and such like – resulting in the "unforeseen" (as it has been called) character of his metres and stanzas. (*LIFE*, p.323)

Hardy's imaginative treatment of such creatures serves to enliven them as characters, so that their actions and behaviour rival humans in importance. This quality is significant in his poetry, as it further serves to relate objects back to the speaker-subject. The line 'Tangling themselves in your hair', for example, serves to indicate that the speaker is relaying a personal experience, and this further aids the implication that, if the poem details, stanza by stanza, his approaching old age, the lovers of the first stanza must be drawn from his youth. The bees are thus amplified in two ways, embodying a Darwinian vocational activity and being creatively emblematic of the speaker's memories of summer and

youthfulness. The bees are used to match the speaker's past happiness, adding a sense of enhanced vibrancy which subverts the neutral mood.

Ultimately, these vital sensations are not sustained, and the poem proceeds towards the more pessimistic second and third stanzas which contain images of decay such as the rotting apples and mangy toadsmeat. In particular, the final stanza, with its linguistic description and pictorial impression of a tree shedding its leaves reminds us of the 'tree of life' passage from *The Origin* where Darwin describes extinct species as having 'decayed and dropped off' from the trunk. [37] By the final stanza, the lovers, the bees, the toadsmeat, the apples and the leaves have gone, with the speaker also seemingly facing death. All that is left is the emergence of a robin, seeming to signify winter, occupying the final short line. The final five syllable line has an iamb followed by an anapest, the concluding 'on' emphasized by the two unstressed syllables which precede it. This stressed 'on' chimes with and seems to connect to 'gone', the opening word of the poem. Yet crucially, the vibrant energy of the earlier bees, and their juxtaposition with the lovers, serve to enhance the feeling that while the speaker's love has now passed it was not idle or wasted.

Moreover, a raven or a crow would more directly serve as a metaphor for death, and the use of a 'robin' appears both thematically and linguistically significant. While signifying winter, robins are also associated with the coming of spring, their red breasts offering an uplifting vision of colour, a quality which Hardy apparently admired. J. C. Squire, editor of the *London Mercury,* described Hardy's zest for life in old age, observing 'The boy of seventy years ago had not felt more acutely spring's freshness or autumn's

[37] Darwin, *On the Origin of Species,* pp.171-2.

grief, brooded with more luxury the visionary red of the robin's breast.' [38] This admiration is demonstrated in the previously mentioned 'The Robin', but also 'A Leader of Fashion' (*CP III*), where Hardy's speaker bemoans an unnamed woman's obliviousness to the charms and tragedies of life:

> Never has she known
> The way a robin will skip and come,
> With an eye half bold, half timorsome,
> To the table's edge for a breakfast crumb.
> (ll.1-4)

It is difficult to see Hardy's robin in 'The Later Autumn' as a clear symbol of pessimism. Its entrance appears less gloomy still when the word 'robin' is examined as part of Hardy's 'Gothic art principle' and, like his treatment of the bees, its implications for conveying a sense of movement and change in his poetry. A scan of the assonance and alliteration of the final two lines after the midway caesura, 'while yon, | A robin looks on' shows that there are two sets of 'on', with an additional 'o' and 'n' falling midway between these sets contained in the word robin. The final word sounding of 'A Later Autumn' therefore is subtly repeated throughout the last two lines, offering a delicate but evident sense that life will, in some form, continue.

[38] Cited in James Gibson, ed., *Thomas Hardy: Interviews and Recollections* (London: MacMillan, 1999), p.234.

This sense of hope does not include the poetic speaker, however. Just as the bees are amplified to become symbols of the speaker's youth, the robin becomes the symbol of his oncoming demise. Its emergence as watcher, appearing from the wings in the very last line, positions it as both observed object and amplified watching subject, giving an implied sense that it is waiting to replace the speaker. In *The Origin,* Darwin discussed disappeared races as having fallen from the tree of life, to the extent that complete species and genera are known only as fossils, but he also emphasized the wonder of the affinity between past, present and future generations.[39] While discussing the 'wonderful collection of fossil bones made by M.M. Lund and Clausen in the caves of Brazil', Darwin saw this as evidence that displayed the 'wonderful relationship in the same continent between the dead and the living', fossil bones serving to illustrate 'the law of the succession of types'. [40] In other words, the unsettling discovery of species death could be placed in context, and fund an appreciation of the past's connection to ongoing life. Similarly, in 'The Later Autumn', the aged speaker appears to place himself within an overarching Darwinian context, the structure and imagery of his poem resembling a tree shedding its leaves, with himself also falling from the tree of life and being replaced.

The depiction of the seasons and indeed the implication, with the robin's appearance at the poem's conclusion, that spring will follow autumn, indicates cyclical recurrence and continuation. This objective optimism, which transcends the speaker's preoccupation with himself, is not necessarily encountered in other seasonally themed poems of an earlier or similar period. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'Barren Spring' (1870), for

[39] Darwin, *On the Origin of Species,* p.172.
[40] Darwin, *On the Origin of Species,* p.338.

example, depicts a coming spring which offers no revivification for the speaker, who laments, 'So Spring comes merry towards me here, but earns | No answering smile from me'. [41] In the later 'The Waste Land', T. S. Eliot's speaker describes the coming of spring as 'the cruellest month' as it accentuates the poet's previously experienced pain, its return reviving him just enough to remember it. [42] In Hardy's poem, however, the speaker's own sense of mortality is counterbalanced by his wider awareness that life is seasonal and thus cyclical. While the robin's appearance here, looking 'on', phonetically chimes with 'gone', it also juxtaposes this, offering a faint but distinct sense of life going 'on' toward spring, even if that process does not include Hardy's speaker. The scenes of the speaker's described past, such as the vitality of the bees, will therefore return again without him in the coming spring as new creatures are born. In short, while the focus of Hardy's poem relates to personal aging and the coming of death, it also provides a counterbalanced mood and shows us that life itself will continue onwards just as before.

Hardy places natural creatures at the very centre of his world as fellow, and indeed interchangeable, interlocutors. He imaginatively amplifies birds and bees, conventional euphemisms of procreation, as central characters within the context of a poem about approaching death. While the speaker's future appears bleak, his past is revivified while creatures are enlarged, counterbalancing the tone of the poem. Such instances may offer brief snapshots of energy and movement, but they gift Hardy's readers a hopeful view of nature as part of a continuum that transcends the preoccupied observing self. Natural

[41] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'Barren Spring', *Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Jerome McGann (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 163-164, ll. 5-6.
[42] T. S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land', *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), pp.25-51, l. 1.

phenomena can be noticed, illuminated and in some cases enjoyed in spite of a more negative personal mood.

3. THE COMFORTING POSSIBILITY OF HOPE

This sense of joy and hope is more strongly pronounced elsewhere in Hardy's poetry; instead of the speaker's memories serving to emphasise the vibrancy of insects and birds, focus shifts to the ways in which creatures prompt his own hope and desire. While Hardy's poetry can illustrate his deductive awareness of nature's capacity for enjoyment it can also offer his speaker, and indeed the reader, the sense that personal hope is possible. Anna West has observed the ways in which human and animal plotlines interweave in Hardy's novels, so that 'The two are intertwined in an indeterminable loop.' [43] This is not always so in Hardy's poetry, where the relationship between subject and object, the human speaker and creatively observed creatures, is less egalitarian. This is significant, as in poems where the speaker appears more cheerful, the power balance between the viewer and subjects is often increasingly weighted in favour of the former. For example, in several poems, such as 'The Blinded Bird' (1917) (*CP II*) and 'I Watched a Blackbird' (1928) (*CP III*), birds function less as observed examples of enjoyment and more, through their struggles and endurance, as a possible source of hope for the human watcher. Elsewhere, in 'Song of Hope' (1901) (*CP I*), Hardy imagines a heavenly future scene in which birds function as creative emblems of human hope. The speaker looks towards 'O sweet To-morrow!' (l.1),

[43] West, p.47.

being a time ‘When there will sing us | Larks of a glory’ (l.14-15). In ‘The Bullfinches’ (1901) (*CP I*), Hardy’s speaker is a bird. He addresses a flock of ‘brethren’ (l.26), which is reminiscent of a choir. Faced with the ambiguous uncertainty of what may or may not come after death, he extols the group to sing regardless, ‘Brother Bulleys, let us sing | From the dawn till evening!’ (ll.1-2)

In this section I will argue that creatures in Hardy’s poetry can manifest the possibility of hope, which, while uncertain, provides his pondering speakers with a sense of comfort. This means that in such poems, hope is rarely extinguished, and that, for Hardy’s speakers, the act of hoping is at least possible. I will examine this aspect of Hardy’s nature poetry by once again discussing the influence of Charles Darwin, further connecting it to Hardy’s interest in poets such as John Keats and nineteenth-century Gothic architects such as William Burgess. In particular, I will discuss this aspect of Hardy by examining ‘The Darkling Thrush’ (1901) (*CP I*), where Hardy’s bird is imagined as a caroler, prompting the personal speaker to consider the possibility of hope.

In ‘The Darkling Thrush’, Hardy’s poetic voice is more centrally established through the use of the first person ‘I’. Yet despite this, the tone of the poem resembles ‘The Later Autumn’ with its more impersonal speaker. The personal speaker’s conflicted thoughts in ‘The Darkling Thrush’, and the use of the conditional, creates an ambiguous mood in which the possibility of hope appears to be indicated by the thrush but may or may not be achieved by the poet. This poem provides a bittersweet tone, the stimulus provided by imaginatively realised natural creatures affecting and perhaps lifting the teller’s imaginative mood. ‘The Darkling Thrush’ is dated as 31st December 1900, being composed

many years before ‘The Later Autumn’, but thematically and seasonally it appears as if the later poem’s successor. Set in midwinter, a thrush, rather than a robin, becomes the central focus of the poem, providing a sense of acoustic, if not tangible comfort as the speaker makes his way across a barren heath:

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.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
The Century's corpse outleant,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

‘The Later Autumn’ contains a tension between ‘Gone’ and ‘on’, but here the word ‘Hope’ is clearly very important, carefully inserted into the poem and assigned a capital ‘H’, before being followed by a caesura to give it a dramatic end pause. Moreover, the word ‘happy’ runs

directly above in the previous line above, striking an alliterative chord. This falls in line with the overarching, easy, iambic flow of the poem, which is more orthodox and familiar than 'The Later Autumn', with its lines varying from trimeter to tetrameter, so that the poem resembles a ballad, or indeed a song.

The use of a singing bird, and the word 'darkling', seems to signify a conflicted mood of optimism and pessimism, being traceable to four poets among Hardy's major reading sources: Shelley, Arnold, Shakespeare and Keats. The influence of Shelley, in particular, appears significant in regards to the poem's bittersweet mood. In 'Shelley's Skylark' (1901) (*CP I*), composed in 1887 and published in the same poetry collection, Hardy's speaker imagines the corporeal remains of Shelley's bird, imploring 'faeries' (l.17) to 'consecrate it to endless time' (l.22). This project seems to reach its culmination in 'The Darkling Thrush', which becomes Shelley`s Skylark reborn. The titular word 'darkling', however, is originally found in Shakespeare's *King Lear* when the Fool utters the following lines to Lear:

> The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long,
> That it's had it head bit off by it young;
> So, out went the candle, and we were left darkling.[44]

The Fool's wise nonsense aptly describes Lear's situation; he has been usurped by his daughters, just as the sparrow, in raising a cuckoo chick, will eventually be eaten by it. The

[44] William Shakespeare, *King Lear, The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works, 3rd edn,* ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 943-974, (I.4.198-200).

order of things has been inverted, leaving Lear, as a shadow of his former Kingly self, 'darkling' and eventually cast out tragically upon the heath.

The above Shakespeare *King Lear* reference further links to Hardy's own famous literary invention; he renamed the heathland close to where he grew up as Egdon, which connects to the legend of King Lear of Wessex. [45] Hardy's heath, similar to Lear's, was a dramatic stage upon which tragic events occurred, and it is in a similar landscape where Hardy's speaker encounters the darkling thrush. Set upon a 'desolate' landscape, it also appears to reference Matthew Arnold's 'Dover Beach', the latter poem's 'darkling plain' stripped of all imaginative and religious meaning. [46] The titular term 'darkling' thus indicates the poem's deathly aspect as Hardy's speaker faces a foreboding, lifeless landscape. This becomes even more apparent as one bears in mind that Hardy's original title for the poem, published in *The Graphic* in December 1900 was 'By the Century's Deathbed', while in the second version Hardy changed 'paddock', a human-made field, to 'coppice'. [47] The latter word indicates wild-growing trees which are not cultivated but have to be cut back. [48] The word 'coppice' is also similar to 'copse', which in turn phonetically reminds one of a corpse, and connects the first line of the opening stanza, 'the century's corpse outleant', to the subsequent line of the second.

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[45] Cited in Harold Orel, ed., *Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings: Prefaces, Literary Opinions, Reminiscences* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1966), p.13.
[46] Matthew Arnold, 'Dover Beach', *Matthew Arnold (The Oxford Authors),* ed. by Miriam Allott and Robert H. Super. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 135-36, (l.35).
[47] Jahan Ramazani, 'Hardy's Elegies for an Era: "By the Century's Deathbed"' *Victorian Poetry*, 29 (2) (1991), 131-143 (p.134) <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxye.bham.ac.uk/scholarly-journals/hardys-elegies-era-centurys-deathbed/docview/1297944857/se-2?accountid=8630> (accessed 12 Aug 2018).
[48] Jonathan Wike, 'Toward the "Coppice Gate": A Reading of Thomas Hardy's "The Darkling Thrush"', *Philosophy and Literature*, 38 (1A) (2014), A129-A143 (p.A130) <https://doi.org/10.1353/phl.2014.0033> (accessed 18 May 2018).

At the same time, unlike Lear or Arnold's landscapes, Hardy's poem exhibits one significant difference. His speaker stands upon a threshold; waiting at 'the coppice-gate' he, and indeed perhaps time itself, have not yet entered the metaphorical landscape which stretches ahead. Despite the influences of *King Lear* and Arnold, therefore, the existence of a threshold is important, meaning that the poem 'The Darkling Thrush' cannot be seen as utterly tragic. Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale' better helps us in understanding this bittersweet, threshold quality. Hardy was a life-long admirer of Keats's poetry, as evidenced by his 1887 visit to Keats's grave in Rome (*CL I*, p.163), and his 1923 letter to Sir George Douglas in which he praised his poetry (*CL VI*, p.203).

Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale' also famously describes a speaker's reaction to birdsong, and further contains the word 'darkling', part of the well-known phrase from stanza VI, 'Darkling I listen; and, for many a time | I have been half in love with easeful Death'. [49] The word 'Death' is capitalised, emphasizing the meaning, and this latter word also connects to Hardy's original, darker title. Hardy recorded a further, thematically similar line from stanza VI in his notes, underlining the words 'cease upon' in 'To <u>cease upon</u> the midnight' (*SSN*, p.22). Significantly, Keats's speaker exists upon a poetic threshold; he half-wishes to cease, but specifically while in enjoyment of great beauty, sung by the bird, which he will listen to while 'darkling'. Hardy's substitution of 'darkling' for corpse, in the poem title, therefore, appears softer, more mitigated by transitional feelings of empathy and enjoyment. More interestingly, while in stanza VI Keats capitalised 'Death' Hardy eschews the word in the second version, and instead in his later work it is the word 'Hope' that is capitalised.

[49] John Keats, 'Ode to a Nightingale', *John Keats: The Complete Poems*, 5th edn, ed. by John Barnard (London: Penguin Books, 2006), pp.346-348, l. 51-52.

Hardy's 'darkling' thrush, therefore, like the speaker, exists upon an ambiguous threshold between life and cessation, and signifying hope as much as death, chooses to 'fling his soul | Upon the growing gloom.' Hardy's careful use of the word 'Hope', therefore, appears significant. If Hardy *knows* that there is definitely no hope then this is not reflected in the architecture of the poem. Moreover, Hardy's landscape, while gloomy, should not be seen as lacking poetic fallacy, as the grotesqueness of the heath Hardy describes seems an extreme outgrowth of the teller's imaginative pessimism. The impersonal speaker of 'The Later Autumn' previews death through its simple, cyclical association with the darkening day, describing how 'shades far extend | Like lives soon to end', but the teller of 'The Darkling Thrush' uses more grandiose, macabre imagery. Here, death and darkness are everywhere, being omnipresent in every sight and sound, and 'The land's sharp features seemed to be | The Century's corpse outleant'. The descriptions are wild and ethereal, with death laments heard in the wind, and tree branches 'like broken lyres'.

Such passages indicate Hardy's training as a Gothic architect, and his familiarity with Gothic grotesque imagery. Ruskin, for example, observed the power of the grotesque within Gothic art, maintaining that the 'tendency to delight in fantastic and ludicrous, as well as in sublime, images, is a universal instinct of the Gothic imagination'. [50] Yet, as Trodd, Barlow and Amigoni note, the 'multiple and aberrant nature of the grotesque as a cultural phenomenon places it in a problematic position as an evaluative, or even

[50] Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, p.173.

descriptive, term'. [51] It is hence evident that the speaker's descriptions of the landscape are the work of a pessimistic imagination, and, significantly, that the actions of the thrush are not. Conversely, the thrush's appearance in stanza three marks a turn in the poem, and also signifies a partial shift from the realm of thought to the Darwinian world of flesh and blood.

As already discussed, Hardy's poetry of nature appears thematically underpinned by a Darwinian view of the universe. Stevenson argued that this influence helped shape Hardy's belief that 'progress was an illusion, and that the primal force was merely a ceaseless craving for change in manifestation'. [52] In 'The Darkling Thrush', this craving, as Holmes has more recently noted, made 'Hardy's projection of hope onto the bird seem little more than a wish-fulfilment driven by his own inability to find any other grounds for hope'. [53] It is certainly true that the speaker's sense of hope – derived from the thrush - is not tangible or verifiable. What is clear here, however, is the effect that the actions of the thrush have upon the mood of the poem, and indeed the poetic speaker. It is notable that the commencement of the bird's song – and the action of singing – shakes the speaker from his dark imaginative stupor, allowing him to shift his stance more hopefully, if fancifully. This is a quality found in Darwin's writings; in his notebooks Hardy recorded, from *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, Darwin's account of a particularly pleasant experience whilst conducting natural study. Darwin writes:

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[51] Colin Trodd, Colin, Paul Barlow and David Amigoni, 'Introduction: Uncovering the Grotesque in Victorian Culture' in *Victorian Culture and the Idea of the Grotesque*, ed. by Colin Trodd, Paul Barlow and David Amigoni (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1999), pp. 1-20 (p.2).
[52] Stevenson, p.53.
[53] John Holmes, *Darwin's Bards: British and American Poetry in the Age of Evolution* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 2009, reprinted 2013), p. 168.

> At last I fell fast asleep on the grass, & awoke with a chorus of birds singing around me, & squirrels running up the trees, & some woodpeckers laughing, & it was as pleasant & rural a scene as ever I saw, & I did not care one penny how any of these beasts & birds had been formed. (*LN I*, p.204)

This anecdote, highlighted by Hardy, helps give an insight into both men's personal views on the delights of nature. Creatures become a form of animated entertainment, performing for the surprised pleasure of the lounging observer. Darwin, in his prose, documents actions rather than describing appearances, placing the stress on the singing, running, laughing movements of the creatures he encounters. In doing so, and in documenting his surprised responses to such behaviour, he humanises such creatures as active agents. This quality is frequently encountered in *The Origin*, where flycatchers are described 'dashing like a kingfisher at a fish', mice can be witnessed 'climbing branches, almost like a creeper', and black bears are seen 'swimming for hours with widely open mouth, thus catching, like a whale, insects in the water'.[54] Natural creatures in Darwin's prose are frequently shown in motion, and their behaviour provides a constant sense of surprise for the observer. Their actions, crucially, provoke reactions, and for Darwin undertaking such observation requires a constant readjustment of assumptions.

Similarly, in 'The Darkling Thrush', the bird's appearance in the third stanza changes the tone of the poem. Like Darwin's experience with the woodpeckers, the thrush's song provides a major shift of perspective for Hardy's speaker. The effect of the birdsong

[54] Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, p.215.

upon the listener, with its 'full-hearted evensong | Of joy illimited', reminds us of Darwin's reactions, recorded by Hardy, to the strange behaviour of the cirripede, noting that the workings of 'Nature are illimitable' (*LN I*, p.204). The birdsong can be read metaphorically as an attempt by Hardy to personify and realise the idea of unlimited hope, but it also exists as a very real acoustic example of natural wonder, and the bird's actions serve to function as a synecdoche for the innumerable ways in which natural creatures behave. Real hope in Hardy's poem, if it exists at all, therefore, is not teleological but ontological, and seems to lie within, and only within, the very action – the singing – of the thrush. More than this, just as Darwin is shaken from his theoretical slumber by natural creatures, in Hardy's poetry the behaviour of such animals can serve as a consolatory antidote against bitter preoccupations. The imaginative language of Hardy's speaker in the second stanza, in which he darkly describes how the world 'Seemed fervourless as I', is suddenly countered by the language at the start of the third, in which 'At once a voice arose among | The bleak twigs overhead'. The thrush's song functions as an ideational stimulus, the fulcrum for the poem's shift. It is only thanks to the birdsong that Hardy's poetic voice can move from dire pessimism to a lighter mood. The thrush and its song provide the impetus for change.

This lighter aspect of Hardy's nature poetry is influenced by the wide-ranging influence of Ruskin; in 'The Nature of Gothic' he championed the importance of change in art, counseling 'Let us then understand at once that change or variety is as much a necessity to the human heart and brain in buildings as in books'. [55] Ruskin's thoughts on change helped determine the zeitgeist of the nineteenth century as expressed in its architecture. In

[55] Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, p.167.

particular, an important aspect of such change was the creative representation of small animals and birds, employed to throw monotony into lighter relief. Even more specifically in relation to Gothic church architecture, this was designed to instigate a theologically transformative experience. Perhaps the most influential practitioner of this art was William Burgess, whose famous, if ultimately unsuccessful, competition designs for the Royal Courts of Justice were referred to by *The Ecclesiologist* in 1866 as indicative of 'the very best architectural work we have seen since the commencement of the Gothic Revival'. [56] In addition to his designs, Burgess' work at Waltham Abbey, Cardiff Castle and Castel Coch demonstrated a focus on carved animals engaged in various activities and episodes.

While the primary focus of Gothic decorative art was to reconcile the viewer to a more serious theological position, Burgess's work exemplifies an additional playfulness, in which his animals often perform as characters from tales and stories. His work at Waltham, for example, demonstrated a number of carved scenes from Aesop's Fables, while at Castell Coch 'Snails, lizards, and caterpillars; butterflies, mice and birds worm their way around the doorways. Scenes from Aesop's Fables illuminate the walls. The theme is Life and Death in Nature'. [57] Hardy's own Gothic restorative work on St Mary's Church, Turnworth, appears to reflect the architectural influence of Burgess, which may have come through Hardy's employer and Gothic mentor Arthur Blomfield. Burgess and Blomfield were well-known to each other, and from 1863 dined together regularly at the Arts club. [58] Hardy's later work on St Mary's may display Burgess's influence, and Gittings's study of

[56] Cited in J. Mordaunt Crook, *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream* (London: John Murray, 1981), p.248.
[57] Crook, p.185-6; p.282.
[58] Crook, p.78-79.

the church notes ‘a particularly pert and lifelike owl, which is almost certainly Hardy’s individual design’. [59] Perhaps significantly, what appears to be a horned owl shape, situated under Hardy’s sketch of a pair of church windows, can also be located in Hardy’s architectural notebook (*AN*, p.12).

Although the direct influence of Burgess is impossible to determine, certainly in his sketches and Gothic decorating work Hardy used birds and other creatures. More specifically, the possible influence of Burgess, with his playful and lively decorations, would help further to account for the ways in which Hardy’s creatures are characterized in his poetry. In Hardy’s work, the presence of natural creatures produces powerful transformative sensations that can revivify the past, amplify corporeality or signify change. In ‘The Darkening Thrush’, the personified bird appears to signify the latter aspect, providing a corporeal and an imaginative shift in tone from the bleak monotony of the first two stanzas. It signifies a change in schematic perception, moving from visions of darkness to pure flesh and blood, but Hardy then quickly integrates it back into his creative poetic structure. The first two stanzas of the poem read as a narrative with the poem’s dark imagery, referencing a haunted church cemetery. This is accentuated through the words Hardy employs, such as ‘spectre-grey’, ‘corpse’, ‘crypt’, ‘canopy’, ‘spirit’ and ‘haunted’. Then in stanza three the thrush’s singing is creatively co-opted into the same paradigm, being amplified anthropomorphically. Words such as ‘evensong’ ‘soul’ and ‘carolings’ (and possibly, in reference to a choir-boy’s ruff, ‘beruffled’) reconfigure the bird as a church choir-singer, the bird taking the place of darker imagery and appearing to signify the

[59] Robert Gittings, *Young Thomas Hardy*, 2nd edn (London: Penguin Books, 1978), p.168.

concept of faith. Just as the observance of change and movement in the natural world were significant for Darwin's theoretical studies, the same processes had distinct and important implications for the artistic theory of composition. The thrush's actions provoke an observation of its behaviour, and this in turn provides Hardy's poetic voice with an artistic change in tone, moving from darker cemetery imagery to the church itself.

This aspect of the poem relates to the complex role of the Christian faith in Hardy's life and work. As I discussed in the introduction chapter, while Hardy was brought up with High Church principles (*LIFE*, p.33) his belief began to fade during the 1860s. [60] A number of Hardy's poems reflect his loss of faith, Jon Roberts arguing that his poetry 'mercilessly interrogates' the myth that God suffers with and for humanity. [61] Elsewhere in his poetry, however, Hardy appears to approach religion as a form of creative illusion. Norman Arkans has discussed Hardy's poetry as influenced by his view of the Bible as a 'shaped work of art', arguing that he used religious myth as 'a mode for adaptation.' [62]

This aspect of 'The Darkling Thrush' can be examined fruitfully through comparison with the way in which such religious imagery is encountered more directly and powerfully in Hardy's later poem 'The Oxen' (*CP II*), composed at Christmas 1915. Hardy's poetic teller here recalls the myth that oxen knelt at Christmas time in honour of Christ's birth, and, further recalls his childhood fancy that, unseen, the oxen may actually be kneeling:

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[60] Harold Orel, 'Hardy and the Developing Science of Archeology', *Thomas Hardy Annual No 4*, ed. by Norman Page (London: Macmillan, 1986), pp.19-44 (p.21).
[61] Jon Roberts, 'Mortal Projections: Thomas Hardy's Dissolving Views of God.' *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 31, (1), (2003), 43–66 (p. 45) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25058613?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents> (accessed 11 Jan 2021).
[62] Norman Arkans, 'Hardy's 'Religious Twilight.'' *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 21, (3) (1979), 413-432 (p.417) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40754581> (accessed 13 Jan 2021).

We pictured the meek mild creatures where
  They dwelt in their strawy pen,
Nor did it occur to one of us there
  To doubt they were kneeling then.
(ll.5-8)

In this poem, the commonplace oxen are, like the thrush, creatively 'pictured', this time in the teller's reminiscences, as imaginative and fanciful symbols of the Christian church. Interestingly, the silhouette of a cow can also be found in Hardy's architecture notebook on the same page as his owl shape, below his sketch of church windows (*AN*, p.12). In 'The Oxen' such beasts are employed as symbols of Christianity which brightly colour the speaker's childhood memory. At the same time, Hardy's speaker, in more mature mood, is less able to believe this with conviction than before, noting 'So fair a fancy few would weave | In these years!' (ll. 9-10)

The exact way in which hope functions in Hardy's poetry is often left uncertain, but this very ambiguity also affords brighter possibilities. The act of hoping in 'The Oxen' is connected to a future conditional mood, and while never fully realized it also never fully denied, remaining a possible, if theoretical, option. This hope frequently sees empirical observation eschewed in favour of the imagination, so that creatures' details are combined with aspects of the speaker's fancy rather than purely seen. For example, the teller's doubt is mitigated by his imaginative hope, leading to the confession that, 'If someone said on

Christmas Eve, | 'Come ; see the oxen kneel' (ll. 10-12) this would ensure that 'I should go with him in the gloom, | Hoping it might be so' (ll. 15-16). The final couplet is indicative of a number of Hardy's poems, and particularly 'The Darkling Thrush', where 'gloom' is juxtaposed with 'hope', tussling within the poet's mind. Hoping here is rather contingent upon the conditional phrase 'If someone said', meaning that such hope can only be fully activated at some future time by another telling him that the fantastic was true. At the same time, the conditional 'If' also indicates that his poetic speaker is not utterly disregarding such hope. Further, Hardy prefaces this with 'Yet I feel', 'Yet' possessing the ambiguous double meaning 'but' and 'still'. Read as 'but' the poem can be seen to emphasise the way in which it will, 'If someone said', change tack from realism towards fancy and hope. If read as 'still', the poem conveys the sense that such hoping lingers on regardless from childhood as an imaginative option. Even more importantly, the juxtaposition of 'If' with 'Should' ultimately reveals how responsive Hardy's speaker is, and would continue to be, to such fancies. In 'The Oxen', therefore, Hardy's desire for both hope and the act of hoping is conveyed as a powerful poetic sensation.

Conversely, while the bird in 'The Darkling Thrush' acts as an ecclesiastical symbol, and provides an imaginative shift in perception, for many scholars the poem appears to end with the sense that 'hope' is intangible. Dennis Taylor, for example, in his reading of 'The Darkling Thrush', focuses on the conclusion of the poem, arguing that 'The last line lingers with the echo that Hardy is still as "unaware" as ever'. [63] For Taylor, the 'poem's style, with its stage-managed images, its abstract rhetoric, and its severe qualifications,

[63] Taylor, *Hardy's Poetry,1860-1928,* p.146.

contradicts the hoped for experience'. [64] This reading appears emphasised by the structure of the final two lines: 'Hope' is bracketed with a comma, giving it stress, and yet the caesura divides it from the second part of the line, 'whereof he knew'. This in turn is end-stopped, with the speaker concluding 'And I was unaware', giving the sensation that 'Hope', the bird and the narrator, the three sides of the poem's triangle, are finally separated. The ending is difficult to determine; such hope may or may not exist for the bird, and it may, or more likely will not, exist for the speaker. Yet, what is significant about Hardy's poem is that it also creatively amplifies the bird, so that it becomes a temporal symbol of hope. In becoming larger than life, the bird's behaviour in turn affects the teller, changing the entire tone of the poem from dark to light until the wavering last line. It gives the speaker the opportunity to fancifully dream, and to imagine, as he relays, 'That I could think there trembled through | His happy good-night air | Some blessed Hope'.

'The Darkling Thrush' finally concludes with an ambiguous mood in which, like 'The Oxen' the conditional plays a deeply significant role. The conditional mood of Hardy's line 'That I could think' functions in the same fashion as the thrush, and indeed the speaker's own position in standing upon the threshold of the 'coppice gate'. It creates what seems to be a deliberately ambiguous final tone, meaning neither 'I can hope' nor 'I did hope', nor, indeed, 'I will hope', but at the same time not necessarily meaning the opposite either. If we read the line 'I could think' as relating specifically to the past conditional, Hardy's ending appears fanciful. In such a reading, it appears that the speaker sought comfort in such thoughts, but ultimately did not believe them to be true. Conversely, the

[64] Taylor, *Hardy's Poetry,1860-1928*, p.146.

opposite reading infers a future scenario, in which Hardy's speaker can indeed possibly achieve belief in 'Hope'. This ambiguity seems to offer a tantalising and overarching potentiality for hope that transcends the 'I' speaker. In this sense, such a reading defies a pessimistic interpretation of the poem. Instead, in involving the reader as an active interlocutor, and depending on this type of personal reading, Hardy's creatively personified thrush offers a broad and profound interpretation of what hope may or may not be. Animals, therefore, can provide Hardy's poetic speakers and his readers with a sense of possibility that they themselves may lack, and it is thus left to the observers of such creatures to draw hope from this.

The idea of 'hope', in functioning as a conditional possibility, exists as an option in Hardy's overall scheme of thought. The word itself, and its grammatical variants, are commonly used in Hardy's poetic lexicon: 'hope' occurs forty-nine times in his poetry, 'hopeful' twice, 'hopefully' three times, 'hopes' eighteen times and 'hoping' six times. Some of these occurrences are ironically pessimistic, some more genuinely optimistic in meaning, but such occurrences can also appear ambiguous. We are reminded of Hardy's 'Apology' comments that humankind may be 'drawing back for a spring. I repeat that I forlornly hope so' (*CP II*, p325). In this sense, while the realisation of such hope is not guaranteed, and may perhaps ultimately be forlorn, the desire for hope, and indeed the act of hoping itself, is not rejected or denied. In Hardy's poetry of nature, such as 'The Darkling Thrush', a sense of hope remains theoretically interpretable and accessible. Natural creatures like the thrush can therefore offer the comfort that hope may potentially exist and that the act of hope itself can always be pursued.

4. THE APPRECIATIVE COMPREHENSION OF NATURE

Elsewhere in Hardy's poetry, his hopeful intuition that natural flora and fauna may possess an awareness of *something* beyond human perception is more explicitly stated. Hardy's enjoyment at pondering such mysteries is outlined in one of his final poems, 'A Private Man on Public Men' (1928) (*CP III*), where he describes having deliberately lived 'Pondering upon some stick or stone, | Or news of some rare book or bird' (l. 10-11), while in 'Afterwards' (1917) (*CP II*) he imagines forms of flora and fauna and questions, 'Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more, | "He was one who had an eye for such mysteries"?' (ll.15-16) Further, in 'The Upper Birch Leaves' (1917) (*CP II)* Hardy's personal speaker looks at some autumn leaves and feels or imagines that he can hear 'their tune' (l.14). Additionally, in 'The Year's Awakening (1914) (*CP II*), Hardy's impersonal speaker ponders how a 'vespering bird' (l.9) and a 'crocus root' (l.19) can sense the approach of spring, repeating the thoughtful refrain 'How do you know?' (l.10) In such cases, Hardy's encounters with various lifeforms provoke thoughtful, questioning engagement with the natural world and can also provide his speakers with insights. In such works, where the mood of the speaker is more sanguine, this aspect is achieved through lifeforms functioning less brightly as central characters and more as an adjacent source of thinking.

Hardy's appreciation of such insights is demonstrated in 'An August Midnight' (1901) (*CP I*), where the personal speaker encounters a group of insects. While the

creatures he witnesses can be seen, they are not always able to be observed in detail by the naked eye, and are initially imagined in the poem's first stanza. At the same time, as the poem proceeds they gradually resonate less powerfully as amplified characters and instead, by the second stanza, begin to function as fellow, if also different, lifeforms. They are contrasted to humankind, but this also leads the poet to appreciatively comprehend the vital existence of such creatures. In 'An August Midnight', therefore, Hardy's poetic imagination and his perceptions are more fully interconnected and realised, as his thoughts shift in a deeper direction which illustrates his enjoyment and appreciation of nature. This section will examine the way in which Hardy's poetry achieves this sense, providing a brighter reading of 'An August Midnight' that connects to his scientific and artistic influences such as J. G. Wood, John Ruskin, Charles Darwin, T. H. Huxley and George Romanes.

Critics have noticed how Hardy can use insects in his novels as metaphors for human follies and tragedies. Michael Irwin, for example, has observed that Hardy describes 'wailing gnats', which 'dance luminously in the light of the sunset', in a scene where the mood of Clym and Eustacia feels 'oppressed'. [65] Yet, in an 'An August Midnight', insects are employed more brightly to illustrate the ways in which natural phenomena can inspire deeper feelings. The poem was composed in 1899, approximately one year before 'The Darkling Thrush', and documents Hardy's speaker working late in his study, whereupon he becomes cognizant of the insects around him:

[65] Michael Irwin, 'Insects in Hardy's Fiction', *The Thomas Hardy Journal*, 10, (3) (1994), 54-63. (p.56) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/45274119.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Acb11ecd1d73ea03e5a0918691156151 8> (accessed 13 Jan 2021).

I

A shaded lamp and a waving blind,
And the beat of a clock from a distant floor:
On this scene enter – winged, horned, and spined –
A longlegs, a moth, and a dumbledore;
While ‘mid my page there idly stands
A sleepy fly, that rubs its hands…

II

Thus meet we five, in this still place,
At this point of time, at this point in space.
– My guests besmear my new-penned line,
Or bang at the lamp and fall supine.
‘God’s humblest, they!’ I muse. Yet why?
They know Earth-secrets that know not I.

Hardy’s notes tell us that the poem was composed at Max Gate (*CP I*, p.184), the exact detailing of the location indicating that the work was based upon a particular experience. Due to this, Marsden connected the poem to ‘The Darkling Thrush’, noting that the

composition of both suggests 'some precise inspiration'. [66] In addition, 'An August Midnight' also shares another key aspect with Hardy's later piece as both deal with the theme of thresholds in time. While 'The Darkling Thrush' is concerned with the end of a century, the earlier composed poem is set at the close of a single day. The issues at play in 'An August Midnight', which marks the threshold point between one day and another, seem less emotionally dramatic than those encountered in the slightly later poem. The seasons in which the poems are set are also significant, as while 'A Darkling Thrush' occurs in the final winter month of the calendar year, 'An August Midnight' takes place in the height of summer. The word 'August' can additionally be read as meaning celebrated, acclaimed or exalted, and this second, implied meaning becomes significant when the titular adjectives used in 'A Darkling Thrush' and 'An August Midnight' are directly compared. Hardy's thrush is 'darkling', while his midnight is 'august', and this accentuates the sensation that if a threshold is being crossed in 'An August Midnight' it should be viewed more brightly. As we have already seen in the previous section, a number of Hardy's poems are influenced by his religious upbringing. Stephen Platten has argued that Hardy's 'entire life and work are interwoven with musing on faith and doubt', further contending that in 'An August Midnight' there is 'the lingering shadow of a metaphysic'. [67] Yet 'An August Midnight' conveys a sense of secular vibrancy, which is located in the part-observed, part-imagined depictions of tiny creatures. Moreover, this natural stimulus is not a cause of poetic angst, and is ultimately appreciated and marveled at by the speaker.

[66] Kenneth Marsden, *The Poems of Thomas Hardy: A Critical Introduction* (London: University of London: Athlone, 1969), p.63.
[67] Stephen Platten, '"They Know Earth-Secrets": Thomas Hardy's Tortured Vocation', *Religion & Literature*, 45 (3) (2013), 59-79 (p.60; p.71) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24397715> (Accessed 01 December 2019).

In examining the poem's insects, we can trace their part-empirical, part-creative representation in the first stanza to Hardy's different scientific and imaginative readings. In 'An August Midnight', Hardy's creative treatment of the singularity and sense of mystery that these creatures embody affords them an importance that rivals humankind's own. The poem is separated into two six line stanzas, the first with a rhyme scheme of ABABCC, and the second with an alternating AABBCC. This contrast, coupled with the ways in which the meter ranges in length, while the stress varies line by line from iambs to anapests, creates an unstable sensation which resembles the movement of flying or darting insects. The first stanza chiefly focuses upon the entrance of these creatures, 'a longlegs, a moth and a dumbledore' described as 'winged, horned and spined'. Hardy's separation of the insects into three distinct types likely reflects his reading of the English natural historian J. G. Wood. During the nineteenth century, the works of Wood were immensely popular. Lynn L. Merrill notes how '*Common Objects of the Country* […] sold 100,000 copies in one week', while Bernard Lightman further notes that Wood's obituary in *The Times* newspaper praised him for doing 'more to popularize the study of natural history than any writer of the present age'. [68]

Hardy's use of the terms 'winged, horned, and spined' can be linked to his knowledge of Wood as the 'longlegs, a moth, and a dumbledore' are all described, and indeed brought vividly to life, in *Insects at Home* (1872) which Hardy owned. West observes that, during Hardy's day, 'dumbledore' was a local Dorset term for a bumblebee, although it is unlikely

[68] Lynn L. Merrill, *The Romance of Victorian Natural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.10; Bernard Lightman, *Victorian Popularisers of Science: Designing Nature for New Audiences,* 2nd edn (London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p.169.

that one would have entered Hardy's window at midnight. [69] Hardy's use of the term more likely reflects Wood's definition of the dumbledore as a flying, humming insect, although Wood spells it differently as 'Dumble-Dor', further categorizing it as '*Geotrupes stercorarius*, popularly known as the DOR BEETLE, the FLYING WATCHMAN, the DUMBLE-DOR, and similar names, according to the locality in which it lives'. [70] It is distinguished by Wood as being 'sometimes glossed with green or blue, and rich shining-violet beneath' and 'the male having on the inner side of the front tibia a single erect spine' (p.118). Wood also lists 85 types of Moths, including the 'lovely Long-horn Moths […] a truly magnificent insect' which possesses wings that 'are singularly beautiful, but when it is examined by the microscope its splendor absolutely baffles description' (p.518). Wood urged his readers to examine such creatures with a careful eye, stating that a naturalist 'will see as much beauty in a snake, spider, or toad, as in any of those animals which we are accustomed to consider models of beauty'.[71] This credo was also adhered to by Hardy. In his notes he outlined how 'The business of the poet and the novelist is to show the sorriness underlying the grandest things, and the grandeur underlying the sorriest things' (*LIFE*, p.178), and, like Wood, his vivid treatment of insects in 'An August Midnight' gifts us the latter quality.

The description 'horned, winged and spined', however, was probably not derived from Hardy's empirical observation. While antennae and spines are visible to the unaided

[69] West, p.86.
[70] John George Wood, *Insects at Home: Being a Popular Account of All Those Insects Which Are Useful or Destructive, And Minutely Describing Their Structure, Habits, and Transformations* (New York: John B. Alden, 1884), p.118 <https://archive.org/details/insectsathomebei00wood/page/n5/mode/2up> (accessed 4 Jul 2018). Further references are given after quotations in the text.
[71] Cited in Lightman, p.190.

eye, such descriptions were likely produced in part by the workings of his imagination. This quality was in turn likely indicative of several different factors. For example, if Hardy had experienced looking at insects through a microscope, or spent time looking at enlarged illustrations of them, then this may also have shaped how he imagined such insects. This creative aspect is indicative of the writings of religious naturalists such as Wood, Merrill observing that such texts attempted 'to juggle both balls at once: objective facts and personal response'.[72] In particular, Wood's personal eye for detail was not shaped by secular or Darwinian naturalism; his sense of natural wonder was deeply entwined with his Christian belief, holding the conviction that placing creatures under the microscope revealed God's design. Darwin's methods, as Moore observes, 'could never rule out the possibility of alternative explanations'. [73] This saw many clerical naturalists reject Darwin's theory of change and persist in their belief in fixity.[74]

Post-Darwinian naturalism can be understood as conflicted, two major competing positions being natural history and natural theology, exemplified, as Holmes notes, by Darwin's image of the tree of life and the Natural History Museum in London. While the former shows nature in continual change, the latter, likened to a cathedral, was, Holmes observes 'dedicated to the wonders of God's creation, with side chapels offering an index to all life'.[75] Wood's categorization of natural creatures can be seen in this way, with Lightman noting that Wood's 'discussion of religious themes is often reinforced by the

[72] Merrill, p.185.
[73] Moore, p.196.
[74] Moore, p.215.
[75] John Holmes, 'Natural History, Evolution and Ecology: The Biological Sciences' in *The Routledge Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century British Literature and Science*, ed. by John Holmes and Sharon Ruston (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 331-356 (p.333).

inclusion of vivid visual images. His best-selling *Common Objects of the Country* opens by drawing an analogy between learning to read the Bible and learning to read nature'. [76] For Wood, placing creatures within a religious natural framework not only accentuated their beauty but influenced his literary and visual representations of them as objects of wonder. For example, in *Insects at Home* Wood describes the world of insects as full of 'variety and brilliancy of colour', and 'when placed under the revealing lens of the microscope, absolutely blazing with natural jewelry'. [77] The world of the small thus shined with such beauty, colour and purpose because, for Wood, it was representative of God's power.

Wood's power of imaginative description was also clearly attractive for Hardy, despite his Darwinian position. He recorded in his notes a number of passages from *Insects at Home*, including Wood's description of the beetle which 'blazes with gem-like hues, almost dazzling in their splendour' (*LN I*, p.33). Hardy additionally notes Wood's accounts of insectoid parts which he brings vividly to life, describing 'Compound eyes – a vast number of facets, like a multiplying glass – the eyes of beetles, butterflies' (*LN I*, p. 33). *Insects at Home* was originally published in 1872, and this quotation may possibly have influenced Hardy's 1875 note in which he described 'certain insects around me as magnified by the microscope: creatures like elephants, flying dragons, etc' (*LIFE*, p.110). Hardy's line 'horned, winged and spined' appears similarly fantastical, the descriptions reminiscent of his 'elephants, flying dragons', as if he had imagined glimpsing them through a microscope.

[76] Lightman, p.189.
[77] Wood, p. 2.

Wood's depiction of insects therefore reflects the ways in which the microscope and imaginative interpretation could be conflated in nineteenth-century texts. Many who used the device held it as a form of visual phantasmagoria, an imaginative entertainment akin to popular magic lantern shows of the time. [78] Martin Willis holds that 'Microscopic vision, then, was represented as both the actualization of what had previously only been imagined and the starting point for a new process of imaging what might still be out of visual reach.' [79] This tension between microscopically real and imagined realms is also illustrated in the literature and novels of the late Victorian era.[80] The fantastical term 'dragons' used by Hardy appears indicative of a mind inspired by the general reading of literary works which contained imaginary creatures.

Hardy's part empirical, part-imaginative representations of life, therefore, illustrates not just his interest in natural history but also his more general artistic interests. We gain the sense of these creatures as being artistically fashioned as creations by Hardy's speaker, depicted as costumed actors entering a stage. Hardy describes his study as 'a scene', and his use of 'enter', followed by a dash, resembles stage directions for a play. Due to the strangeness of the creature's description, however, they at first seem ill-omened, and anticipate tragedy. The three 'winged, horned, and spined –' creatures, for instance, faintly remind us of the events in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, where the titular character is hailed upon the heathland as 'Thane of Cawdor' and 'King' by the three witches. [81] In 'An August

[78] Martin Willis, *Vision, Science and Literature, 1870-1920: Ocular Horizons* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), p.25.
[79] Willis, p.13.
[80] Meegan Kennedy, 'Technology', *The Routledge Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century British Literature and Science*, pp. 311-328 (p.320).
[81] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* in *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works,* pp. 975-1000 (I.3.47-48).

Midnight', Hardy's three insects enter his house from the surrounding heath. Hardy also bookends 'Horned, winged and spined' with a second dash, and this effect serves to distinctly accentuate the strangeness of the creatures' description. Described as such, they are, as Holmes observes 'like devils in a medieval fresco'. [82]

While these creatures appear strange, and at first ill-omened, they are also vividly alive, and further connect to Hardy's Gothic influences. In 'The Nature of the Gothic' Ruskin makes the distinction between Venetian 'base grotesqueness' and the Northern Gothic style which exemplifies 'that magnificent condition of fantastic imagination'.[83] This is more specifically explained in *Modern Painters*, where, as Lucy Hartley notes, Ruskin's third, most noble category of the grotesque is explained as that which artistically represents what the imagination cannot fully grasp. [84] In the first stanza, therefore, rather like 'The Darkling Thrush', Hardy's amplification of natural creatures appears to relate to Gothic principles, and the imaginative representation of that which, while being real, cannot be fully understood by the speaker. While Hardy's ideas bring creatures vividly to life, they exemplify a strangeness which illustrates a sense of contrast from the world of the observer. This emphasis upon difference, and the poem's changing meter, further connects to Hardy's reading of Ruskin, who emphasized the importance of '*Changefulness*, or Variety' as a counterbalance to symmetry. [85] Ruskin argues that, juxtaposed against necessary monotony, 'change or variety is as much a necessity to the human heart and brain in buildings as in

[82] Holmes, *Darwin's Bards*, p.157.
[83] Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, p.173; p.239.
[84] Cited in Lucy Hartley, ''Griffinism, Grace and All': the Riddle of the Grotesque in John Ruskin's *Modern Painters*', *Victorian Culture and the Idea of the Grotesque*, pp.81-96 (p.89).
[85] Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, p.164.

books'. [86] In 'An August Midnight', the monotony of the poem's opening proves similarly functional, the quietness of the previous scene serving to emphasize the entrance of the strangely 'winged, horned and spined' insects.

The second line of the first stanza, 'And the beat of a clock from a distant floor' is anapestic, conveying a sense of steadiness but also predictability and drag, which accentuates the sense of time passing slowly. While this line has a regular timed beat the next line is irregular. The third line begins with the same rhythm, but then shifts abruptly to iambs as the insects make their entrance. The anapestic 'On this scene' with its lingering stress, is immediately followed by the three stressed words 'winged,' 'horned' and 'spined', creating a rising and falling, more awkward stress. The hyphens and caesurae also serve to accentuate this stop-start feel, further conveying a sense of strangeness which contrasts the more rhythmic flow which preceded it. This illustrates the unpredictable movement of such strange creatures. Yet, Hardy's form indicates something more profound than mere strangeness, and this effect is analogous to the way in which Ruskin compared architecture to poetry, observing that in verses 'there is something else than rhythm. The verses were neither made to order, nor to match'. [87] This 'something', for Ruskin, is where both architecture and poetry afford pleasure, so that 'great art, whether expressing itself in words, colours, or stones, does *not* say the same thing over and over again'. [88] Comparing the change between Hardy's second and third lines illustrates, other than 'the same thing', this sense of 'something else' to which Ruskin alludes. In 'An August Midnight', the

[86] Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, p.167.
[87] Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, p.166.
[88] Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, p.166.

changefulness further intimates more than the creature's strangeness. As their descriptions jar with the slow, monotonous, mechanistic pace of the earlier line, Hardy's stanza conveys the powerful feeling that these beings are vitally alive.

This sense of the insects' strange existence is softened as the fifth line of the first stanza indicates a shift in mood away from the Gothic, towards an interconnected personification which joins the world of the insects and the human observer. Hardy's speaker notices, ''mid my page', as the poem approaches its half-way point, 'there idly stands | A sleepy fly, that rubs its hands'. The insect's perceived idleness contrasts the busy industry of the writer, proving disruptive, and yet the softer depiction of the fly here is, unlike the strange 'horned, winged and spined' insects, more anthropomorphically reassuring and also offers a sense of kinship between insects and humans. This emphasis on perceived physical and behavioural similarity, and indeed on the connections between very different species, is frequently encountered in Darwin's work. In *The Origin*, Darwin discussed natural competition and selection by emphasising how different species shared essentially the same biological patterns, noting how 'the structure of every organic being is related, in the most essential yet often hidden manner, to that of all other organic beings'. [89] As I discussed in the introduction, Darwin's theory played an important role in Hardy's own perception of the interconnected morality of the natural world. In a 1910 *Evening Standard* unsigned article, Hardy's 'insistence on the rights of animals' are described, in his view, as having 'assumed a new aspect in his regard since the Darwinian theory showed the kinship of all animal creation' (*PV*, p.315).

[89] Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, p. 127.

Hardy's poetry of personification can therefore be placed within the context of Darwin's influence. The fly is spatially connected to the speaker, and Hardy projects his own sleepiness and his own rubbing hands onto his perception of the insect which co-inhabits his writing study. Hardy's personification of creatures through their connection to human dwellings is also encountered elsewhere in Hardy's poetry, especially where he wishes to elicit a sense of warmth and empathy for them. In *The Dynasts* (1904-06-08), at the Battle of Waterloo, for example, Hardy's speaker personifies small creatures in domestic terms, describing the 'mole's tunneled chambers' and the 'hedgehog's household' (*DY*, p.651). Hardy anthropomorphizes them through images of home and hearth, so that they appear more real to us than the impersonal advancing armies who threaten to crush them underfoot.

This anthropomorphic association between human and animal habitats is also a common feature of Wood's writings. This should not be considered paradoxical, as while the aims of Darwin's *The Origin* were directly opposed to the position of natural theology, such works shared a similar rhetorical approach. [90] Merrill, for example, notes that 'Natural history texts are grounded in fact, but their tone is not scientific. They employ rhetorical strategies'. [91] The Romantic writing style of Darwin's *The Origin*, with its personified accounts of animals and insects, illustrated neither 'religion or secularity: it is that Darwin's relation to nature, at every stage of his life, was romantically intense'. [92] This romanticism was, as David J. Depew observes, 'imbibed from the youth culture of his day', which can

[90] Merrill, p.51-52.
[91] Merrill, p.53.
[92] George Levine, *Darwin The Writer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 7.

be specifically connected to the influence of Wordsworth, whose religious poetry was, John Addington Symonds stated, decidedly 'congenial to the moods of men powerfully influenced by scientific ideas.'[93]

Wood can also be placed in this content; he outlined that it was his 'endeavour to make his works anecdotal and vital rather than merely anatomical and scientific'. [94] This saw his insects brought warmly to life through their abodes and operations being described anthropomorphically. Lightman observes, for example, how Wood, in an article on "Masonic Symbols" for the *Freemason's Quarterly Magazine* (1854) 'discussed the parallels between a beehive (one of the emblems of the Craft) and a lodge of Freemasons'. [95] In *Insects at Home*, Wood described his interactions with a nest-building Carder Bee, the naturalist erecting 'a small hut of twigs and leaves' around it, finally causing it to emit 'an angry hum'. [96] Wood depicts insects' behavior, and his interactions with them, in terms of his own anthropomorphic schemes of perception. In 'An August Midnight', the fly's actions are similarly personified through its associations with human spaces. It is imagined by the speaker to mirror the human observer, becoming, as the following stanza informs us, a 'guest', a house visitor entering the poet's abode. The second stanza further enforces a sense of wider social interaction, informing us, 'Thus meet we five'. This reminds us again of Hardy's note, possibly influenced by Wood's writings, of sitting under a tree surrounded by insects, to which he concludes 'And I feel I am by no means alone' (*LIFE*, p.110). The first stanza of 'An August Midnight' therefore illustrates Hardy's complex artistic and

[93] Cited in Levine, *Darwin the Writer*, p.5; Cited in Ryan, p.9.
[94] Merrill, p. 181.
[95] Lightman, p.184.
[96] Wood, p. 370.

scientific influences, but also the brighter ways in which he employs them poetically to illustrate a sense of natural kinship.

The four insects change from strange Gothic figments of the speaker's imagination to become familiarized companions. In the first stanza, Hardy's poem moves in six lines from one type of creative representation to another, indicating two general stages of perception, strangeness and anthropomorphism, or contrast and connection. In both cases in this first stanza, such creatures are brightly brought to life by the poet, illustrating, yet again, Hardy's creative amplification of natural creatures. Further, Hardy's first stanza, in shifting from one imaginative state to another, illustrates not just the vibrancy of the creatures he represents, but how they can temporarily offer a sense of connection for the speaker. Even more than this, in marking such a mental shift in perception, Hardy's poem more profoundly illustrates how the human mind views such creatures in a series of different stages. Firstly, newly unfamiliar creatures may be perceived by the observer as strange or grotesque, and secondly, upon recognizing them, the human brain will quickly accommodate them within an anthropocentric and spatial schematic. In doing so, such things can then exist in tandem with the world of the observer. Hardy's first stanza, in illustrating these two changing representations, also intimates a third and more profound vein of thought. He demonstrates that the human viewer creatively shapes what he or she sees, and, further, that human knowledge itself is a creative act.

Hardy's deeper awareness of the way in which the human mind arranges the world it sees again connects to the legacy of Darwin. His theory of evolution introduced for many scientists, writers and poets, as Levine has observed, an awareness of a world where 'it is

the mind itself, not nature, that creates order'. [97] This can be seen as an important moment in intellectual culture which, as Angelique Richardson notes, 'set in train an epistemological revolution'. [98] In her analysis of Darwin's role in the bringing about the end of essentialism, Richardson shows how, in *The Origin*, Darwin himself saw species classification as 'an artificial convenience'. [99] Darwin's mentally created order provided a new way of understanding how meaning was made, and how such scientific constructs could be viewed in the same way as artistic production.

Hardy's views on science, knowledge and perception as imaginative ideas are demonstrated in poetry that directly references Darwinism. In 'Drinking Song' (1928) (*CP III*), for example, Darwin is featured in the sixth stanza of this nine verse poem:

> Next this strange message Darwin brings,
> (Though saying his say
> In a quiet way);
> We all are one with creeping things;
> And apes and men
> Blood-brethren,
> And likewise reptile forms with stings.
> (1985 ll.46-52)

[97] Levine, *Darwin the Writer*, p.118.
[98] Angelique Richardson, 'Against Finality: Darwin, Mill and the End of Essentialism', *Critical Quarterly*, 53 (4) (2011), 21-44 (p.24) <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8705.2011.02020.x> (Accessed 16 June 2018).
[99] Richardson, 'Against Finality: Darwin, Mill and the End of Essentialism', p. 25.

This juxtaposition of 'blood-brethren' and 'apes and men' connects to Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1871). Hardy's reference to Darwin's ideas, amongst others, also helps him to strip away Christian religious theory bit by bit. In addition, while referencing Darwin's evolutionary idea, and the connections between 'apes and men', the structure of 'Drinking Song' also indicates the poet's wider awareness that Darwin's theory is itself an imaginative thought. The 'Darwin verse', and indeed each of the nine verses of 'Drinking Song', is followed by the chorus, 'Fill full your cups: feel no distress; | 'Tis only one great thought the less!' (ll.17-18). From the poem's title and the chorus it is readily ascertainable that although Hardy's poem diminishes religious beliefs, he ultimately proposes having a drink rather than anguishing excessively. This is therefore a poetic mock lament for the passing of great thoughts rather than a bitter lamentation. Just as the singer displays no sorrow at the blood-ties which connect humans and stranger creatures, so no pessimism is displayed in observing that such distinctions are ultimately human created systems of thought.

While Hardy never met Darwin, he encountered his 'bulldog', T. H. Huxley, in June 1878 at a social gathering and recorded his impression of him 'as a man who united a fearless mind with the warmest of hearts and the most modest of manners' (*LIFE*, p.125). He also recorded short fragments from Huxley's *Science and Culture and Other Essays* (1881) in his notes, documenting the passage where Huxley proposed that '[t]he struggle for existence holds as much in the intellectual as in the physical world. A theory is a species of thinking, & its right to exist is co-extensive with its power of resisting extinction by its rivals' (*LN I*, p146). Hardy's recording of Huxley's comment on the perilous existence of

theoretical ideas reflects the structure of 'Drinking Song', where a series of theories replace each other, stanza by stanza. Rather like how Darwin's theory illustrated how scientific ideas could be seen as forms of artistic production, the idea of science as an art was also observed by Huxley, who connected the two directly in his essay 'On the Physical Basis of Life' (1868). In describing how protoplasm provided the mutual building blocks for ostensibly different lifeforms, Huxley rhetorically questioned 'What community of faculty can there be between the brightly-coloured lichen […] and the painter' for whom 'it is instinct with beauty, or the botanist, whom it feeds with knowledge?' [100]

Two things, one explicit and the other less so, are evident here in Huxley's statement: firstly, lichen and humans both possess the same protoplasm, and secondly painters and scientists each have valuable ways of seeing such phenomena. Huxley equated human knowledge and creativity much more closely in the 'Prolegomena' to *Evolution and Ethics* (1893), describing organization and control of nature as a '"state of Art", thus created in the state of nature by man'. [101] For Huxley, all human works were termed 'works of art, or artifice, by way of distinguishing them from the products of the cosmic process, working outside man' (p.11). At the same time, Huxley reminds the reader that 'evolution is not an explanation of the cosmic process, but merely a generalized statement of the method and results of that process' (p.6). Such scientific theory can thus be seen as an approximation towards understanding particular non-human caused processes and effects.

[100] Thomas Henry Huxley, *On the Physical Basis of Life* (New Haven: The College Courant, 1869), p.5 <https://archive.org/details/onphysicalbasiso00huxlrich/page/n15/mode/2up> (accessed 19 Aug 2018).
[101] Thomas Henry Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics, Evolution & Ethics and Other Essays* (London Macmillan & Co, 1895), pp.1-116, p.9 <https://archive.org/details/a588314000huxluoft/page/n5/mode/2up> (accessed 19 Apr 2018). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Hardy listed Huxley along with Darwin among his main influences (*CL VI*, p.259), and their deeper effect upon his poetry is shown in cases such as 'Drinking Song', which displays an awareness of scientific perception as an evolving human construct. Thus, in Hardy's poem, Darwin's theory is listed, along with the ideas of Thales, Copernicus, Hume, Cheyne, and Einstein, as a passing series of concepts, which, the final chorus informs us, will gradually disappear as new ways to view the world will emerge. The final chorus, however, is unbowed at this prospect, informing us cheerfully, 'Fill full your cups; feel no distress | At all our great thoughts shrinking less' (ll.80-81). What is most significant here is that, as the final line concludes it upliftingly tells us, 'We'll do a good deed nevertheless!' (l.82)

This same meta-awareness, coupled with a similar lack of distress, is encountered in the second stanza of 'An August Midnight'. The speaker's growing cognizance of the creative nature of human meaning leads him to calmly ponder the creatures that lie beyond it. The insects are placed in direct opposition to human semantic order; this is represented in the poem in the form of time, writing and light, depicted as 'a clock', a 'page' and 'a shaded lamp'. In standing outside of such systems, the insects represent an unreason and 'thus', for the poet, 'besmear my new-penned line' and 'bang at the lamp and fall supine'. Rather than conveying a sense of pessimism at this contrast, 'An August Midnight' offers a sense of appreciation for the lives and perspectives of such creatures. Further, the speaker's specific insights enhance both subject and object. These juxtapositions between different worlds are enhanced by the second line of the second stanza, which details how five lifeforms meet, 'At this point of time, at this point in space', illustrating the arbitrary nature of 'a clock', the

human system of time. This is more directly indicated in the eighth verse of 'Drinking Song', where Einstein's theory of the relativity of time is referenced as proving 'That there's no time, no space, no motion' (l.67). In later life, Hardy became interested in Einstein's theory of time and in 1923 recorded the word 'Relativity' (*LIFE*, p.453) in his notes. Hardy's reference to this subject in 'Drinking Song' may indicate that Einstein's theory, to him, seemed to reflect his own earlier treatment of time as relative to the perceiver. Indeed, Hardy's 'An August Midnight' was composed long before Einstein's theories were published, and yet, in this poem, the sense of space and time is similarly indicated as relative, being dependent upon each creature's perspective.

While Hardy's 'An August Midnight' seems to illustrate the arbitrary nature of human knowledge, it also enhances, through the speaker's thoughts, the vibrancy of nature. The value of each creature's relative spatial and time perspective is indicated through the way in which the second line of the second stanza, 'At this point of time, at this point in space', follows a similar and yet contrasting theme and pattern of stress to the second line of the first stanza. While 'And the beat of a clock from a distant floor' concerns measured, chronological human time, 'At this point of time, at this point of space' indicates time as contained within individual realms of perception. This sense is indicated by the meter; the line begins with an anapest, but, unlike 'And the beat of a clock from a distant floor', is followed by an iamb, and, following a caesura, which breaks up the sense of flow and continuity, the pattern repeats a second time. This creates a less monotonous, regular timed beat, which accentuates a sense of plurality of time perception, further indicating the way in which chronological systems of time are singular to humans and thus artificial. In 'An

August Midnight', the changefulness further intimates not just the strangeness of such creatures, but how they may operate, in vibrantly alive ways, upon a different chronological or semantic scale to Hardy's speaker.

Further, in the poem's conclusion, the speaker directly questions and contests the Biblical categorization of such creatures as inferior, asking '"God's humblest, they!" I muse. Yet why?' In this way, the speaker's perception at the poem's conclusion directly juxtaposes the Christian perception of such creatures. Natural historians such as Wood may have sought to document the vibrancy of insects as a way of revealing God's design, but meeker creatures were considered subordinate to humans in religious scripture. Hardy's use of the term 'creeping things' in 'Drinking Song' also appears to juxtapose the authenticity of scripture, 'creeping things' being taken from The Bible. [102] In placing 'apes and men' and 'creeping things' side by side in 'Drinking Song', Hardy's poem contrasts the Biblical description of such creatures, taking the Darwinian view that all things have evolved from a common ancestor. In doing so, Hardy also offers a biological alternative to the Lamarckian evolutionary belief of Alfred, Lord Tennyson. In Tennyson's 'In Memoriam' the narrator envisages a 'Nature, red in tooth and claw', which humans can transcend by letting 'the ape and tiger die'. [103] Instead, in Hardy's 'Drinking Song' blood is not spilt but biologically intermingled. The apes are not left to die but are intrinsically bound to man, and indeed reptiles, through common blood-ties. While there is no sense of religious transcendence, therefore, there is a strong sense of commonality between creatures. Moreover, the stanza's

[102] Genesis 5.24; Leviticus 5.29-31.
[103] Alfred Lord Tennyson, 'In Memoriam A H.H', *Selected Poems*, ed. by Christopher Ricks (London: Penguin Classics, 2007) pp.96-199, (p.135.l.15; p.186. l.28).

fourth line, ‘And likewise reptile forms with stings,’ appears to present some slippage or conflation of terms between reptiles and insects; while reptiles do not possess stings, insects do, the fourth line economically creating a bond or bridge between the two species in just four words. This allusion to the commonality of all creatures is further underscored by the final stanza’s direct human/insect connection which describes how humans are ‘like butterflies | Of many dyes’ (ll.74-75). This Darwinian account is less violent and dramatic than Tennyson’s verse where nature is ‘red in tooth and claw’. Man is physiologically connected as brethren to all creatures, including rather unedifying, ‘creeping’ life forms, but in instructive ways which fail to horrify. This sense of how, in Hardy’s ‘Drinking Song’, taxonomical connections between ‘men’ and ‘creeping things’ ultimately fail to cause concern is accentuated, as already discussed, by the way in which Hardy’s poem indicates how all such categorizations, religious and scientific, are, as T.H. Huxley also observed, systems of thought. Hardy’s speaker, therefore, grasps that all human systems of use, such as time, writing, scientific theory and religious thought, are ultimately creative tools of meaning. At the same time, he also affirms that these things should not be mourned too seriously.

This awareness, therefore, that the insects in ‘An August Midnight’ are not ‘God’s humblest’ ensures a greater secular reverence for such creatures. Hardy’s speaker emphasizes this in his concluding descriptions of the insects, avoiding imagery that is artistic, spiritual or scientifically specific. Instead, the poem’s final line reads ‘They know Earth-secrets that know not I’, with the teller placing sole importance upon Earth rather than either heaven or the human world of ideas. This grounded, corporeal effect, along with the

recognition that other systems of human meaning such as time and writing are arbitrary, creates a more visceral sense of connection with nature which does not need to draw upon scientific systems of categorization or theological belief. The speaker becomes appreciatively cognizant of such creatures not as 'God's humblest', nor strangely 'horned, winged and spined', nor as anthropomorphically 'sleepy', or indeed taxonomically categorised as 'A longlegs, a moth, and a dumbledore' but instead as equal, Earth-sharing creatures.

As Hardy's speaker confesses, however, the thought processes of such creatures are unknowable. Elsewhere, he articulated this more clearly, maintaining in an 1892 letter to Roden Noel that 'Each is, to all knowledge, limited to his own frame', and continuing, 'you cannot find the link (at least I can't) of one form of consciousness with another' (*CL I*, p.262). For Anna West, Hardy's poem emphasizes the division which exists between the speaker-perceiver and the observed insects. Yet, unlike the third-person structure of his novels, establishing an equal plurality of voices, a panorama of perspective, within the restrictive framework of a personal poem, is impossible. Instead, the view of the world seen through the perspective of Hardy's speaker affords a narrower but deeper vista of perception, which appears to reflect his 1866 note:

> A widely appreciative mind mostly fails to achieve a great work from pure far-sightedness. The very clearness with which he discerns remote possibilities is, from its nature, scarcely ever co-existent with the microscopic vision demanded for tracing the narrow path that leads to them. (*LIFE*, p.56)

This emphasis on microscopic rather than panoramic perception restricts the personal speakers in Hardy's poetry and, at the same time, enhances intensely powerful flashes of inner awareness about the world outside. Like the teller of 'The Darkling Thrush', Hardy's speaker in 'An August Midnight' mentally stands upon a threshold of perception, but in the latter poem his awareness of what lies beyond his vision is more profound. What Hardy's speaker does strikingly achieve, therefore, whilst being unavoidably locked within his own perspective, is deduce that other equally important but unknowable perspectives on life do exist. This basic grasp of the limits of our human perception, such as how we are forced to deduce what we see, and further, how life exists existentially outside of our cognizance, reflects a mature understanding of how we realistically visualise the world. This is what reading Hardy's poetry of nature gifts us, because such mental aspects appear deeply familiar to our own human experiences of sense perception. Moreover, Hardy's use of a personal speaker, which poetically emphasizes the restrictive reality of human perception, also by contrast makes his implied appreciation for such witnessed creatures all the more powerful. The less the observer is able to see, that which he does feel, or through the poetry implies, is rendered by contrast all the more striking. Thus, while Hardy's poetic teller cannot truly reach an epiphany with the insects he glimpses, the existence of other ways of seeing, and indeed the vividly individual power of such perceptions, can be deduced and appreciated through his own reasoning.

This deductive aspect of Hardy's approach towards non-human intelligence further reflects his notebooks, and specifically his reading of the evolutionary biologist George

John Romanes. Hailed in 1886 by *The Times*, Romanes was described as 'the biological investigator upon whom in England the mantle of Mr. Darwin has most conspicuously descended'. [104] Romanes and Hardy attended Darwin's funeral in April 1881 (*LIFE*, p.158) and as both commenced membership of the London Savile Club from 1879 onwards they would almost certainly have known each other. [105] Certainly Romanes' popularly selling works on biology and evolution were known to Hardy, who documented in his notes a passage from Romanes' 'The World as an Eject' which was published in the *Continental Review* in 1886 (*LN I*, p. 174), the same year that Romanes was lauded by *The Times*. The term 'eject' was likely influenced by W.K. Clifford, whose further ideas on 'mind stuff' Hardy expressed an attraction to in 1892 (*CL I*, p.262). Clifford's definition of 'ejects' was explained in his article 'On the Nature of Things-in-Themselves', published in *Mind* in the January 1878 issue'. [106] Clifford noted that an element in itself, such as the inner conscious workings of a mind, was not empirically observable by one external to it. Humans, however, possessed the unique ability to be 'aware of consciousness in other members of the same species' describing such bodies not as an object but as 'an eject, an inferred existence which is "thrown out" of one's own consciousness'. [107]

This term 'eject' appeared to be developed by Romanes and applied towards animal consciousness. In his *Animal Intelligence* (1882) Romanes outlined that creatures' mental abilities could be deduced if one could 'proceed by analogy to infer from the observable

[104] Cited in Donald R. Forsdyke, *The Origin of Species Revisited. A Victorian who Anticipated Modern Developments in Darwin's Theory* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), p.221.
[105] Pleins, p.62; Greenslade, p.24.
[106] Timothy Madigan, *W.K. Clifford and "The Ethics of Belief"* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), p.59.
[107] Cited in Madigan, p.59.

activities of other organisms what are the mental operations that underlie them'. [108] In his 1886 'The World as an Eject' he more specifically differentiated between what he saw as objective qualities, which can be empirically perceived, and ejective qualities, which cannot. Ejects, according to Romanes, must be encountered through 'provisionally ascribing' meaning, so that 'the mind of animals, other people, or a superconscious "world as eject", can be ascribed through a knowledge of one's own mind'. [109] Essentially, while one cannot empirically prove that an animal has specifically innate mental or cognitive properties, one's objectivity being bound by one's sense perception, one can deduce, or as Romanes holds 'provisionally ascribe' properties to natural phenomena based on the model of one's own properties. In documenting Romanes 'objective' and his 'ejective' references (*LN I*, p.174) in his notebooks, Hardy specifically underlined these words.

This evolutionary affinity, tied to a common cognition, underpins Romanes' treatment of the natural world as illustrated in *Animal Intelligence*. Romanes describes how fish, for example, display emotion that 'corresponds with that which is distinctive of the psychology of a child about four months old'. [110] Of particular mention is the human-like curiosity displayed by fish, which 'is shown by the readiness, or even eagerness, with which fish will approach to examine any unfamiliar object'.[111] This sense of ejective affinity is illustrated by Hardy in his verse, such as in 'The Convergence of the Twain' (1914) (*CP II*), where fish are disturbed by the sunken Titanic, but, given voice by Hardy,

[108] George John Romanes, *Animal Intelligence* (London: Kegan Paul, 1882), p.2 <https://archive.org/details/animalintelligen00romauoft/page/n1/mode/2up> (accessed 6 Jul 2018).
[109] George John Romanes, 'The World as an Eject' in *The Contemporary Review*, 50 (1886) 44-59, (p.53; p.55) in *ProQuest* <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxye.bham.ac.uk/docview/1294593452?accountid=8630> (accessed 26 May 2018).
[110] Romanes, *Animal Intelligence*, p.242.
[111] Romanes, *Animal Intelligence*, p.247.

‘Gaze at the gilded gear | And query: “What does this vaingloriousness down here?”…’ (ll.14-15). Romanes also, like Darwin, ascribes ‘the existence of an aesthetic sense in animals’, further contending that ‘birds find some aesthetic pleasure in the sounds which they emit’. [112] Hardy’s musings on ’The Darkling Thrush’ also appear to intimate an attempt at ejective assumption regarding the practices of a species of bird which Romanes in his book describes as manifesting ‘a high degree of intelligence’. [113] As I already discussed, Hardy speculates cautiously whether the bird is relishing its own musical production, or whether there is something more profound underpinning the sound that he cannot understand. What remains unclear in this poem, however, is whether, if the ‘Hope’ exists, the thrush is itself aware of it, the conditional phrase ‘That I could think’ ambiguously preceding some hope ‘whereof he knew’.

This is not the case in ‘An August Midnight’, however, where in the final line the teller explicitly states, ‘They know Earth-secrets’, even if he is obviously unable, through his role as a personal speaker, to ascertain exactly what they might be. Metaphysical hope, tied to animals, is here replaced by a physical, secular awareness of such creatures’ sentient uniqueness. While a committed Darwinist, towards of the end of his life Romanes rediscovered his Christian faith. His theory of mind outlined in *Mind and Motion and Monism* (1895) sough to unite ‘in a higher synthesis the elements of both spiritualism and of materialism, […] which satisfies every act of feeling on the one hand, and of observation

[112] Romanes, *Animal Intelligence*, p.282.
[113] Romanes, *Animal Intelligence*, p.283.

on the other'. [114] Romanes' logical definition of ejects appears, therefore, mitigated by the return of his religious faith which served to invest his scientific theory with spiritual wonder. Hardy's more secular poetry contrasts this; by the conclusion of 'An August Midnight' the poet looks out deductively at a natural world that is clearly corporeal. Yet, while Hardy's speaker cannot empirically prove that such creatures know 'Earth-secrets', his stance can be compared to that of Romanes' ejects. The speaker, in 'provisionally ascribing meaning' based on the knowledge of his own mind, ejectively perceives that the insects possess a corporeal knowledge of things on a scale that humans do not.

Unlike the 'Thrush' poem, there appears no ambiguous possibility of metaphysical hope in 'An August Midnight', but instead a more satisfying and pleasurable understanding of what other creatures may possess that humans do not. This awareness also appears to indicate a reaction of satisfaction; the line 'Yet why?' with its emphatic ending-stopped question, directly challenges the preceding, reductive perception of insects as 'God's humblest'. While the creatures display a lack of awareness of the human world, one flying into the lamp and knocking itself out, Hardy's speaker looks beyond what they do not know, appearing to value instead things beyond human perception which they may know. He immediately follows his utterance 'God's humblest' with the juxtaposed affirmation that 'They know Earth-secrets', seeming to demonstrate Hardy's approval of insects' own unique qualities. This appreciative reaction appears to resemble the sentiments encountered in 'Let Me Enjoy' (*CP I*), where Hardy's speaker knows that nature has 'other aims than my delight' (l.4), but despite this awareness he issues the request to, 'Let me enjoy the earth

[114] George John Romanes, *Mind and Motion and Monism* (New York: Longmans, Green, & Co, 1895), p.27 <https://archive.org/details/mindmotionmonism00roma/page/n5/mode/2up> (accessed 6 Jul 2018).

no less' (l.1). Hardy's desire to enjoy nature, therefore, persists; this remarkable will to enjoy strikingly juxtaposes the speaker's awareness that creatures possess a vital force which is not religiously created for the purpose of human enjoyment. Similarly, in 'An August Midnight', despite the natural creatures' perceived ambivalence towards humans, the speaker does seem to strive to 'enjoy the earth no less'. The more Hardy's speaker perceives the strangeness of such creatures, the more this accentuates his continual appreciation of them. This final comprehension is the culmination of a complex thought act, in which the speaker has moved from creative depictions of strange insects, to a more comforting, personified account of them, to a deeper awareness of what human perception is. Finally, he becomes cognizant that these vibrant creatures possess perceptions that humans lack. It is here that the speaker gains a deeper sense of the wonder of the natural world, in which the insects are recognized as the sentient, corporeal equal of humans. Hence, the poem demonstrates Hardy's approving awareness of life's potential capacity to live, experience and enjoy life on its own terms.

As I have argued, Hardy's poems of nature offer counterbalance, comfort and comprehension, demonstrating an enjoyment of the natural world but also a sense of hope. In 'The Later Autumn', the speaker's perception of animals and insects, and their ostensible happiness, counterbalances a pessimistic state of mind. In 'The Darkling Thrush', the speaker's attempt at grasping meaning through observing the actions of animals offers the hopeful sense that they may possess some knowledge of the world beyond human perception. This creates the comforting possibility, if not the actual fulfilment, of hope, and allows for the act of hoping to be pursued. In 'An August Midnight', the speaker's

observation of such creatures leads to a more definite sense that they possess levels of perception beyond his own. This provides a contrast between the observer and the observed, and yet, as the speaker's scientific and theological systems of classification are placed in perspective, this also sees him achieve an appreciative comprehension of such creatures. This leads the personal speaker to affirm with a sense of secular approval that they possess the same level of importance as humans. In such moments of perception, it appears that for Hardy's poetic speakers, and for the poet himself, a profound appreciation and enjoyment of life is distinctly possible.

CHAPTER 2. THE CELEBRATION OF HUMAN RELATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

Hardy's representation of love has often been held to be intense by scholars, but also rather solipsistic and morbid. [1] Yet topics such as passion and companionship can also be seen as proxies for the way in which Hardy's poetry more generally celebrates the value of human life. While many of Hardy's poems deal with the importance of love, they can be separated into two major and interconnected tendencies. In this chapter I will argue that Hardy's poetic speakers strive to enjoy the importance of intense, heightened moments, which range from solipsistic fantasies to mutually enjoyed romance, while his poems also more consistently celebrate the endurance of commonplace types of human love such as familial and community affection.

In the first of these poetic tendencies, Hardy's speakers briefly encounter women who give occasion to solipsistic dreams, while several other poems focus upon moments of passion actually achieved between two people. A number of his poems amongst the former group display a rather androcentric perspective, admiring but also objectifying women from a distance, echoing the wish of the second stanza of 'Let Me Enjoy' (1909) (*CP I*) to enjoy 'a fair':

[1] See, for example, J. Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970); Michael Irwin, 'From Fascination to Listlessness: Hardy's Depiction of Love', *Reading Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Charles P. C. Pettit (London: Macmillan, 1998), pp.117-137. Marion Thain, *The Lyric Poem and Aestheticism: Forms of Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016, reprinted 2018), pp.164-165.

About my path there flits a Fair,

Who throws me not a word or sign;

I'll charm me with her ignoring air,

And laud the lips not meant for mine.

(ll.5-8)

Here Hardy's speaker describes encountering a beautiful girl in a street locale. He is ignored by her, leading to two possible implications: she may not be paying him any heed, her attention being elsewhere, or she may be deliberately ignoring him. Despite either of these unpromising possibilities, the speaker expresses the extraordinary desire to 'laud' her. He looks at her to charm himself, praising her lips while knowing that he cannot kiss them. His wish to enjoy reflects a pleasure which is entirely of his own making. Therefore the second stanza from 'Let Me Enjoy' indicates a mixture of solipsistic enjoyment but also irony at being cut off from a real person he can only envision. This aspect is also felt in similar poems where Hardy's speakers briefly encounter women and, failing to act, instead attempt to imagine that romantic opportunities were possible. This affords a compromised and ironic sense of enjoyment. Hardy's savouring of such intense moments is, therefore, more powerfully and convincingly demonstrated in poems where his speakers celebrate real moments of passion between two people.

In the second of these general poetic tendencies, Hardy celebrates less intense forms of love such as family, companionship and community. In them, his speakers

commemorate and preserve the actions of lovers and families. While Donald D. Stone has argued that Hardy's fiction demonstrates a pessimistic failure to provide substantial homes for his characters, this is not necessarily true of his poetry nor indeed of his general outlook. [2] Hardy's earliest poem, 'Domicilium', likely composed between 1857-1860, places great importance upon home and family. [3] Much later, in 1893 when Hardy visited the home of Sir Francis and Lady Jeune at Arlington Manor, he praised its ambiance, 'finding the house when they arrived as cheerful as the Jeunes' house always was in those days, Hardy saying that there was never another house like it for cheerfulness' (*LIFE*, p.276). Tellingly, 'cheerfulness' is a word rarely used by Hardy scholars, and yet this sensation can be clearly felt in a number of Hardy poems which deal with love, family and community. At the same time, Hardy's poems also demonstrate more hopefully how those individuals who pass away are able to leave their legacy, meaning that both rural traditions and character types will continue. I will demonstrate in the two sections of this chapter how Hardy's poetry of intense moments and commonplace companionship draws on his various readings to celebrate these dual aspects in a joyous or hopeful fashion.

2. THE INTENSITY OF THE MOMENT

Hardy's poetry fancifully admires briefly glimpsed women and also celebrates real moments of romantic passion in a number of personally or impersonally narrated pieces.

[2] Donald D. Stone, 'House and Home in Thomas Hardy', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 39 (3) (1984), 292-304 (p.303) <https://doi.org/10.2307/3044806> (accessed 18 May 2018).
[3] Dennis Taylor, 'The Chronology of Hardy's Poetry', *Victorian Poetry*, 37 (1) (1999), 1-58 (p. 36) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40003647> (accessed 25 June 2019).

While, as mentioned, several critics have seen Hardy's love poems as being ultimately rather pessimistic, Jane Thomas has detected moments of enjoyment in them. She observes that his speakers can reimagine memorable experiences, giving 'presence to what is absent, lost or lacking, and to secure it in the present and for the future'. [4] A number of Hardy's poems do appear to fancifully fill gaps in an empty present, using the images of briefly glimpsed or intensely encountered women in order to do so. But the poetic importance Hardy's speakers place upon intense moments in time also sees him celebrate mutually enjoyed moments of passion for having occurred. This helps us to trace a thematic arc in such poems from fanciful and ironised solipsism to memories of shared romance which help to add quality to the poet's existence. For Hardy, therefore, while a number of such poems are fanciful, his actual passionate experiences are deeply life-affirming. To feel sexual desire is to be intensely alive, even when those heightened moments of sensation may also involve disappointment and pain. This is noted explicitly in the poem 'He Inadvertently Cures His Love-Pains (Song)' (1925) (*CP III*), where the older speaker implores someone to fully 'restore | Those old sweet agonies again!' (ll.15-16)

In this section, I will argue that Hardy's poems frequently celebrate intense moments not merely as a way of imaginatively restoring the dead to life, but to savour such heightened emotions again and again. Several of these poems, which detail encounters with specific women, end with the speaker being unacknowledged. Despite the disappointment of Hardy's speakers, these poems emphasize their imaginative desire to enjoy such moments anyway. Indeed, in several poems, the termination of such moments allows the

[4] Jane Thomas, *Thomas Hardy and Desire: Conceptions of the Self* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.191.

solipsistic speaker to dream that a romantic encounter may have been possible when it likely was not. At the same time, Hardy's speakers appear to be aware of the ironic fact that they are merely spinning fantasies. These two aspects, I will argue, generally reflect the influence of George Meredith's 'Essay on Comedy' and more specifically Robert Browning's ironic treatment of procrastination. Elsewhere, a number of Hardy's poems celebrate intense moments in time where romance occurred, so that the speaker remembers intense happiness. While these poems are not solipsistic, in some of them Hardy draws upon the imagination, comparing the vibrant aspects of sexual love to natural imagery such as landscapes, birds and flowers, but also to romantic myths. I will demonstrate how such aspects of his poetry reflect the influence of Browning, but also Charles Darwin, Percy Bysshe Shelley and Algernon Charles Swinburne.

The theme of admiring intensely from a distance, often stimulated by the briefest of encounters, is demonstrated in a number of Hardy's poems. Several of Hardy's earliest pieces of this type, for example, depict his momentary encounters with Dorset girls as a youth. While some of these very brief experiences, such as falling 'madly in love with a pretty girl who passed him on horseback' (*LIFE,* p.29), were carefully recorded in his notes, others were honoured in poems. For example, a 'game-keeper's pretty daughter, who won Hardy's boyish admiration' (*LIFE,* p.30) was celebrated in the poem 'To Lizbie Browne' (1901) (*CP I*). The third stanza of Hardy's poem celebrates her hair, asking 'Who else had hair | Bay-red as yours' (ll.14-15). The enduring memory of this girl also likely inspired the later published poem 'The Glimpse' (1917) (*CP II*), where Hardy's speaker chases the spectre of '–"A maid with red hair"' (l.10). Elsewhere, Hardy memorialises brief

encounters with grown women in poems such as 'In the Street (Song)' (1925) (*CP III*), 'The Rejected Member's Wife' (1909) (*CP I*) and 'Green Slates' (1925) (*CP III*).

What connects such poems is the speaker's failure to openly declare his feelings to the object of his desire, objectifying rather than interacting. This aspect of Hardy's poetry is problematic, as the women depicted in such poems function merely as signifiers which help shape the speaker's fantasies. Angelique Richardson has noted this androcentric aspect of Hardy's work in relation to *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), the title placing 'Elfride at the passive centre of the novel', so that, instead of looking out at the world, 'Elfride's eyes are for being "looked into"'. [5] This is also a prevalent aspect of *The Well-Beloved* (1897), where Jocelyn Pierston pursues a series of self-created, idealised images of women.

Several of the poems I will discuss in this section illustrate similar aspects, where male speakers objectify an uninterested or in some cases possibly even repulsed female individual. The only way in which such dreaming is possible is through the exclusion of the voices and opinions of the unknown women involved. At the same time, Hardy's speakers often appear aware of the imbalances between the viewer and perceived subject, displaying an ironic sense of humour which is self-mocking. For example, in 'The Letter's Triumph (A Fancy)' (1928) (*CP III*) a love letter sent to a young woman is humorously given the role of speaker, telling his male sender, 'And while you wait in hope and fear,' (l.16), that it is 'near her naked fingers, sleeve, or glove | I lie – ha ha! – all day' (l.21). The male suitor

[5] Angelique Richardson, ''Some Science Underlies All Art': The Dramatization of Sexual Selection and Racial Biology in Thomas Hardy's A Pair of Blue Eyes and The Well-Beloved', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 3, (2) (1998), 302-338 (p.307) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13555509809505967>

is mocked by the letter, which has proceeded farther than he has managed to do, ironically highlighting his current shortcomings.

The tragi-comic, ironic humour that permeates such poems, and which helps to balance outright pessimism, reflects George Meredith's 1877 lecture 'An Essay on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit'. Here, Meredith documented a number of comic moods but equated the best comedy as possessing a natural element which 'enters you like fresh air into a study'. [6] Hardy may have read the lecture when it was subsequently published in April 1877. He first met Meredith in 1869 at the offices of Chapman and Hall when he reviewed Hardy's now lost work *The Poor Man and the Lady* (*LIFE,* p.62), and Meredith was an early and enduring influence on the way in which Hardy softened his social satire. In a 1909 letter to Florence Henniker, Hardy praised the recently deceased Meredith's thought, remarking 'what he had to say was of the very highest' (*CL IV*, p.24), while further noting in 1927 the influence of Meredith's 'Comic Spirit' upon '[s]ome of his later contemporaries and immediate successors' (*PV*, p.470). These included Hardy himself, who wrote in his memorial poem 'George Meredith: 1828-1909' (*CP I*) that 'He was of those whose wit can shake | And riddle to the very core' (ll.7-8). In particular, Meredith counselled Hardy to be much more careful in his social criticism, Hardy's notes recording Meredith's criticisms of his text that 'The satire was obviously pushed too far' (*LIFE*, p.63). Attacking the bluntness of satire more generally in his essay, Meredith discussed how instead comedy should laugh 'through the mind', and not shy away from tragedy. [7] Indeed,

[6] George Meredith, *An Essay on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit* (London: Archibald Constable, 1905), p.93 <https://archive.org/details/essayoncomedyus00mere> (accessed 27 August 2019).
[7] Meredith, p.88.

for Meredith, the presence of tragedy could compliment comedy, noting that 'The stroke of the great humourist is world-wide, with lights of Tragedy in his laughter'. [8] This chimes with Hardy's own thoughts on this connection, writing in 1889 to John Addington Symonds that 'All comedy, is tragedy, if you only look deep enough into it' (*CL I*, p. 190).

More specifically, the tragi-comic quality demonstrated by a number of Hardy's procrastinating speakers is demonstrated in the verse of Robert Browning, another of his important influences, whom he was reading at the latest by 1868 (*LIFE*, p.59). Hardy highly valued Browning, noting in a 1901 letter 'how slowly & surely he is overtopping Tennyson' (*CL II*, p.293). Hardy's favourite poem of Browning's was 'The Statue and the Bust', published in *Men and Women* (1855), and in a 1902 article for the *Dorset Country Chronicle*, Hardy described, while holidaying in Florence, trying to locate the real the statue and bust featured in Browning's poem (*PV*, p.187-88). [9] Linda Shires argues that 'It is hardly surprising that Hardy's favourite Browning poem should have been "The Statue and the Bust," with its emphasis on the lost chances and postponed fulfilment'. [10] Browning's poem, however, is also a satire on human folly, and mocks human timidity rather than cursing cosmic fate. Hardy, according to a 1962 article in *Encounter*, is also quoted in 1919 as identifying with the main theme of the poem, noting, 'Procrastination, that's what it is, and there's nothing to be said about procrastination that is not in that

[8] Meredith, p.84.
[9] Linda M. Shires, 'Hardy's Browning: Refashioning the Lyric', *Victorian Poetry*, 50 (4) (2012) 583-603 (p.583). <https://doi.org/10.1353/vp.2012.0033> (accessed 29 July 2019).
[10] Shires, p.583.

poem'. [11] What Browning's poem tells us is not that fate or chance ruins lives, but that romantic possibilities exist, even if people may hesitate in such situations.

In some of Hardy's own poems of procrastination, such as 'A Thunderstorm in Town' (1914) (*CP II*) and 'Faintheart in a Railway Train' (1922) (*CP II*), such opportunities do not necessary exist, but their apparent solipsism is leavened with self-delusion and humour. Here, his speakers imagine that a romantic liaison could have occurred if they had been bolder and had seized the moment. It is precisely the passing of these moments, together with the complete exclusion of a female voice, which allows the speakers to dream of what may have been. Hardy's enjoyment of such intense moments appears compromised, and the speaker's tone in these pieces, rather like Browning's poem, is tragi-comic and bathetic, although for somewhat different reasons.

The first of these poems, 'A Thunderstorm in Town', dated '1893' (p.18), likely describes an encounter with Mrs. Florence Henniker, with whom Hardy became infatuated in that year, describing her on their first meeting as 'charming' (*LIFE*, p. 270). The speaker describes his delight at the pair being momentarily ensconced within a hansom cab during a rain storm. The first stanza tells:

She wore a new 'terra-cotta' dress,
And we stayed, because of the pelting storm,
Within the hansom's dry recess,
Though the horse had stopped; yea, motionless

[11] Cited in James Gibson, ed., *Thomas Hardy: Interviews and Recollections* (London: MacMillan, 1999), p.115.

We sat on, snug and warm.

(ll.1-5)

Time here is natural and elemental rather than mechanical and human-made, the occupants of the cab being compelled by the rain storm to remain within regardless of their schedules. The stanza therefore conveys the impression of time slowing down and, for the romantic speaker, intensifying. Hardy's use of frequent commas lends the poem an unhurried, dilated feel. The fourth line specifically emphasises this effect and the speaker's delight at the situation. This is illustrated by the word 'yea', with its elongated vowel sound, being followed by a comma, and the word 'motionless'. The line is enjambed, continuing into the next as 'We sat on', essaying the sensation that this timeless, 'motionless' state is persisting. Through these effects, Hardy creates an intense, powerful mood, in which the speaker and the woman sit together uninterrupted by the passing of seconds and minutes.

Yet the speaker's pleasure ends in the second stanza as, rather suddenly, 'Then the downpour ceased' (l.6). The speaker expresses what appears to be regret at his failure to act, as he bemoans in the final couplet that 'I should have kissed her if the rain | Had lasted a minute more' (l.10-11). The use of 'should' in this context is uncertain, rather like the character of the speaker himself. 'Should' can be read as something which the speaker definitely would have done, only given more time, or indeed merely what he ought to have done, or wished to have done, but regrettably didn't or couldn't do. Neither reading, however, convinces us that the speaker definitely would have acted.

Our understanding of the poem, and the speaker's enjoyment and regret, is complicated further when we view the scene from the woman's perspective. In the second stanza she is described as having 'sprang to her door' (l.8), indicating an escape of sorts. The speaker's enjoyment is hence not matched by the 'She', who likely did not wish to be placed in this particular situation. What appears evident is the sense of the speaker as entitled in his infatuation, projecting fantasies upon someone who is uninterested in him. Complicating things further, however, the speaker also seems conscious that this is the case. His feeling of 'sharp sad pain' (l.6) as the door opens, and his description of her as having 'sprang' out of the carriage indicates not just his sadness at the moment's passing, but his awareness that she likely wished to evade him. What emerges, therefore, when we view things from both perspectives, is a male speaker attempting to fantasise about things he knows cannot be. This provides the poem with a complex mood in which, due to the speaker's self-delusion, feelings of solipsistic enjoyment, poignancy, and bathetic comedy are present.

The ways that Hardy contrasts time measurement in the first and second stanzas is also significant, and help us to further understand the poem's bathetic aspect. While the first stanza deals with natural, elemental time and extends fancied possibilities, the second stanza, which concerns the speaker's sadness and regret, refers to very brief units of numerical time. What the speaker had been too timid to do during the rainstorm, he is unlikely to have done if it had lasted just a minute longer. After already enjoying what appeared an abundance of time with the woman, therefore, the speaker's claim that he should have acted if he had possessed 'a minute more' appears ironic.

The speaker's final two lines are very similar to the wedding feast scene in Browning's 'The Statue and the Bust' (1855) where the Duke and the Lady exchange a kiss. Browning tells us 'Face to face the lovers stood | A single minute and no more' whereupon 'the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred, | As the courtly custom was of yore.' [12] Browning's two lovers, however, fail to build upon this brief kiss and procrastinate over the course of years. Thus, Hardy's rather Browningesque final couplet again appears bathetic; while his speaker fantasises that, given just a minute, romance was possible, the similarities with Browning's lines, and the ultimate message of his poem, say otherwise. While Hardy's speaker fails in the act of kissing, he is also denied the years afforded to Browning's lovers. The denial of this extra minute allows him to dream that, although unlikely, he may actually have done so.

Thus the sudden curtailment of this precious moment lends it a great significance for Hardy's inward-looking speaker. Its memory abides through the lingering power of its partly imagined possibility. The passing of the moment, never to return, allows Hardy's speaker to fancy that a kiss would have been possible, while likely knowing that had he attempted a kiss he would almost certainly have been rejected. Ultimately, Hardy's romantic imagining is only possible through the complete exclusion of the female voice. It is only in his solipsistic fantasies that the speaker can quasi-imagine and somewhat enjoy the thoughts of what might have been had this specific moment continued.

[12] Robert Browning, 'The Statue and the Bust', *Robert Browning's Poetry: A Norton Critical Edition*, 2nd edn, ed. by James F. Loucks and Andrew M. Stauffer (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), pp. 191-97, ll.43-44, ll.47-48.

This complicated aspect is further illustrated in poem 'Faintheart in a Railway Train' (*CP II*) which focuses upon the speaker's response to a glimpsed woman. Described as 'she' rather than her, the woman is the subject of the final line of the first stanza, implying an agency of sorts. At the same time, she does not notice the speaker and her perspective is not given:

At nine in the morning there passed a church,
At ten there passed me by the sea,
At twelve a town of smoke and smirch,
At two a forest of oak and birch,
And then, on a platform, she:

A radiant stranger, who saw not me.
I said, "Get out to her do I dare?"
But I kept my seat in my search for a plea,
And the wheels moved on. O could it but be
That I had alighted there!

In this poem the personal speaker describes, in mostly iambic tetrameter, passing familiar sights such as churches, the sea, a town and a forest. Hardy here connects the female subject of the poem with the rural landscapes he glimpses; the line 'At two a forest of oak and birch,' directly precedes the woman's appearance in the poem. Her position as an

objectified source of stimulus is indicated by the speaker's descriptions of the woman, she being, 'A radiant stranger, who saw not me'. Moreover, in emphasising the woman, the poet's use of time is again of crucial importance. As the carriage bears the speaker upon his journey, mechanical time also advances, each line proceeding in rather monotonous fashion, like the train, from 'At nine', 'At ten', 'At twelve', to 'At two'. In the fifth line of the stanza, however, where a desired woman appears, the time becomes non-specific. Instead the speaker tells us 'And then', creating the sense, like the first stanza of 'A Thunderstorm in Town', that this experience is timeless, and cannot be adequately measured, assigned to a particular period, or indeed categorised as finite. Here the meter shifts to a jolting three-beat line with two caesuras, creating an effect rather like the slowing of a carriage, but also of time dilating. This also serves to powerfully accentuate the unique effect of the woman he is about to witness, as he notices 'And then, on a platform, she'.

The episode resembles Hardy's earlier, 1868 notes regarding a journey aboard a steamer to Lulworth where he noticed 'A woman on the paddle-box steps' (*PMN*, p.34). While the woman does not notice Hardy he further describes her 'White feather in hat, brown dress, Dorset dialect. Classic features' (p.34-36). Her decision not to disembark appears to have caught Hardy by surprise; she fails to alight at Lulworth, being quickly borne away, so that he 'Saw her for the last time standing on deck as the boat moved off' (p.34). Similarly, in 'Faintheart' as Hardy briefly deliberates getting out, the train suddenly resumes its journey. This effect is accentuated by the meter; as the train accelerates away from the station, the iambs are replaced with anapaests in the eighth and ninth lines, creating a sudden change of pace. Further, the penultimate line tells us 'And the wheels

moved on. O could it but be' before running on into the next line's 'That I had alighted there!' With no endstopping, the ninth poetic line thus resembles the ongoing train line that bears the speaker away, giving us the sense of a train quickly picking up speed as it moves on. The juxtaposition of the first part of the ninth line, which describes the moving train, with the wistful nature of the second part, creates the effect of Hardy's speaker being quickly pulled away from the vision he had witnessed. Yet the structural emphasis placed upon 'O could it but be', hanging in separation between the previous sentence and the next line, seems to imply that, for the speaker, something is left unfinished and can imaginatively linger.

This thematically chimes with Robert Browning's poem 'The Last Ride Together' from *Men and Women* (1855), the same volume which contains 'The Statue and the Bust'. In this poem Browning's speaker describes his last coach ride with an unobtainable lover, the journey ambiguously and uncertainly moving between the worlds of the real and the imaginative. The speaker himself questioningly describes it as:

> The instant made eternity,–
> And heaven just prove that I and she
> Ride, ride together, for ever ride? [13]

[13] Robert Browning, 'The Last Ride Together', *Robert Browning's Poetry*, pp.201-4, ll.108-110.

In Hardy's 'Faintheart' the final lines can also be viewed as ambiguous, affording amongst their possibilities the teller's romantic belief that, by alighting on the station platform, a passionate dalliance may actually have been possible.

This enduring fantasy is again able to be imagined by Hardy's speaker because the intense moment passes. This allows him to fantasise that, but for procrastination, romance was possible, noting 'But I kept my seat in my search for a plea'. Further, Hardy's use of 'And' with 'then' in the fifth line of the first stanza, juxtaposed with a more exact cataloging of time in the first four lines, achieves a sense of continuation, moving from the past into the future. This is accentuated when we compare the entire fifth line, 'And then, on a platform, she:' with its numerical counterpart, 'That I had alighted there!' from the second stanza. Both lines use trimeter, creating a shorter, more focused, and heightened effect. The fifth line of the second stanza, when fully enjambed as 'O could it but be | That I had alighted there!' also implies a sense of openness, carrying several possible meanings. The lines may represent a lament for the past, or could mean that the poet retains the imaginative fancy that the moment, if replayed again, could have ended differently and romantically. At the same time, these lines also indicate the speaker's awareness of his solipsism, and the fact that the briefly glimpsed woman would not in reality correspond with his objectifying visions or indeed wish to return his sentiments. Yet this is not complete delusion, as the line 'O could it but be' can also be read as the speaker demonstrating his awareness of this position: namely that he is conjuring up an idealised reading of a brief visual experience and wishing that it were true.

What is optimistic about this poem, the earlier discussed 'A Thunderstorm in Town' and others of this type, is the moment's disappearance, which allows Hardy's speaker to dream of what could have been because it has passed. Hardy thus places extraordinary emphasis upon savouring a brief moment in time due to the fantasies of possibility it provokes. But this mood, and indeed the similar effects produced in 'Thunderstorm' are only achieved through what they exclude: the moods, personalities and perspectives of the women glimpsed in poems. Such momentary encounters, therefore, are enjoyed as part of a solipsistic fantasy, this providing a sense of irony and comedy of which the speaker appears cognizant.

Such intense moments are enjoyed more convincingly elsewhere, specifically in poems which detail actual romantic love. Such poems, for instance, include 'Best Times' (1922) (*CP II*), 'The Little Old Table' (1922) (*CP II*), 'A Spot' (1901) (*CP I*), 'Lines: To a Movement in Mozart's E-Flat Symphony' (1917) (*CP II*) and 'The Background and the Figure' (1917) (*CP II*). Elsewhere, in some of the poems I will shortly discuss, Hardy connects moments of passion to specific landscapes or romantic myths and legends. In many of these, the female voice is again largely excluded, contrasting Hardy's novelistic representation of Tess Durbeyfield, who, as Rosemarie Morgan observes, 'utters herself […] by word and by gesture, actively'. [14] Nevertheless, unlike the more compromised sense of enjoyment in the poems I have just discussed, the following selection does not represent women in purely imagined or solipsistic terms. The pronouns used in these poems are plural, the speaker relaying the momentary actions of two, they and we, describing couples

[14] Rosemarie Morgan, *Women and Sexuality in the Novels of Thomas Hardy* (London: Routledge, 1988), p.91.

climbing, dancing and kissing. The more active representation of the women here is suggestive of the way these poems concern moments of shared sexual passion that are implied to have genuinely occurred. Hardy appears to treat such instances, and the natural landscapes within which they took place, with great importance. Physical love is connected to natural imagery such as fertile landscapes, flowers and birds. This emphasises how for Hardy such moments yield invigorating, live-giving properties for both men and women which can endure powerfully in memory.

Hardy's poetic celebration of such passionate moments likely reflects his background, being brought up in a small country town that still followed lingering working-class traditions such as the allowance of sex before marriage. While premarital sexual relations were viewed as sinful by the middle and upper classes, Francoise Barret-Ducrocq demonstrates that working-class and provincial couples often went through a series of stages in courtship, before sexual relations were enacted under the tacit understanding that marriage would follow. [15] Hardy's treatment of sex is also representative of wider tendencies in mid-nineteenth-century Victorian culture. Michael Mason, for example, notes that the 1860s were a decade that exemplified 'a vigorous culture of sexual transgression'. [16] Such aspects also connect more generally to the influence of Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1871). In this work Darwin discussed female birds as possessing the power to exercise sexual selection, connecting this to a hypothetical

[15] Francoise Barret-Ducrocq, *Love in the Time of Victoria: Sexuality and Desire Among Working-Class Men and Women in Nineteenth-Century London*, trans. John Howe (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p.86-87.
[16] Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.97.

description of country girls and competing males.[17] George Levine has noted how, despite Darwin's own Victorian chauvinism, this anthropomorphic thought experiment 'actually introduces into *human* mating the female choice that, for humans, he was later to deny' further observing that the *Descent* was an important influence on Hardy. [18] Angelique Richardson has also argued that Darwin's shift in focus towards sexual selection, 'would prove a fruitful one for Hardy'. [19] Hardy's own poetic celebration of sexual passion can therefore be placed within this general socio-cultural context.

More personally, however, Hardy's treatment of these aspects and their associations with natural landscapes is indicative of the character of his first wife Emma, and the rural location of his first meetings with her. His documented recollections of his first encounter at St Juliot Rectory, Cornwall, with Emma Gifford relay her free nature, Hardy recollecting his early impressions of her that 'She was so *living*, he used to say' (*LIFE*, p.76). Further, Hardy's notes associate Emma's character physically with the landscape where he met her, complimenting her horsemanship upon the cliffs, and describing how 'the moment she was on a horse she was part of the animal' (p.77). This aspect of her character was also celebrated in 'Beeny Cliff' (1914) (*CP II*), with a woman, likely Emma, described as 'the woman riding high above with bright hair flapping free–' (l.2). In this poem, the descriptions of 'the woman', the wild Cornish landscape and a passionate memory are connected, serving to revivify the aged poet.

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[17] Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), vol 2, p.122-3.
[18] George Levine, *Darwin Loves You: Natural Selection and the Re-enchantment of the World*, 3rd edn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p.196, p.188
[19] Angelique Richardson, 'Hardy and Biology', *Thomas Hardy: Texts and Contexts,* ed. by Phillip Mallett (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp.156-179 (p.157).

These qualities and their associations with landscapes are also encountered in 'In the Days of Crinoline' (1914) (*CP II*), which comically relays the affair of a vicar's wife who is compared to wild heath and woodland. In this poem, Hardy celebrates the wife's ingenuity in using her constrictive crinoline frame to her advantage. In changing her appearance, choosing one fashion to deceive her pompous husband, she uses another style to share a moment of passion with her lover:

A plain tilt-bonnet on her head
She took the path across the leaze.
– Her spouse the vicar, gardening said,
"Too dowdy that, for coquetries,
So I can hoe at ease."

But when she had passed into the heath,
And gained the wood beyond the flat,
She raised her skirts, and from beneath
Unpinned and drew as from a sheath
An ostrich-feathered hat.

And where the hat had hung she now
Concealed and pinned the dowdy hood,
And set the hat upon her brow,

And thus emerging from the wood

Tripped on in jaunty mood.

The sun was low and crimson-faced

As two came that way from the town,

And plunged into the wood untraced…

When severally therefrom they paced

The sun had quite gone down.

The hat and feather disappeared,

The dowdy hood again was donned,

And in the gloom the fair one neared

Her home and husband dour, who conned

Calmly his blue-eyed blonde.

“Today,” he said, “you have shown good sense,

A dress so modest and so meek

Should always deck your goings hence

Alone.” And as a recompense

He kissed her on the cheek.

The wife's love-making in this poem, while not stated, is strongly hinted at by the expression 'The sun was low and crimson-faced', which implies shame but also passion. The 'ostrich-feathered hat' also helps signify that the wife is beautifying herself in readiness for a meeting with a lover.

More specifically, the feathered hat appears to symbolise the wildness of nature as opposed to the spiritual world. Read in this way, the wife's sexual behaviour seems natural and instinctive rather than shameful. The wife's feathered hat, coupled with her behaviour, also more generally follows Darwin's studies of bird courtship in *The Descent of Man* (1871). Darwin discussed how mating choice was chiefly the decision of female birds. [20] In choosing a lover, the wife behaves as a selector, chiming with Darwin's comments on birds that 'females occasionally exhibit, […] the strongest antipathies and preferences for particular males'. [21] But the ostrich feathered hat also illustrates that the wife is soliciting attention and is looking to be chosen. What these two elements indicate is the way in which the hat functions as a symbol of joint desire. Certainly, the wife's moment of passion comes while wearing the feathered hat, and she fully seizes this chance with a lover seemingly more virile than her husband.

This feathered hat is further connected to the landscape, as the pair enter a wood to make love. Such wilder images are contrasted with the pompous husband's staid domain; while he carefully controls his garden, his wife more passionately makes love within the wood. The wife is 'blue-eyed,' like Elfride, in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), and Hardy's notes record that 'The character and appearance of Elfride have points in common with

[20] Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, vol 2., p.93.
[21] Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, vol 2, p.123.

those of Mrs Hardy in quite young womanhood' (*LIFE,* p.77). The wife in the poem also reminds us of Emma, as she was the sister-in-law of the rector at St. Juliot Rectory, living there under his guardianship when Hardy first met her (*LIFE*, p.77). Hardy and Emma's romantic trysts would have been conducted secretly away from the Rectory, and without the knowledge of the rector, additionally helping to explain the way in which the poem appears to condone and even celebrate the wife's behavior

The vicar's dour pomposity is juxtaposed against his wife's energetic nature. For example, the wife is described as in 'jaunty mood', and this fifth line reveals an imperfect rhyme. The word 'mood' jars with the earlier voiced words in the stanza, including the 'dowdy hood' given by her husband, and thus accentuates the vibrant nature of the wife. This contrast achieves the type of comic atmosphere outlined by Meredith. In his essay on the comic spirit he describes it as refreshing, 'like reassuring daylight […] savour it and have what flowers live on, natural air for food'. [22] Hardy's poem comically mocks the husband to emphasize that the wife and her lover, described collectively as 'they', are the source of the poem's energy. This further reminds us of the passage from Meredith's essay, where he states that 'where women are on the road to an equal footing with men, in attainments and in liberty […] pure Comedy flourishes'. [23] In thwarting the controlling actions of her conceited and priggish husband, the wife provides the poem's sense of comedy. While the husband passively waits, the wife and her lover passionately seize the moment and live.

[22] Meredith, p.93.
[23] Meredith, p.61.

The importance Hardy places upon seizing such moments, and the connection between such instances and natural imagery, is strongly evident in some of his elegies for Emma. In 'At Castle Boterel' (1914) (*CP II*), for instance, the aged speaker tells us in the poem's final two lines 'And I shall traverse old love's domain | Never again' (ll.34-35). The words 'Never again' close the poem, concluding it pessimistically. In remembering Emma's death, the speaker must mourn her passing. While the poem ends despondently, however, it also contains a strongly uplifting aspect. The aged speaker remembers climbing a hillside at Boscastle on the north coast of Cornwall, remembering 'Myself and a girlish form benighted' (l.6). The memory of this moment is important; so much so that the final line of the first stanza emphasises that it is remembered 'Distinctly yet' (l.5). The reason why this memory resonates so brightly for Hardy is that the climb eventuated in an implied moment of passion, the speaker citing it as evidence 'that we too passed' (l.25). It is, therefore, the poem's juxtaposition between the lonely speaker's 'I' and the lover's 'we' which illustrates the importance of this shared experience. Put simply, Hardy's speaker places such importance upon this shared passionate moment because it justifies the lovers' existence, being a deeply life-affirming act.

This relates to Hardy's readings. The earliest influence upon Hardy's poetry, and indeed crucial to this aspect of his poetic thought, was Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* which he received in 1862, and Dennis Taylor contends that this saw him 'urged into his career by an anthology'. [24] In his copy, Hardy made a pencil mark next to Robert Herrick's 'Counsel To Girls,' as it is titled in Palgrave's volume, which commands its readers to seize

[24] Dennis Taylor, 'Hardy's Copy of "The Golden Treasury"', *Victorian Poetry*, 37 (2) (1999), 165-191 (p.165) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40003761> (accessed 25 June 2019).

important moments and make love before they become too old. Hardy noted that the poem was '(My grandf$^{r's}$ song)', illustrating that it was likely played as a tune by his paternal grandfather on fiddle when he was young. [25] But just as the tune clearly resonated with Hardy, so did its command to seize such moments before time overtakes youth.

The poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley, including several collected in *The Golden Treasury*, had a more substantial and long lasting influence upon this aspect of Hardy's thought. In a 1921 letter to Roger Inpen, Hardy described Shelley as 'that greatest of our lyrists' (*CL VI*, p.101), but Shelley's passionate attitude towards love was just as important for Hardy, F.B. Pinion noting that 'Shelley's ideas helped enormously to free Hardy from the shackles of convention'. [26] Hardy was particularly drawn to Shelley's meditation on free love in 'Epipsychidion', making reference to the poem in *Jude the Obscure* (1896) (*JO*, p.244-45). More pertinently, Hardy seemed to have employed 'Epipsychidion' as part of a seduction attempt in an 1893 communication with Florence Henniker. Having learnt that she had recently read the poem Hardy seized upon this to write, 'I too have been reading "Epipsychidion" – indeed by mutual influence we must have been reading it simultaneously' (*CL II*, p.23). In the poem, a meditation on free love addressed to Emilia Viviani, Shelley's speaker petitions her not to be timid, because 'Birth is worshipped by those sisters wild | Called Hope and Fear', and further imploring 'The day is come, and thou wilt fly with me'. [27] Hardy appeared to borrow from Shelley's language in his letter to Florence Henniker on

[25] Robert Herrick, 'Counsel to Girls', *The Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language*, ed. by Francis Turner Palgrave (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1861), p.70. Dorset County Museum. H.2018.133.0238.
[26] F. B. Pinion, *Thomas Hardy: Art and Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p148.
[27] Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Epipsychideon', *Shelley Poetical Works*, 2nd edn, ed. by Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp.411-430, l.380-1, l.388.

'Epipsychidion', elsewhere in the missive revealing his desire to 'fly off to foreign scenes or plunge into wild dissipation' (*CL II*, p.23).

Shelley's views on love were also influential upon the young Robert Browning who, Roland A. Dueksen notes, 'pledged himself to Shelley's principles'. [28] In the last part of Browning's 'The Statue and the Bust', readers are similarly urged to act upon their passionate impulses. Browning's speaker tells us:

> Do your best, whether winning or losing it,
> If you choose to play! – is my principle.
> Let a man contend to the uttermost
> For his life's set prize, be it what it will! [29]

Certainly, in his courtship of Emma, Hardy identified with that credo, and similarly to the Brownings, Hardy and Emma seized their own romantic moment. This is demonstrated in 'At Castle Botterel' where Hardy celebrates and strikingly commemorates the implied moment of sexual passion between himself and Emma. He tells us:

> It filled but a minute. But was there ever
> A time of such quality, since or before,
> In that hill's story? To my mind never,
> (ll.16-18)

[28] Roland A. Duerksen, *Shelleyan Ideas in Victorian Literature* (London: Mouton & Co. 1966), p.24.
[29] Browning, 'The Statue and the Bust', ll.240-243.

The poet's celebration of this passionate moment, therefore, encapsulated in verse, follows the message of Browning's speaker. Emma's loss is lamented by Hardy, but, far more importantly, their relationship is also celebrated for having actually happened. Indeed, what is most bemoaned is that it cannot happen again. With no female voice present, we are only aware of the occurrence as being important to the poet, or 'To my mind' as the speaker tells us. Yet it holds such significance because it consecrates the existence of two people, the 'we too' described. The speaker thus combines the precious memory of this passionate moment with its location, seeing it in his mind as adding to the value of the Cornish landscape where it occurred, just as the location lends the act significance. The moment enjoyed between two people cannot be undone, and as long as the landscape stands, and indeed poetry survives, it must endure.

Hardy's poetry of this type also achieves more sustained moods of optimism, through shifts in perspective when remembering past romance. For example, in 'The Night of the Dance' (1909) (*CP I*), Hardy's speaker remembers an important moment, not by juxtaposing its memory with his present, but by relaying the place and time of its beginning. Hardy's speaker recalls impending passion, savouring the instances leading up to the significant moment, and expanding his enjoyable remembrance of it. The events preceding this romantic encounter take place upon an outdoor dancing green:

> The cold moon hangs to the sky by its horn,
>
> And centres its gaze on me;

The stars, like eyes in reverie,
Their westering as for a while forborne,
Quiz downward curiously.

Old Robert draws the backbrand in,
The green logs steam and spit;
The half-awakened sparrows flit
From the riddled thatch; and owls begin
To whoo from the gable-slit.

Yes; far and nigh things seem to know
Sweet scenes are impending here;
That all is prepared; that the hour is near
For welcomes, fellowships, and flow
Of sally, song, and cheer;

That spigots are pulled and viols strung;
That soon will arise the sound
Of measures trod to tunes renowned;
That She will return in Love's low tongue
My vows as we wheel around.

Time is at first measured cyclically and naturally, rather than mechanically, established by the moon and the whoo-ing of owls. The poem begins describing how 'The cold moon hangs to the sky by its horn', but its locus of attention slowly lowers towards earth, describing 'Old Robert' and 'sparrows'. By the end of the second stanza 'owls begin | To whoo from the gable-slit'. Thus Hardy's poem draws upon the imagination to create a mood where the speaker is gazed down upon by the anthropomorphised moon, stars and then owls. In this way, he is slowly positioned at the centre of a romantic scene in which the 'She' will also appear, being surrounded by a supporting natural chorus.

This romantic imagery connects to Shelley's 'Epipsychidion'. In that poem, Shelley's speaker invites Emilia to elope with him to an Elysian island. Here, in such a romantic paradise Shelley imagines:

> The ring-dove, in the embowering ivy, yet
> Keeps up her love-lament, and the owls flit
> Round the evening tower, and the young stars glance
> Between the quick bats in their twilight dance. [30]

Like Shelley, Hardy's speaker is also intent on romance, appearing to draw upon similar personified images. The owl's appearance helps forecast this romantic mood, but also illustrates the poem's part-corporeal perspective, as cosmic time becomes signified naturally and biologically by the nocturnal bird calling. The owls' hooting also indicates a

[30] Shelley, ll. 529-532.

more anthropomorphic change of mood. Darwin, in *The Descent*, identified bird actions such as flying and singing as pursued partly for pleasure, and particularly noted that 'Singing is to a certain extent […] an art'. [31] As Hardy's owls enter the poem they are equated with pleasurable aspects such as music, dance and romance. The owls' whoo-ing presages the narrator's woo-ing of his intended, which will take place upon a dance floor accompanied by music.

Then the poem proceeds into the third stanza, which confirms that 'Yes; far and nigh things seem to know | Sweet scenes are impending here'. This line appears to reference yet again, as I have discussed in my analysis of 'The Darkling Thrush' (*CP I*) and 'An August Midnight' (*CP I*) in chapter 1, the implication that natural creatures are privy to knowledge beyond the ken of humans. Here, in its descriptions of the 'sweet scenes', Hardy's poem shifts from the natural world to the human sphere. In introducing mechanical time measurement, telling us that 'the hour is near', he thus indicates human activity. But, in shifting his focus from a broader, cosmic timespan, and in slicing time more narrowly, the speaker intensifies the importance of the moment to come. Hardy's sentiments, and indeed his vocabulary, again connect to Shelley's 'Epipsychidion' but also link to Browning's poetry. In telling us that 'the hour is near', Hardy apes the sentiments of Shelley's speaker, who states that 'The hour is come'. [32] For Shelley, this precious hour will not be momentary but unending, whereby 'thoughts and joys' will be 'Folded within their own eternity'. [33] This further connects to Browning's 'Now', taken from his final

[31] Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, vol 2., p.55.
[32] Shelley, l.394.
[33] Shelley, l.523, l.524.

collection *Asolando: Fancies and Facts* (1889). In this sonnet Browning mechanically condenses a moment of passion into 'This tick of our life-time's one moment', exclaiming 'Ah, Sweet – | The moment eternal'. [34] Browning's phrase 'The moment eternal', although not referenced by Hardy in his notes, also relates to a number of his poems which seek to render particular moments eternal.

Hardy's sweet moment in 'The Night of the Dance' approaches with the impending arrival of party-goers and 'Of sally, song, and cheer'. Finally, in the fourth stanza, the speaker remembers that the dance will soon begin and 'That She will return in Love's low tongue | My vows as we wheel around'. Hardy's dancing here operates literally but also metaphorically, implying the kind of sexual congress which Browning in 'Now' more explicitly details as 'Merged in a moment which gives me at last | You around me for once, you beneath me, above me'. [35] Like Browning's poem, the concluding mood in Hardy's poem is intense and ecstatic.

Similarly to some of the earlier poems I have discussed, there are aspects of solipsistic desire here, as the speaker anticipates the woman returning the speaker's vows to him rather than expressing her own voice. Unlike 'Faintheart', however, where the rail carriage pulls the speaker away from the woman, just as his fantasies pull him away from the reality of flesh and blood so that 'the wheels moved on', here both dance in tandem together, so that 'we wheel around'. Unlike the earlier poem, moreover, the importance of the female subject is accentuated, 'She' here being capitalised, and juxtaposed upon the

[34] Robert Browning, 'Now', *Asolando: Fancies and Facts*, 6th edn, (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1890), p.10, l.10, ll.11-12 < https://archive.org/details/asolandofancies05browgoog> (accessed 17 Jun 2019)
[35] Browning, 'Now', p.10, ll.7-8.

same line with ‘Love’. Hardy’s poem thus celebrates the remembrance of a vital experience, the ‘hour is near’ foretelling an intensely precious moment of passion.

It is in ‘The History of an Hour’ (1925) (*CP III*) where Hardy most directly stresses the importance of enjoying such brief moments. Here he adopts the same imperative voice as Browning’s speaker in ‘The Statue and the Bust’, who implores his readers to ‘Do your best, whether winning or losing it’. [36] Once again, Hardy uses natural imagery as associated metaphors for passion. His floral imagery directly resembles the language of Robert Herrick’s ‘To Virgins, to Make Much of Time’ and its famous carpe diem call to ‘Gather ye rose-buds, while ye may’ (l.1). Hardy’s speaker tells us:

> Vain is the wish to try rhyming it, writing it!
> Pen cannot weld into words what it was;
> Time will be squandered in toil at inditing it;
> Clear is the cause!
>
> Yea, ’twas too satiate with soul, too ethereal;
> June-morning scents of a rose-bush in flower
> Catch in a clap-net of hempen material;
> So catch that hour!

[36] Browning, ‘The Statue and the Bust’, l.240.

Written in two Sapphic stanzas, the poem is indicative of Hardy's interest in the love poetry of Sappho, writing in an 1895 letter to Florence Henniker, 'How I love her – how many men have loved her!' (*CL II*, p.84) This additionally reflects the influence of Algernon Charles Swinburne upon Hardy's work. In an 1897 letter to Swinburne, Hardy recalled the 'buoyant time of 30 years ago, when I used to read your early works walking along the crowded London streets, to my imminent risk of being knocked down' (*CL II*, p.158). Both men shared a keen poetic interest in Sappho; Yopie Prins observes that Swinburne, due to the success of his Sapphic imitations, is 'still read as the most important Victorian incarnation of Sappho', while Hardy wrote the elegy 'A Singer Asleep' (*CP II*) for him in a style 'reminiscent of Swinburne's Sapphic sublime.' [37] Hardy also owned a copy of Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* (1866), and the message of 'The History of an Hour' connects to several poems regarding Sappho from that volume.

Hardy noted in the left margin of his copy of Swinburne's 'Anactoria' that the section was originally 'From Sappho,' which Prins identifies more exactly as poem fragment 31. [38] This poem conjures the image of death as a threat against wasted passion, as Sappho pleads for Anactoria's physical love. In his own copy, Hardy highlighted the warning 'Thee too the years shall cover', and later praised the expression in his 1897 letter to Swinburne (*CL II*, p.158). [39] The following line, like Herrick's poem, also connects to Hardy's ephemeral 'rose-bush' scent, Swinburne's Sapphic speaker comparing Anactoria to

[37] Yopie Prins, *Victorian Sappho* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), p.17, p.167.
[38] Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'Anactoria', *Poems and Ballads*, 5th edn, (London: John Camden Hotten, 1873), pp.65-76 (p.65), Dorset County Museum. H.2018.133.0062; Prins, p.116.
[39] Swinburne, 'Anactoria', *Poems and Ballads*, l.189. Dorset County Museum.

'the rose born of one same blood with thee'. [40] (l.190). Elsewhere, in Swinburne's 'Sapphics', the speaker's sensual vision ends as the Muses, Aphrodite and Sappho fade away, but 'Ghosts of outcast women return lamenting, | Purged not in Lethe'. [41] Swinburne thus acknowledges that the details of Sappho's life, like the fragmented remains of her poetry, are fading from sight but his poem still attempts to give life to her passionate, if ghostly vision. Similarly, Hardy's poem describes his own romantic experience as 'too satiate with soul, too ethereal', but also extols its passionate virtues, imploring his readers to seize the day.

The final, shorter line of each stanza of 'The History of an Hour' grammatically accentuates the briefness of passionate episodes but also poetically reaffirms the importance of the moment. Firstly, 'Clear is the cause!' connects to the affirmation 'Yea,' in the following stanza, which is emphasized by a caesura. 'Yea' is also used in the same fashion in the fourth line of every stanza in 'Lines: To a Movement in Mozart's E-Flat Symphony' (1917) (*CP II*) (l.4, l.9, l.14, l.19) while 'Yes' is employed in line 11 of 'The Night of the Dance' (1909). Its isolated shortness, punctuated by the caesura, encapsulates Hardy's powerful affirmation of life's brief but ecstatic experiences. Moreover, the meaning of the shortened line in the first stanza is affirmed in the corresponding truncated last line of the second stanza, which instructs us, 'So catch that hour!' While moments of passion cannot be wholly recorded, therefore, what Hardy's poem does do is emphasize, once again, their importance.

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[40] Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'Anactoria', *Poems and Ballads & Atalanta in Calydon,* ed. by Kenneth Haynes (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p.47-55, l.190.
[41] Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'Sapphics', *Poems and Ballads & Atalanta in Calydon,* pp.163-65, l.75.

Some of Hardy's most passionate poetic memories of brief moments are associated with myths linked to specific connections, such as the Cornish romance of Tristan and Isolde. Again, these poems are directly traceable to Hardy's courtship of Emma Gifford upon the Cornish coasts and his landscape, while real, is represented as part-fantastical in several pieces. It is also associated in Hardy's notes with Cornish legends, and he details spending the August of 1870 visiting Tintagel, the supposed birthplace of King Arthur, with Emma (*LIFE*, p.81). Hardy further connected the Cornish landscape, as he relays in his notes, with 'this vague romantic land of Lyonnesse' (*LIFE*, p.104). His poem 'When I Set Out for Lyonnesse' (1914) (*CP II*) regards when he first met Emma:

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

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

While I should sojourn there.

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

This poem, like ‘Faintheart’, is relayed by a personal speaker and commences with the time-signaling word ‘When’, as the speaker sets out on a journey which would also have involved a train, the route described in Emma’s notes (*LIFE*, p.72). Here, however, the train is effaced, as the speaker’s journey is described more like a quest pursued across a long distance, and is directed towards ‘Lyonnesse’, a mythical country. The first stanza’s second line documents the distance the speaker must travel, being ‘A hundred miles away,’ but the stanza also illustrates a shift not just in place but in time. Time here is not mechanically regulated by clocks, as in ‘Faintheart’, and as the poem proceeds the third line relays how ‘The rime was on the spray,’ indicating that, with frost on the leaves, the time can only be identified broadly and seasonally. The use of cosmic time further accentuates a mood of empty coldness, as the speaker tells us ‘And starlight lit my lonesomeness | When I set out for Lyonnesse’. While natural and cosmic time are non-specific, however, Hardy uses the mythological term for Cornwall, Lyonnesse, to create the sense that the speaker is

entering a magical realm connected to a past time of Arthurian romance. This follows Hardy's personal experience from when his romance with Emma was just beginning. When the pair visited Tintagel, Hardy and Emma read Tennyson together (*LIFE*, p.81), the work most likely being *Idylls of the King* (1859-1885), which, in 'The Coming of Arthur' details the birth of the king at this spot. [42] Further, 'The Passing of Arthur' features Lyonnesse as the mysterious phantom scene of Arthur's battle with Modred. [43] This atmosphere is further illustrated in the second stanza, as the speaker uses words such as 'prophet', 'wizard' and 'durst' to create a rich and intense mood.

The magical dimension of space and time which Hardy's speaker enters, therefore, is a realm of romance and passion, and his use of the word 'Lyonnesse' connects to the Cornish myths of Tristan and Isolde which also inspired Hardy to compose, many years later, *The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall* (1923). In the second stanza of 'When I Set Out for Lyonnesse' Hardy's use of 'sojourn' possibly reflects the line 'And this is why I sojourn here' from 'La Belle Dame sans Merci', Keats' famous poem about love-enchantment.[44] But in Hardy's poem 'sojourn', a French word, is juxtaposed with 'durst', an archaic English word. These words can be drawn to the mythical locations of Tristan and Isolde, Cornwall and Britany, France. The tale is retold in 'The Last Tournament' chapter of Tennyson's *Idylls*, but also in Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonnesse* (1882). In his notebooks Hardy records lines from Swinburne's 'Prelude' to Tristram' (*LN I*, p.149). He

[42] Alfred Tennyson, 'The Coming of Arthur', *Idylls of the King*, 2nd edn., ed. by J.M. Gray (London: Penguin. 1996), pp.21-35, ll.185-211.
[43] Alfred Tennyson, 'The Passing of Arthur', *Idylls of the King*, pp.288-300, ll.80-8.
[44] John Keats, 'La Belle Dame sans Merci. A Ballad', *John Keats: The Complete Poems*, 5th edn, ed. by John Barnard (London: Penguin Books, 2006) pp.334-336, l.45.

also references the passionate scene in the section of Swinburne's poem called 'The Sailing of the Swallow' in Chapter VII of *Two on a Tower* (1882). Borrowing Swinburne's lines where Tristram and Isolde first drink the love potion and kiss, Hardy describes Swithin turning to see Lady Constantine's eyes, 'That yearned upon him, shining in such wise' (*TT*, p.266). The 'magic in my eyes' of the speaker when he returns from 'Lyonnesse' can therefore be attributed to an experience of intense passion, which Hardy appears to connect to the magic love potion of Tristram and Isolde.

This poem again denies us a female perspective, but unlike the barely glimpsed 'she' in 'Faintheart', who is described as 'radiant', in this poem the speaker derives joy not from objectification, but from relaying his delighted confusion at a shared romantic encounter, so that he is 'All marked with mute surmise | My radiance rare and fathomless'. The speaker therefore attempts to relay the strange power and mystery of a romantic experience, which is connected in the poem to the workings of magic. This process is detailed as commencing upon a specific moment, the 'When' of the speaker's embarkation, geographically and intimately, towards the person he would fall in love with.

Finally, two of Hardy's most hopeful poems regarding shared passion carry the additional implication that such precious moments, while brief, will endure timelessly. In *A Pair of Blues Eyes* (1873), Elfride Swancourt and Henry Knight sit next to 'a tiny cascade about a foot wide and high' (*PBE*, p.274) prior to kissing, yet their romance ends shortly afterwards in disappointment. In 'Under the Waterfall' (1914) (*CP II*), Hardy creates a more enduring mood in which a dropped wine glass lays forever lost in the pool beneath a waterfall, relaying how 'its presence adds to the rhyme of love' (l.49). Hardy's female

speaker states of the cup 'No lip has touched it since his and mine | In turns therefrom slipped lovers' wine' (ll.51-52). He further references the cup in mythical terms, describing 'There lies intact that chalice of ours' (l.48). While this may seem to refer to the Holy Grail of Tennyson's *Idylls*, as Hardy associates the location with romance it references more closely the magic cup of Tristram and Isolde. In Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882) Isolde draws a 'gold cup forth' which bears a passion draught, causing them to fall in love and ultimately become timeless figures of romance. [45] The association of the cup with the continually falling water, the voice of his past lover, and indeed a mythical chalice of magic potion, helps to consecrate the lovers, the spot and to accentuate the moment's enduring importance.

The influence of Swinburne's poem is additionally felt upon Hardy's 'A Kiss' (1917) (*CP II*), which again pursues the idea of a timeless vital moment. Unlike 'A Thunderstorm in Town' (*CP II*), where the solipsistic speaker fantasises about a kiss which did not happen, here the spot upon which a kiss took place becomes the scene of an intense, reverberating experience:

> By a wall the stranger now calls his,
> Was born of old a particular kiss,
> Without forethought in its genesis;
> Which in a trice took wing on the air.

[45] Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Tristram of Lyonesse, Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1882), pp. 1-170 (p.39) <https://archive.org/details/tirstramlyoness00swingoog> (accessed 27 Jun 2019).

And where that spot is nothing shows:

There ivy calmly grows,

And no one knows

What a birth was there!

That kiss is gone where none can tell –

Not even those who felt its spell:

It cannot have died; that know we well.

Somewhere it pursues its flight,

One of a long procession of sounds

Travelling aethereal rounds

Far from earth's bounds

In the infinite.

The first stanza describes 'where' a kiss occurred, 'By a wall', but then proceeds to juxtapose this by relaying the spot as the speaker views it now. In illustrating this move away from the past, Hardy ends the fifth line with a colon, before using 'There', rather than 'where' to describe the wall in the present. The meter of the stanza supports this contrast, shortening considerably as it reaches the end of the sixth line as the speaker views the present. This creates the effect in the first stanza that the intense and powerful moment of the kiss, broad and solid in memory like a wall, has gradually shrunk and dwindled in significance. At the same time the stanza's final line rhetorically declares 'What a birth was

there!' which completely subverts this mood. The second stanza supports this hanging idea, the first five lines extending in length again as the moment is imagined reverberating outwards. Hardy appears here to have fashioned a concrete or shaped poem, which may resemble something in the first stanza dwindling away, but also, in the second stanza rippling outwards and narrowing in intensity.

In his recent reading, Gregory Tate has discussed the influence of Tennyson's *In Memoriam* upon the feeling of deterministic solace contained in the poem. [46] This mood is not just consoling but hopeful however, and is thematically traceable to the influence of Swinburne. The shape of each stanza rather resembles a glass vase or a chalise, which reminds us of the earlier poem 'Under the Waterfall' and its connections with the magical cup of Tristram and Isolde. In *Tristram of Lyonesse*, the love potion spell is enflamed and sealed as both passionately kiss, Swinburne's speaker telling us that 'their four lips became one burning mouth'. [47] Hardy's poem valorises a particular spot as the past location of 'a particular kiss'. This kiss is further described in legendary terms so that it 'was born of old', while its power is further related to some form of magic, so that it echoes outwards 'where none can tell – | Not even those who felt its spell'.

In the conclusion of the second stanza, the kiss is optimistically imagined reverberating into the heavens, 'Far from earth's bounds | In the infinite'. While in 'The History of an Hour' the passionate moment is 'too ethereal' to be described, here its form becomes 'aethereal', indicating its heavenly, and thus 'infinite' timelessness. This recalls

[46] Gregory Tate, *Nineteenth-Century Poetry and the Physical Sciences: Poetical Matter* (Gewerbestrasse: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p.244, p.246.
[47] Swinburne, *Tristram of Lyonesse*, p.40.

Browning's 'The moment eternal' in 'Now', which affirms the timelessness of the passionate moment. For Browning's speaker the moment of passion is so important because, having happened, it cannot be erased and will always exist for the poet. Similarly, in Hardy's 'A Kiss', the moment, while physically transient, cannot be undone, and is celebrated for having occurred. Further, just as Hardy's 'A Kiss' draws on timeless legends, such as Tristram and Isolde, to accentuate its enduring importance, it also connects to Swinburne's 'Anactoria' (1866), which Hardy heavily marked his own copy of. Here Sappho tells Anactoria that she will be forgotten, 'Except these kisses of my lips on thine | Brand them with immortality'. [48] In Hardy's poem, the speaker's exclamation 'What a birth was there!' indicates something created by an act of love between two people. The kissing couple together achieve a kind of immortality through achieving a moment of physical importance that cannot be undone. This physical, vital act appears to achieve a mythical status in the poet's mind that, along with the kisses of lovers 'of old' become 'One of a long procession of sounds' that reverberate through history.

Thus, in such ways, Hardy's poetry strives to celebrate specific moments of living, tracing an arc from less successful to more fully enjoyed and hopeful experiences. Procrastination in specific instances, in concordance with the exclusion of a female perspective, sees the poet fantasise that romance was possible, although it likely was not. In a number of Hardy's poems, such as the second stanza of 'Let Me Enjoy', his enjoyment is entirely self-constructed. This is compromised, however, by his speakers' awareness of this, and indeed, the irony of their situation. In other poems, as we move from solipsism to

[48] Swinburne, 'Anactoria' , *Poems and Ballads & Atalanta in Calydon*, pp.47-55, l.202-3.

shared experiences, Hardy's speakers appear to enjoy more successfully the richer, life-affirming importance of genuine romance between two people. These vital moments of transient passion are connected to wild, natural imagery, their importance being heightened by their very briefness. Moreover, in poems such as 'Under the Waterfall' and 'A Kiss', Hardy's speakers imaginatively draw on legendary images of romance to imply that these shared moments of passion can consecrate lovers, possessing a hopeful and timeless power.

3. THE ENDURANCE OF THE ORDINARY

While a number of Hardy's poems celebrate the intensity of specific moments, with several indicating the potential endurance of mutual passion, a more sustained sense of joy and hope pervades those which represent shared pleasures enjoyed by families, friends, companions and communities. These, however, are juxtaposed with an awareness of the harshness of life and the inevitable passing of time. As I discussed in the introduction chapter, previous critics have noticed that Hardy's conception of the immanent Will, blindly urging things forward, reflects the influence of Arthur Schopenhauer.[49] It is therefore the effect of the passage of time upon life, rather than in moments of living itself, where Hardy appears to see tragedy. As he wrote in his notes in 1887, referencing Joshua 10:11–14, 'The sun and the moon standing still on Ajalon was not a catastrophe for Israel,

[49] Mary Ann Kelly, 'Hardy's Reading in Schopenhauer: Tess of the D'Urbervilles.' *Colby Quarterly*, 18 (3) (1982), 183-198 < https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2492&context=cq> (accessed 25 June 2019); Dan Jacobsen, 'Thomas Hardy: The Poet as Philosopher', *The American Scholar*, (65)1 (1996) 114-118 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41212448> (accessed 25 June 2019).

but a type of Paradise' (*LIFE*, p.210). Instead, for Hardy, real life moments of such paradise are short, sweet and secular, and must be seized before time passes.

In particular, the more exhilarating joys of communal events, such as music, laughter, drinking and dancing are highly valuable for Hardy, especially when juxtaposed with the foreboding image of time's passing. More broadly, the emphasis Hardy places upon such aspects of life helps us to gain a more complex understanding of his tragic works, where pleasures are thwarted due to random chance or the passage of time. These more joyous and hopeful poems, therefore, reflect Hardy's overarching body of work, including his more pessimistic poetry which, while focusing upon life's transience and sadness, also teaches us the importance of living well and enjoying what will soon be lost.

While the previous section discussed Hardy's poetic focus upon important moments, including shared experiences, this section will trace the argument further. Here I will discuss the ways in which Hardy's poems show rural families and communities coming together to create moments of happiness. In such examples, groups of people converge through celebratory events such as marriage and seasonal festivities, as in 'The Night of the Dance' (*CP* I), already discussed in the previous section. Some poems also relay events occurring in village church communities, reflecting Hardy's sentimental attachment to his lost faith. Hardy's poetry of this type also reflects his interest in the classical world, which, in influencing his representation of communal and rural pleasures, appears to indicate a creative tension. Yet, I will argue, this more emphatically illustrates the way in which he saw his rural subjects as part of an enduring continuum, subject to the same whims of fate

and tragedy as figures from classical antiquity, but also enjoying the same kinds of universal pleasures.

Therefore, while the passing of time underpins Hardy's tragedy, his poetry also shows us the more positive aspects of this ongoing process. Several of his poems celebrate the seasonal and generational repetition of communal enjoyments, demonstrating the value of ordinary pleasures in their very endurance. Such works illustrate the slow ongoing nature of rural life, with families, lovers and communities shown continually to replace one another. Hardy's hopeful representation of such aspects can be attributed to his rural background but can also be seen to represent the joint influence of nineteenth-century paganism, Christian culture and evolutionary theory upon his thought. In this chapter I will trace the influence of Lucretius, Matthew Arnold, John Addington Symonds, A. E. Housman, William Barnes, and Charles Darwin, upon these aspects of his poetry.

Hardy presented a view of country life that was realistic, rather than fanciful, and which was viewed from personal experience rather than supposition. This meant that he was very aware of the hardships endured by rural inhabitants, and numerous examples of such privations can be located in his work. At the same time, G.K. Chesterton's famous attack on Hardy in *The Victorian Age in Literature* (1913) is indicative of how Hardy's position has been misunderstood. Chesterton argued that while 'Meredith climbed towards the sun' Hardy 'went down to botanise in the swamp'. [50] Yet, Chesterton's stark contrast between these two positions failed to account for the subtleties of Hardy's rural approach; in his works lowly characters frequently turn towards the sun and strive to enjoy life's

[50] G. K. Chesterton, *The Victorian Age in Literature* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1913), p.143 <https://archive.org/details/victorianageinli00byuches> (accessed 24 October 2019).

pleasures. Hence, although Hardy often adopted an ostensibly pessimistic starting position in his works, events frequently occurred which completely contrast this. He outlined his reasons for this in a note, dated January 1st, 1902:

> Pessimism (or rather what is called such) is, in brief, playing the sure game. You cannot lose at it; you may gain. It is the only view of life in which you can never be disappointed. Having reckoned what to do in the worst possible circumstances, when better arise, as they may, life becomes child's play. (*LIFE*, pp.333-34)

Hardy's use of the word 'pessimism' here should not be taken too literally. By referring to it as 'what is called such', he signals that his own employment of the term is instead ironic and unique. The passage indicates that his stance does not comply with most people's definition of pessimism. For example, as I have shown thus far, Hardy was not dour in his approach to life or his poetry, but by steeling himself to avoid disappointment when bad things occurred he could better accentuate a general enjoyment of life's pleasures. Hence, his term 'child's play' here appears apt, as a strong sense of play and enjoyment pervades a number of his poems where better situations do occur. Hardy's poetic speakers also stress the more joyous aspects of country life that exist in spite of life's hardships. Constructing a position which implies pessimism, even if it does not exemplify a negative stance, allows Hardy to enjoy, as a kind of pleasant surprise, simple moments of pleasure when they occur.

Hardy specifically outlined his opinions regarding this in 'The Dorsetshire Labourer', an article published in *Longman's Magazine* in 1883, describing how a

Londoner might imagine from afar a Dorset farming labourer as enduring a life of ignorance, penury and misery, but, by witnessing such modes of life, he or she would learn that 'wherever a mode of supporting life is neither noxious nor absolutely inadequate, there springs up happiness, and will spring up happiness, of some sort or other' (*PV*, p.39). He additionally argued that 'it is among such communities as these that happiness will find her last refuge on earth, since it is among them that a perfect insight into the conditions of existence will be longest postponed' (*PV,* p. 39).

Hardy's comment here displays two things about the urban and rural worlds. In one sense it indicates that, while members of urban society possess a more erudite view of the world, rural inhabitants hold a simple but potentially ignorant view of life. As Hardy notes in his further description of rural communities 'ploughmen as a rule do not give sufficient thought to the morrow to be miserable when not in physical pain' (*PV,* p.41). Nevertheless, Hardy also appears to be critiquing the arrogant assumption that educated, urban elites are really sounder or healthier in mind than ploughmen. Indeed, Hardy notes that a 'pure atmosphere and a pastoral environment are a very appreciable portion of the sustenance which tends to produce the sound mind and body' (*PV,* p. 41). For Hardy, such communities possess a way of life that is earthy and vital. His ironic passage regarding rural communities possessing, a 'perfect' rather than a wider view of 'the conditions of existence', which will be longest postponed for them, also queries urban self-assurance. It contains the implication that rural communities, despite ignorance, superstition and poverty, could actually possess a superior grasp of the harsh conditions of life, hence allowing them to maximise their enjoyment of pleasurable moments. Such interludes, when they do exist,

may be more frequently grasped and appreciated by such rural communities without the same level of discrimination. This aspect of Hardy is frequently demonstrated in his poetry where rural pleasures are celebrated over and above the backdrop of urban disillusionment.

Hardy implies that uncomplicated country people, with their close connections to the elements and the changing seasons, and without urban distractions, possess a visceral awareness of, or 'perfect insight' into, the slow and rhythmic ebb and flow of life. They experience the hardness of existence, but also, as a result of this, appreciate the immediate importance of pleasurable moments, regardless of how unsophisticated such things may be. Therefore, in his poems Hardy often highlights how ordinary moments of happiness are enjoyed by his rural subjects. In doing so, he also illustrates the important value of such pleasures for himself. In 'A Jog-Trot Pair' (1922) (*CP II*), which F.B. Pinion notes was based on Hardy and his second wife Florence, and which 'contrasts romantic passion with a more durable love', Hardy's speaker describes how 'simple things, | Onerous to satiate souls, increased their buoyance' (ll.19-20). [51] The final stanza concludes by affirming how they, described as 'common people' (l.21), were 'happier than the cleverest, smartest, rarest' (l.22).

This was something which Chesterton failed to address in his narrow reading of Hardy, describing his literary representation of rural characters as 'brooding and blaspheming over the village idiot'. [52] Chesterton's comments, while an attempt to discredit Hardy's atheism, are indicative of the ways in which certain members of the literary class completely misunderstood the pleasures of rural life as attested by Hardy. This elitist

[51] F. B. Pinion, *A Commentary on the Poems of Thomas Hardy* (London: Macmillan, 1976), p.166.
[52] Chesterton, p.143.

position was occupied by several of Hardy's poetic contemporaries such as Matthew Arnold, who exerted a towering cultural influence during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The nature of Arnold's influence upon Hardy is complicated, however. In 1876 Leslie Stephen recommended that Hardy turn to Arnold's work (*LN*, p.257) and, as several entries in Hardy's literary notebooks illustrate, he read Arnold extensively from this time onwards. Various scholars have discussed what Hardy took from Arnold's writings, such as 'ethical idealism' (*LN I*, p.257) as Lennart A. Bjork argues, or, as Pamela Gossin contends, a more advanced understanding of the classical world. [53] Arnold's high cultural tradition, however, was viewed with suspicion by Hardy, who originated from outside of his elite circle. In *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), Arnold attempted to reinforce the worth of high culture. [54] This cultural intellectualism was tied closely to a moral sense of superiority that drew from the heritage of Christian belief. Favouring an intellectual elite, Arnold dismissed the aristocracy, the middle classes and the working class.[55] Arnold's position became a specific focus of Hardy's attack upon liberal elitism. Having met him in 1880, Hardy noted with displeasure, that 'Arnold is wrong about provincialism […] A certain provincialism of feeling is invaluable. It is of the essence of individuality […] without which no great thoughts are thought, no great deeds done' (*LIFE*, p.151). Further, in relation to the subject of provincial felicity, Hardy argued in his 1883 essay on 'The Dorsetshire Labourer', perhaps in reference to Arnold, that 'The happiness of a class can rarely be estimated aright

[53] Pamela Gossin, *Thomas Hardy's Novel Universe: Astronomy, Cosmology, and Gender in the Post-Darwinian World* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p.43.
[54] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. by R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1965), p.112.
[55] Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, p.143.

by philosophers who look down upon that class from the Olympian heights of society' (*PV*, p.41).

Arnold's rural poetry, unlike Hardy's work, appears unable to empathise with the pleasures and pains of provincial people. Instead Arnold favours the use of classical Greco-Roman imagery over engaging with the rural demotic world. His position, in Stefan Collini's words, indicates one who 'manifestly preferred to loll on Parnassus than to crawl up Calvary'. [56] The term 'Parnassus' is significant; it was used by Arnold and other Oxford poets as a literary reference for Boars Hill, which lies south west of Oxford amongst the Cumnor Hills in the middle of Arnold's 'Scholar Gypsy' country. [57] It indicates how Arnold's poetry continually connects more to classical culture than the realities of the British countryside. This is particularly evident in 'Thyrsis' (1862/4), where Arnold draws on the myths of Orpheus, Corydon, Bion, Pluto and 'Dorian Shepherds' as he describes the ascent up Boars Hill while lamenting of 'Proserpine' that 'Her foot the Cumnor cowslips never stirr'd'. [58] For Arnold, the actual countryside he experiences never seems to equal the Greek classical world of his imagination.

This kind of lofty stance was famously critiqued by Hardy in *Tess* (1891), where the character Angel Clare, like Arnold, appears to float above the real world upon a Parnassus of his own aesthetic making. Calling Tess 'Demeter' and 'Artemis' (*TD*, p.130), Clare views Tess through his own idealised schemas drawn from classical Greek learning. At the

[56] Stefan Collini, *Matthew Arnold: A Critical Portrait*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p.84.
[57] Chauncey Brewster Tinker and Howard Foster Lowry, *The Poetry of Matthew Arnold: A Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940), p.354.
[58] Matthew Arnold, 'Thyrsis', *Matthew Arnold (The Oxford Authors)*, ed. by Miriam Allott and Robert H. Super. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 240-247, ll.81-92, l.99.

same time, Hardy's writings are saturated with Greek cultural references, indicating the importance of the classical world for his own work. What differentiates Hardy's references from Arnold's, however, are the uses to which they are put. Unlike in Arnold's work, which didactically uses classical culture to tell the reader how to behave, it is employed by Hardy as a way of showing the earthy pleasures of rural people, making the world of the provincial both meaningful and alive. Andrew Radford, for example, observes how, in *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874), as Gabriel Oak plays his pipe in an Arcadian fashion, Hardy 'exploits the hint of Greek idyll'. [59] This is not played for the benefit of critics such as Arnold, however. The 'dulcet piping of Gabriel's flute' (*FMC*, p.137) is enjoyed by the farming community attending the sheering-supper at Weatherbury Farm, who gather together to eat, drink and make merry. This enhances the feeling that, just as figures in classical literature enjoyed such pleasures, so do people in their ordinary lives. For Hardy, these enjoyments are essentially no different: both occur during brief moments in time when people gather together, so they must be grasped, shared and appreciated before things take a turn for the worst. By conflating the rural and the classical in his poetry, he sublimates the importance of country songs, dances, music and merry-making, showing how his rural subjects enjoy the same important pleasures as the figures from classical legends and myths. These become universal pleasures, which have been enjoyed innumerable times by communities since antiquity.

Hardy's use of classical references to emphasise the importance of pleasurable moments is indicative of the ways in which Greek paganism rose in popularity during the

[59] Andrew Radford, *Thomas Hardy and the Survivals of Time* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2003), p.72.

second half of the nineteenth century. Margot K. Louis notes its effect on poets such as Barret Browning, Tennyson and Arnold so that 'By the 1860s classical paganism had become vital to authors'. [60] More specifically, Hardy's use of pagan culture reflects, as J. B. Bullen has argued, the influence of John Addington Symonds's *Studies of the Greek Poets* (1873) upon his thought. [61] Hardy's writing follows the influence of Symonds's version of the classical, pagan world in preference to that of Arnold. In his essay 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction', published in *Forum* in March 1888, Hardy directly distinguished between these two standpoints as he discussed:

> Whether we hold the arts which depict mankind to be, in the words of Mr. Matthew Arnold, a criticism of life, or, in those of Mr. Addington Symonds, a revelation of life, the material remains the same, with its sublimities, its beauties, its uglinesses, as the case may be. (*PV*, p.79)

For Hardy, Symonds's stance was preferable because it placed more importance upon appreciating the corporeal nature of life, rather than Arnold's set of ideal rules, derived from convention as well as classicism, which were supposed to direct and guide it.

Many of Hardy's poems reflect this position, acknowledging the importance of high culture but also directing his readers to notice and grasp the pleasures of ordinary life. It further bears comparison with Hardy's artistic position, outlined later in his 'Apology'

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[60] Margot K. Louis, 'Gods and Mysteries: The Revival of Paganism and the Remaking of Mythography through the Nineteenth Century', *Victorian Studies,* 47 (3) (2005), 329-361 (pp.338-343, p.338) <https://doi.org/10.1353/vic.2005.0100> (accessed 21November 2019).
[61] J.B. Bullen, *Thomas Hardy: The World of his Novels*, (London: Frances Lincoln, 2013), p.91.

(1922) that 'the exploration of reality […] is the first step towards the soul's betterment, and the body's also' (*CP II*, p.318). This aspect of Hardy's thought, in which rural communities can offer forms of respite from natural elements, such as comradeship, parties and music, is demonstrated in several of his poems such as 'In a Wood' (1898) (*CP I*), 'Winter Night in Woodland' (1925) (*CP III*), and 'The Country Wedding' (1922) (*CP II*), which I will later discuss in greater detail.

For Hardy, then, classical culture helped emphasise the sense that the pleasures of antiquity and his era were essentially the same. One of the most important texts that reinforced Hardy's view of the importance of universal pleasures was Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura.* It was reintroduced into Western thought in the early Renaissance period, and began to influence Victorian poetry, particularly after H.A.J. Munro of Trinity College, Cambridge, published a critical translation in 1860. [62] Another reason for the revival of Lucretius's work was, as Holmes explains, 'the growth of secularism, which saw Lucretius begin to be given more serious attention'. [63] While Lucretius found his quasi-materialism reassuring, as it meant not having to fear living on after death, many Victorians were at odds with his idea that the gods were indifferent to human felicity or suffering, and were, as Louis notes, 'outraged by the very notion of an indifferent deity'. [64] For example, while Arnold drew on Epicurean ideas in 'Empedocles on Etna' he saw 'Depression and

[62] W. R. Johnson, *Lucretius and the Modern World*, 2nd edn (London: Gerald Duckworth, 2006), p.79; Frank. M. Turner, *Contesting Cultural Authority: Essays in Victorian Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.267.
[63] John Holmes, 'Lucretius at the *Fin de Siècle*: Science, Religion and Poetry', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 51 (3) (2008), 266-280 (p.266) <https://doi.org/10.2487/elt.51.3(2008)0024> (accessed 3 August 2019).
[64] Louis, p.343.

ennui…[as] the characteristic stamped on the poem of Lucretius', while Tennyson's 'Lucretius' (1868) presented the Latin poet 'as melancholic, even insane and suicidal'. [65]

Hardy's interpretation of Lucretius was more optimistic than Tennyson's and Arnold's representations. He praised him as the 'glorious Double-man – poet & scientist' (*CL II*, p.143) in an 1897 letter to Edward Clodd, indicating that Hardy regarded both the poetry and the ideas of Lucretius as significant. Indeed, this interest lasted throughout his adult life; he owned an 1851 prose version of the *De Rerum Natura* translated by John Selby Watson, recording some words from Book I in his *Studies, Specimens &c. Notebook,* which Pamela Dalziel and Michael Millgate note bears the date 1865 (*SSN,* p.xi). His interest in Lucretius can also further be connected to his preference for the writings of Symonds. In the November 1879 issue of the *Fortnightly Review* (*LN I*, p.361), Symonds argued that 'We are braced by contact with impassioned revolutionaries, with Lucretius, Voltaire, Leopardi', and this was copied out by Hardy into his literary notebooks (*LN I*, p.124). It underlines that, along with the views of Symonds, Hardy would have seen the *De Rerum Natura* as containing liberating and valuable truths about the reality of existence.

Such truths, for Hardy, involved being able to appreciate the ordinary aspects of life rather than chasing after acclaim. In his literary notebooks he recorded, circa 1896 (*LN II*, p.508), from Edward Dowden's *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1886) the quotation that, while in ancient literature, public opinion, fame and honour were set above virtue 'Lucretius forms p[erha]ps the single exception' (*LN II*, p.62). He owned a copy of

[65] Donald Mackenzie, 'Two Versions of Lucretius: Arnold and Housman', *Translation and Literature*, 16 (2) (2007), 160-177 (pp. 163-165) <https://doi.org/10.3366/tal.2007.0026> (accessed 27 May 2019); Frank M. Turner, *Contesting Cultural Authority: Essays in Victorian Intellectual Life*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.267; Holmes, 'Lucretius at the Fin de Siècle: Science, Religion and Poetry', p.272.

Craufurd Tait Ramage's *Beautiful Thoughts From Latin Authors* (1864), and Hardy's 'A Private Man on Public Men' (1928) (*CP III*), with its focus on appreciating an epicurean life, appears to resemble Ramage's translated passage from Book II of the *De Rerum Natura* entitled 'Philosophy'. Lucretius notes that what is best in life is 'calm, peaceful', to watch while others strive 'At learning, wit, nobility, or fame' or battle 'To reach the top of wealth and sovereign power'. [66] While Hardy was a famous public figure by the time of publication, he echoes these sentiments, if not his own reality, in his 'A Private Man on Public Men'. This retiring posture, genuine or assumed, may also extend to Hardy's interest in – and brief novelistic references to – the poetry of Horace. [67] Michael Edson, for example, has detailed and partially critiqued the scholarly position which holds that British retirement poetry, following the 'popular rediscovery of Horace in the 1500s, was chiefly influenced by the Horatian "*beatus ille* ('happy man')"'. [68] Horace, however, was partially influenced by Lucretius, and Hardy's stance in 'A Private Man on Public Men' endorses a Lucretian view of life that can be more likely traced to his copy of Ramage.[69] His speaker tells the reader that while his contemporaries were striving for wealth in the courts 'Or where the Senate nightly keeps | Its vigils, till their fames were fanned' he instead lived quietly, 'Pondering upon some stick or stone, | Or news of some rare book or bird' (ll.10-11).

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[66] Craufurd Tait Ramage, *Beautiful Thoughts from Latin Authors* (Liverpool: Edward Howell, 1864), p.218 <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.500658> (accessed 12 Sep 2019).
[67] Stephen Harrison, *Victorian Horace: Classics and Class*, 2nd edn (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), p.139-141.
[68] Michael Edson, ''A Closet or a Secret Field': Horace, Protestant Devotion and British Retirement Poetry', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 35 (1) (2012), 17-41 (p.18). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-0208.2010.00347.x> (accessed 6 September 2019).
[69] William Young Sellar, *The Roman Poets of the Augustan Age: Horace and the Elegiac Poets*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.61-62.

This aspect of Hardy's poetry can be contrasted with A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* (1896), in which scholars have detected similar Lucretian themes. [70] Mackenzie has noted that *A Shropshire Lad* draws from Book III of the *De Rerum Natura* in its 'treatment of death, not being, and the mortality of the material soul'. [71] The connections between Hardy and Housman's treatment of such themes appear significant, especially as Hardy's Max Gate copy of *A Shropshire Lad* (1896) is dated 1898, the same year he published his first collection of verse. Frank Hedgcock, a critic of Hardy's acquaintance, and historian Stewart M. Ellis both remembered Hardy's admiration for Housman. [72] Hardy first met Housman in 1899 at Max Gate (*LIFE*, p.327), visited him at Cambridge in 1913 (*CL IV*, p.320-21), and in a 1913 letter to Edmund Gosse remarked that 'I wish that Shropshire Lad […] would do some more verses' (*CL IV*, p.307).

Part of the reason for Hardy's approval of *A Shropshire Lad* may lie in the fact that, while the speaker presents a harsh and unvarnished view of existence, he does so to help fortify toughness. In poem LXII, Housman describes the Anatolian King Mithridates, who gradually strengthened his resistance to poison by slowly imbibing it, trying:

First a little, thence to more,
He sampled all her killing store;
And easy, smiling, seasoned sound,

[70] Richard Gaskin, *Horace and Housman* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2013), p.77; Kenneth Womack, ''Ashes under Uricon': Historicizing A. E. Housman, Reifying T.H. Huxley, Embracing Lucretius', *A. E. Housman: A Reassessment*, ed. by Alan W. Holden and J. Roy Birch (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp.76-86 (p.76).
[71] Mackenzie, p.169.
[72] Cited in Gibson, p. 98, p.111.

Sate the king when healths went round. [73]

These fortifying sentiments are found in several of Hardy's poems, such as 'In Tenebris II' (1901) (*CP I*), where Hardy wrote that 'if way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst' (l.14). A number of Hardy's brighter pieces, however, differ from Housman's poem, indicating life's harshness not merely to engender toughness, but in order to emphasise the important of pleasurable moments. For Hardy, as for Lucretius, accepting the harsher aspects of life also meant that it could be enjoyed and even laughed at. These aspects are demonstrated in a number of Hardy's poems which I will later discuss at length, such as 'The Slow Nature: (An Incident of Froom Valley)' (1898) (*CP I*), 'Life Laughs Onward' (1917) (*CP II*), and 'Ice on the Highway' (1925) (*CP III*).

Hardy's poetry, while focusing on shared pleasures which reflect classical influences, often shows the way in which they are enjoyed by rural communities, linking universal themes to his own specific Dorset location. In poems such as 'The Spring Call' (1909) (*CP I*), his speaker becomes one of many ordinary rural inhabitants aligned with the seasons. Hardy's speaker often transcends his own personal position, incorporating the wider community, describing in this case how the lovers' greeting call "'pret-ty de-urr!"' (l.24) is sounded in Dorset in the Spring. The teller thus relays 'However strangers sound such words, | That's how we sound them here' (ll.19-20), the pronoun extending the connection to all the men and women of his community.

[73] A. E. Housman, 'LXII', *A Shropshire Lad and Other Poems,* ed. by Archie Burnett, 2nd edn (London: Penguin Classics, 2010), pp. 78-80, ll.63-66.

This poem further reflects the influence of his Dorset mentor, the clergyman and poet William Barnes. Hardy's notes tell us that he encountered Barnes around 1856 (*LIFE*, p.32). Barnes became a lifelong friend, and many of his poems, such as 'In the Spring', which Hardy expressed a liking for (*PV*, p.25), address seasonal change and renewal. In the Spring' describes the speaker's young lover as resembling the flowers of the season, so that 'her skin's lik' the jessamy blossom | A-spread in the Spring', but further connects this to seasonal, rural customs, such as nuptials, 'An' oh! 'tis the maid I'm a-hopen | To wed in the Spring.' [74] The preceding imagery is further connected to the surrounding fauna, for instance through birdsong, while Barnes' verse uses traditional Dorset diction and pronunciation, with, for example, the letter 's' voiced as 'z':

> O whissle gay birds, up bezide her,
> In drong-way, an' woodlands,
> O zing, swingen lark. [75]

In Hardy's 'The Spring Call', the greeting call '"pret-ty de-urr!"' (l.24) is seen, or imagined, as repeated by the local birds. The morpheme 'urr' rhymes with 'her', forming a three part connection which aligns the caller with the object of his affection but also further aligns the lovers with the cries of the birds and their natural communal environment. Hardy's poem, like Barnes' poetry, uses a selection of Dorset diction and pronunciation, But the speaker,

[74] William Barnes, 'In the Spring', *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect* (London: C. Kegan Paul, 1879) p. 349-50, ll.3-4, ll.27-28 <https://archive.org/details/dorsetpoemsofrura00barnrich/page/n9/mode/2up> (accessed 2 Nov 2018).
[75] Barnes 'In the Spring', ll.21-23.

in highlighting other ways in which lovers' calls are sounded, such as 'Beneath a Scottish sky,' (l.10), also emphasises the overarching theme of love, while once again connecting universal pleasures to his own rural region.

Hardy's representation of shared and communal pleasures such as courting, weddings and carolling was not just influenced by paganism, but was also underpinned by his emotional attachment to the Church. This is no paradox if one places these pagan and Christian influences within the context of Hardy's evolutionary meliorism, which, he explained in his 'Apology' (1922), was a set of beliefs 'so old as to underlie the Gospel scheme, and even to permeate the Greek drama' (*CP II*, p.319). Both cultural influences appear to underpin Hardy's more hopeful poems of human life. This means that, while Housman's work displays, as Perkins argues, a 'conspicuous absence of Christian feeling and the presence of stoicism', its influence lies mixed in Hardy's poetry with a more life-affirming but not conventionally or religiously moral Christian stance. [76]

Hardy likely lost his religious faith during the 1860s but in January 1890 he noted that 'I have been looking for God for 50 years, and I think that if he had existed I should have discovered him' (*LIFE*, p.234). [77] Revealingly, this comment illustrates three different things about Hardy's attitude towards Christianity. Firstly it displays Hardy's lack of genuine faith, and secondly an irreverent attitude, whether towards God or himself, but thirdly, through revealing half a century of unsuccessful religious searching, it also indicates a lingering attachment to the Church. Jan Jędrzejewski has noted Hardy's

[76] David Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry: From the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1977), p.202.
[77] Ralph Pite, *Thomas Hardy: The Guarded Life* (London: Picador, 2006), p.125.

relationships with members of the Dorset clergy, arguing 'he would often support them in their efforts at social or community work'. [78] Hardy appeared to see religion as benign in principle, yet founded on an untruth, namely the belief in God. In a 1902 missive to Edward Clodd he explained his position in detail, writing that:

> If the doctrines of the supernatural were quietly abandoned to-morrow by the Church, & "reverence & love for an ethical ideal" alone retained, not one in ten thousand would object to the readjustment, while the enormous bulk of thinkers excluded by the old teaching would be brought into the fold, & our venerable old churches & cathedrals would become the centres of emotional life that they once were. (*CL III*, p.5)

A number of Hardy's poems demonstrate the nature of this emotional and moral connection, featuring the Church as the centre of communal life, and the focus of pleasures such as singing and dancing. Indeed, the church as a source of music is central to his family, with several generations of Hardy men playing the fiddle during weekly services, while his enjoyment of church weddings also reflects his own family experience. His parents met at Stinsford Church when his father was a fiddler in the west-gallery (*LIFE,* p.18), and the event is commemorated in 'A Church Romance' (1909) (*CP I*), detailing in simple, sentimental language how 'Thus their hearts' bond began, in due time signed' (l.9). His poetic representation of rural Church communities was also influenced by Barnes, who, as a local clergyman, exemplified for Hardy the kinder, more forgiving face of Christianity. In

[78] Jan Jedrzejewski, *Thomas Hardy and the Church* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), p.183.

Barnes' life-affirming poetry, the church is often featured as a backdrop to youthful romance, friendships and fun. In 'Easter Sunday', Jim, after church, shows off his frock coat 'An' he had sich a bit o' fun! | He meade the maidens squeal an' run'. [79] Elsewhere, in 'Bringen Woone Gwain O Zundays' the poet describes John, who:

> Vor after church, we got hwome,
> In evenen you did always come
> To spend a happy hour or two. [80]

Hardy's emotional, rather than critical response to Barnes's poems is evidenced in an 1886 letter to Coventry Patmore, writing that he had 'lived too much within his atmosphere to see his productions in their due perspective' (*CL I*, p.157). Giles Dugdale argues that, in his editing of an edition of Barnes's poems, Hardy 'preferred to show the part of Barnes wherein his own love of nature and humanity could be revealed' while Ralph Pite connects Hardy's loving-kindness to 'the way of life led by William Barnes'. [81] Hardy's poems, therefore, are also influenced by the community-spirited legacy of Barnes. In particular, several poems that I will discuss later powerfully demonstrate Dorset rural customs and seasonal celebrations, such as merry-making and drinking. Works such as 'We Field-Women' (1928) (*CP III*), 'Shortening Days at the Homestead' (1925) (*CP III*) and 'Great Things' (1917) (*CP II*), directly bear the thematic influence of Barnes.

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[79] William Barnes, 'Easter Sunday', *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect*, p.8, ll.26-27.
[80] William Barnes, 'Bringen Woone Gwain O' Zundays', *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect*, p.17-18, ll.9-11.
[81] Giles Dugdale, *William Barnes of Dorset* (London: Cassell & Company Ltd, 1953), p.197; Pite, p.474.

What is perhaps most significant about Hardy's representation of communal pleasures is that they are indicated to be enduring. In some poems, his characters appear to function as universal types who do not just reflect the past but signpost the future, participating in activities which will continue after they pass away. In this, Hardy's position is influenced not just by the intellectual culture of paganism and the social, communal aspects of Christianity but also by evolutionary theory. This slow but continually regenerative aspect of Hardy's thought is therefore compatible with his 'evolutionary meliorism' (*CP II*, p. 319) and, as I discussed in the introductory chapter, a weak Lamarckian position as exemplified by figures such as Edward Clodd. [82] Hardy was close friends with Clodd and owned a copy of his *Pioneers of Evolution From Thales to Huxley* (1897) (*CL II*, p.143). In his book Clodd powerfully documented human evolution as a physical and mental advancement, and as Lightman notes, saw evolutionary theorists from Thales to Huxley as 'the geniuses produced by the evolutionary process'. [83]

Clodd also discussed the ways in which the development of family sympathies had advanced civilization, tracing these general processes from Lucretius to other evolutionary figures. [84] In his 1897 letter to Clodd, as already mentioned, Hardy was effusive in his praise of the 'due honour' which Clodd gave to the poetic and scientific ideas of Lucretius (*CL II*, p.143), indicating that he placed his ideas within the same bracket as evolutionary thinkers such as Darwin. In *The Descent*, Darwin argued that family ties and character

[82] Bernard Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science: Designing Nature for New Audiences*, 2nd edn (London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p.223.
[83] Lightman, p.253-266.
[84] Edward Clodd, *Pioneers of Evolution from Thales to Huxley: With an Intermediate Chapter on the Causes of Arrest of the Movement* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1897), p.31 <https://archive.org/details/pioneersofevolutclod> (accessed 28 Mar 2018).

could be passed down from hereditary descendent to descendant, linking such biological traits to sympathy which he also saw as evolutionary in origin. [85] Hardy would have approved of Lucretius, Clodd and Darwin's notions regarding human social evolution, as he held the view that character traits such as sympathy and kindness towards others possessed the capacity to endure. This is displayed in poems such as 'In Time of "The Breaking of Nations"' (1917) (*CP II*), which I will address at the end of this section.

In Hardy's poetry, his speakers and characters often attain a sense of warmth and companionship through interactions with rural communities. He illustrates how these shared experiences are brightened in exhilarating ways through the enjoyment of music, laughter and drinking, while also indicating that such pleasures are universal and will endure across time. The importance for Hardy of simple human companionship is demonstrated even in situations where the plants and animals surrounding such communities are shown to compete in Darwinian fashion. For example, in 'In a Wood' (1898) (*CP I*), Hardy's speaker describes entering a forest:

Heart-halt and spirit-lame,
City-opprest,
Unto this wood I came
As to a nest;
Dreaming that sylvan peace
Offered the harrowed ease –

[85] Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), vol 1, p.280; p.164.

Nature a soft release

From men's unrest.

(ll.9-16)

Initially, the poem begins with the poet 'Dreaming that sylvan peace | Offered the harrowed ease', reminding us of Arnold's 'Scholar Gypsy' (1852-3), where the Cumnor hills are described as offering 'shy retreats' and an imagined 'sequester'd grange'. [86] Hardy's teller, similar to Arnold's speaker, enters the scene from a more urban environment, being 'Heart-halt and spirit-lame, | City-opprest'. At the same time, the teller is not necessarily city-born, as the poem is subtitled 'From *The Woodlanders*' (p.83), being an imagined extended version of the novel, indicating that the speaker may share similarities with the rural characters in Hardy's novel. In addition, he tells us that, 'Unto this wood I came | As to a nest', further indicating that he may be returning to the place of his youth or childhood.

In Hardy's first stanza, therefore, the speaker draws upon classical culture, but also implies that the wood is specifically local to him. By the third stanza, however, the sylvan spell is broken with the realization that the trees are competitors:

But, having entered in,

Great growths and small

Show them to men akin –

Combatants all!

[86] Matthew Arnold, 'The Scholar Gypsy', *Matthew Arnold (The Oxford Authors)*, ed. by Miriam Allott and Robert H. Super (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 208-215, l.70, l.130.

Sycamore shoulders oak,
Bines the slim sapling yoke,
Ivy-spun halters choke
    Elms stout and tall.
(ll.17-24)

Hardy describes the trees as 'Combatants all!' Darwin, in *The Origin*, had described the competitive impulses of the natural world as 'the war of nature'. [87] The trees' struggle to populate the forest in Hardy's poem shows that in competition there must always be losers as well as winners. Hardy describes such losers, 'Cankering in black despair' (l.31), the poet bemoaning the fact that 'no grace I find' (l.32). This is similarly illustrated in *The Woodlanders* (1887), where 'the ivy slowly strangled to death the promising sapling' (*WL*, p.52). Further, natural competition mirrors human competition in *The Woodlanders*, where the struggling lichen and ivy accentuate the rivalry that exists between Fitzpiers and Giles. These aspects are also reflected in Hardy's bleak poem 'The Ivy-Wife' (1898) (*CP I*). The ivy that voices the poem is female, but resembles a competitive spouse, quite possibly Hardy's pessimistic view of a middle-aged Emma, who describes how 'I longed to love a full-boughed beech | And be as high as he' (l.1-2) before encircling an ash tree 'Till with my soft green claw | I cramped and bound him as I wove…' (ll.16-17).

In many of Hardy's bleaker works, the pleasures of his subjects are strangled or thwarted, but this also accentuates the value of such pleasures to him, as is demonstrated

[87] Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, Or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, 3rd edn (London: Penguin Books, 1985), p.459.

elsewhere. Some of his brighter poems, for instance, identify the source of such brief moments of joy as found in shared human companionship. In 'In a Wood', the personal speaker becomes aware not just of the forest's Darwinian nature, but appreciates the sympathetic qualities found in rural human society:

> Since, then, no grace I find
>
> Taught me of trees,
>
> Turn I back to my kind,
>
> Worthy as these.
>
> There at least smiles abound,
>
> There discourse trills around,
>
> There, now and then, are found
>
> Life-loyalties.
>
> (ll.33-40)

In *The Descent* Darwin had noted that one of the most powerful human and social virtues was 'the instinct of sympathy' and that this quality 'no doubt was originally acquired, like all the other social instincts, through natural selection'. [88] While in Hardy's poem the trees evolve through competition, human societies can be understood as a higher product of the same evolutionary processes. The slow, competitive growth of the trees therefore affords the poet a new perspective on the importance of shared human companionship. The last

[88] Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex, Vol 1*, p.164.

stanza of ‘In a Wood’ concludes on a note of abiding hopefulness as Hardy’s speaker turns towards the succour of human ‘Life-loyalties’. Hence, Hardy’s reference in ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’ to the ‘sound mind and body, and thus much sustenance’ (*PV*, p.41) which is the birthright of the rural worker, is evidenced here as soothing, in the final stanza, the ‘City-opprest’ urban mind of the speaker. For Hardy, all living, growing things are competitive, but, among such processes it is human companionship that offers joy and hope.

The emphasis Hardy places upon the life-affirming significance of companionship is illustrated in a number of his brighter poems. In some of these, music or singing functions as a way of cheering the speaker, reminding him of a human presence. This also helps us to place some of his more pessimistic pieces, where such human warmth is lacking, in greater context, further illustrating its fundamental importance for Hardy. For example, in ‘Night-Time in Mid-Fall’ (1925) (*CP III*) Hardy describes a deserted, stormy night where ‘Church-timbers crack, and witches ride abroad’ (l.12). While the absense of a human presence helps create a dark mood in such works, this thematically connects to other poems featuring people singing and playing music that offers bright reprieve from nature’s harshness. When reading Hardy’s various poems of this latter type, we can see how these musical pleasures are experienced and enjoyed during different times of the year, illustrating the ways in which different events can improve the seasons in which they are held. In several of Hardy’s poems of this type bleaker moments are succeeded by sudden examples of human warmth. In ‘Christmastide’ (1928) (*CP III*), for instance, the lonely speaker describes walking ‘despondently’ through the night rain, but the mood in the second, concluding stanza brightens as:

A cheerful voice called, nigh me,
'A merry Christmas, friend!' –
There rose a figure by me,
Walking with townward trend.
(ll. 9-12)

This figure, a common tramp, breaks into song as he walks, illustrating how moments of musical celebration, such as Christmas carols, can serve to brighten some of Hardy's potentially darker seasonal poems.

'Winter Night in Woodland' (*CP III*) directly illustrates Hardy's perception of music as a brightening force. The first stanza documents the struggles of a fox, while the second concerns the fate of birds at the hands of poachers. The poem, published in 1925 but subtitled '(Old Time)' (p.44), possibly indicates a much earlier date of conception, but also appears reminiscent of Robert Frost's *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* (1922). Yet Hardy's poem, having established a melancholy mood, then proceeds to subvert this. The final stanza's opening line, beginning with the hanging conjunction phrase 'And then', signposts a new direction and introduces a group of fiddlers who are out Christmas caroling:

From dim distance, a rhythm of voices and strings:
'Tis the quire, just afoot on their long yearly rounds,

To rouse by worn carols each house in their bounds.

(ll.20-22)

Unlike ‘In a Wood’, which juxtaposes Darwinian nature with human ‘life-loyalties’, this poem, in the first three stanzas, places human behaviour within the same competitive Darwinian paradigm. Yet, in the final stanza, through its more specific representation of communal warmth such as music, placed within the context of Christmas festivities, Hardy also illustrates how human life transcends such harshness.

Again, his bleaker poems, which address the passing of these communal pleasures, and the absence of musical celebration, can help us place his brighter poems of this sort in an overall context. In ‘In the Small Hours’ (1922) (*CP II*), Hardy’s speaker, a fiddler, wistfully looks back to the past weddings and parties he played at. Upon waking, and finding ‘That Now, not Then, held reign’ (l.24), he tells us that ‘It seemed a thing for weeping’ (l.21). In ‘The Country Wedding’, subtitled ‘(A Fiddler’s Story)’ (1922) (*CP II*), however, the poem ends ironically, the prevailing mood being that of comedy. Hardy, as his notes record, ‘played sometimes at village weddings, at one of which the bride, all in white, kissed him in her intense pleasure at the dance’ (*LIFE*, p.28), but he also played ‘in the house of the tailor who had breeched him’ (*LIFE*, p.28). Music, therefore, could have associations with both celebratory events and comedic situations, and in Hardy’s poetry these things are often related. The final stanza of ‘The Country Wedding’, for example, ironically relays how the bride and groom are celebrated and later mourned by the same group of fiddlers, the speaker remembering in the closing couplet about the time ‘When we

went to play 'em to church together, | And carried 'em there in an after year' (ll.35-36). The initial seven stanzas, however, are full of cheer, smiles and laughter, the wedding being blessed with 'fine weather' (l.2) and celebrated with music.

While Hardy's poetry celebrates the role of music in brightening human life, he places great emphasis upon enjoyments which intensify such shared experiences. We can therefore find striking examples of joy and hope in poems featuring exhilarating, heady pleasures such as laughter and drinking. The first of these pleasures, the act of laughter, is connected to events involving music at parties, weddings or church services. Laughter plays a key role in 'The Country Wedding', for example, where the bride, perhaps foreseeing future tragedy, remonstrates with the fiddler:

> 'Too gay!' She pleaded. 'Clouds may gather,
> And sorrow come.' But she gave in, laughing,
> And by supper-time when we'd got to the quaffing
> Her fears were forgot, and her smiles weren't slack.
> (ll.25-28)

This passage, in which the bride 'gave in, laughing' resembles a number of Hardy's poems in that it reminds us of the philosophy of Lucretius. Hardy's copy of Ramage contains a passage from Book III of the *DRN* entitled on the 'Shortness of the Pleasures of Life' which advises those looking serious at celebratory events to remember that 'delights are short'. [89]

[89] Ramage, p.222.

This also reflects Hardy's reading of Symonds's *Studies of the Greek Poets* (1873). Symonds, in the conclusion to his *Studies,* quoted Arthur Hugh Clough as he praised the spirit of the Greek '"Stoic-Epicurean acceptance" of the world' where accepting transience engendered a heighted enjoyment of life's pleasures.[90] Hardy recorded the passage in his notebooks (*LN I,* p.65), indicating that he would have read Symonds's further comment that 'They clearly saw that, in spite of disaster and disease, life was a good thing for those who maintained the balance of moral and physical health'.[91] While the bride's funeral takes place at the poem's conclusion, in triumphing over her forebodings and grasping the preciousness of the moment she successfully enjoys being part of what is described as 'a grand wedding' (l.29). The bride's laughter marks her decision to seize the day and enjoy the event before things later take a turn for the worse.

For Hardy, moreover, as for Lucretius, laughter functions as a universal constant underpinning human existence. In Book II of *De Rerum Natura,* Lucretius tells Memmius, 'That a man can laugh who has no laughing atoms'. [92] Such atoms, Lucretius argues, lacking any intrinsic sentience themselves, continually assimilate into laughing humans. While change informs life as an inevitable aspect which must be faced honestly if it is to be successfully lived, the recurrence of laughter also illustrates the endurance of shared pleasure. Clodd summarised Lucretius' position towards change in his *Pioneers of Evolution* (1897), writing that it 'is the law of the universe; what is, will perish, but only to

[90] John Addington Symonds, *Studies of the Greek Poets,* 2 vols (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1880), vol 2, p.396 < https://archive.org/details/studiesgreekpoe06symogoog> (accessed 17 Jun 2019).
[91] John Addington Symonds, *Studies of the Greek Poets: Volume 2*, p.396.
[92] Lucretius, *On The Nature of the Universe*, trans. by Ronald Melville (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1997, reprinted 2008), l.986.

reappear in another form', and that, therefore, '"This terror of the soul, therefore, and this darkness, must be dispelled"'. [93] In Hardy's poems, terror is never the pervading or enduring emotion; just as tragedy repeats in other forms, so does laughter. In some of his more tragi-ironic poems, therefore, joy and fun still continues for others, just as life in general proceeds onwards. In 'The Slow Nature', subtitled '(An Incident of Froom Valley)' (1898) (*CP I*), as a bereaved woman suffers a loss, the bearer of the bad tidings 'soon lost his mournful mood | And laughed in his ancient way' (l.31-32). The same sentiments are demonstrated in 'Life Laughs Onward' (1917) (*CP II*), as Hardy's speaker describes a visit to an old abode, now occupied by gamboling children, and realizes that:

> Life laughed and moved on unsubdued,
> I saw that Old succumbed to Young;
> 'Twas well.
> (ll.13-15)

In addition, in 'The Country Wedding', those enthusiastically enjoying the fiddlers' music include the married and the yet to marry, such as 'maids, bachelors, and spouses | Who cheered the songs that we knew how to play' (ll.15-16), giving the sense that, while a funeral follows the wedding, such festivities will in turn continue to be enjoyed by future communities.

[93] Clodd, p.25.

Hardy's poetic characters can even enjoy recurring seasonal problems through sharing moments of laughter. The harshness of rural winter, for example, is offset by humour in 'Ice on the Highway' (1925) (*CP III*):

Seven buxom women abreast, and arm in arm,
Trudge down the hill, tip-toed,
And breathing warm;
They must perforce trudge thus, to keep upright
On the glassy ice-bound road,
And they must get to market whether or no,
Provisions running low
With the nearing Saturday night,
While the lumbering van wherein they mostly ride
Can nowise go:
Yet loud their laughter as they stagger and slide!

The footnote to the poem tells us that the location is elevated, set upon 'Yell'ham Hill' (p.46) in Dorset, and thus must be rather precarious. The meter in Hardy's poem reflects this, alternating in length line by line, indicating the slip-sliding steps a group of women must make 'On the glassy ice-bound road'. The alternating length of the lines in the poem serves to highlight the women's challenge, with the shorter lines particularly accentuating this problem. The speaker tells us, for example, 'And they must get to market whether or

no,' with the following truncated line relaying that 'Provisions running low'. Again, this contrast is highlighted in the ninth and tenth lines, which inform us 'While the lumbering van wherein they mostly ride | Can nowise go'. The final elongated line, however, 'Yet loud their laughter as they stagger and slide!' concludes the poem by subverting the mood that the shorter lines have established. Hardy places the line stress upon the four words 'loud', 'laughter', 'stagger' and 'slide', joining them together as naturally interconnected. In using these four words he also demonstrates alliteration and assonance, creating an onomatopoeic effect akin to glassy, slippery ice but which is also light and humourous. As in 'Winter Night in Woodland' Hardy shows, this time through laughter, how shared pleasure can overcome the harshness of nature and create a more joyous mood.

Hardy's use of laughter, and its recurrence, is most brightly represented in 'We Field-Women' (1928) (*CP III*), where rural women endure autumn and winter in the first two stanzas before, in the final stanza, laughing and rejoicing in the summer sun. Like *Tess* (1891), this poem features locations such as a dairy farm and a vegetable field called Flintcomb-Ash. Whereas in *Tess*, however, the location moves from the former to the latter as the seasons proceed and the mood darkens, Hardy's poem reverses this order:

> How it rained
> When we worked at Flintcomb-Ash,
> And could not stand upon the hill
> Trimming swedes for the slicing-mill.
> The wet washed through us – plash, plash, plash:

How it rained!

How it snowed
When we crossed from Flintcomb-Ash
To the Great Barn for drawing reed,
Since we could nowise chop a swede. –
Flakes in each doorway and casement-sash:
How it snowed!

How it shone
When we went from Flintcomb-Ash
To start at dairywork once more
In the laughing meads, with cows three-score,
And pails, and songs, and love – too rash:
How it shone!

All of the three parts begin and end with the same refrain, but each sixth line, containing an exclamation mark, fully emphasizes the stanza's content rather than merely echoing the first line. As events move from winter to summer, and from Flintcomb-Ash to the Great Barn and then the dairy farm, the refrain in each stanza changes, verbs moving from 'rained' to 'snowed' and then, finally, to 'shone'. Like 'The Country Wedding: A Fiddler's Story', the poem's theme of transient happiness connects to Lucretius. For example, in the final

stanza the speaker describes 'love – too rash', the dash serving to emphasize love's heightened but unsustainable extremity. The poem also concludes with the words 'How it Shone!', however, which directly juxtaposes the effect of the previous hanging line, creating the powerful abiding effect that such experiences were worthwhile and highly pleasurable. While 'The Country Wedding' ends more ironically, 'We Field-Women' concludes more brightly in 'the laughing meads', strongly indicating that precious moments were enjoyed by the speaker.

The title's use of the collective pronoun distinguishes it from the more tragic arc of *Tess,* representing not just agricultural and seasonal but shared experiences. In this respect, 'We Field-Women' demonstrates the influence of Barnes' treatment of the seasons. His first book of *Poems* is arranged with specific 'Spring', 'Summer', 'Fall' and 'Winter' sections while rural characters are significantly connected to both the landscape and the seasons. In the 'Spring' section of his *Poems,* Barnes's 'The Milk-Maid o' The Farm' describes how 'O Poll's the milk-maid o' the farm ! | An' Poll's so happy out in groun''. [94] Similarly to Hardy's poem, which concludes with the words 'How it shone!', Barnes describes how 'the zun | Do sheen agean the western brows'. [95] Hardy's 'We Field-Women' likewise illustrates how seasonal changes are enjoyed by rural characters while further implying that these pleasures are cyclical and continuous. Barnes's milkmaid faces the sun and 'There she do zing beside her cows', while in 'We Field-Women' brighter events are enjoyed by the women in the final stanza. [96] The 'dairywork' occurs 'In the laughing meads,

[94] William Barnes, 'The Milk-Maid o' The Farm', *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect*, pp.13-14, ll.1-2.
[95] Barnes, 'The Milk-Maid o' The Farm', ll.13-14.
[96] Barnes, 'The Milk-Maid o' The Farm' l.16.

with cows three-score, | And pails, and songs' indicating that, despite the wet and cold of the previous stanzas, the women's capacity for singing and laughing at life, as in 'Ice on the Highway', remains undimmed, and that such moments will resume, both for these women and more hopefully for country field women in general.

In addition to laughter, drinking further accentuates shared moments of celebration in Hardy's poems, such as dancing, music and parties. The frequent references to alcohol in Hardy's works indicate its lifelong importance to him as a source of joy, and Robert Graves describes how, upon visiting Hardy in 1920, he 'grew enthusiastic in praise of cider, which he had drunk since a boy and thought one of the finest medicines he knew'.[97] In poems such as 'Drinking Song' (1928) (*CP III*), as I have already discussed in Chapter 1, drinking can function as a shared antidote to a perceived absence of meaning in life. Here, the speaker implores his listeners to 'Fill full your cups; feel no distress' (l.80), proceeding to more hopefully proclaim 'We'll do a good deed nevertheless' (l.82). Drinking can also help brighten life's familial celebrations and romantic pleasures. In 'News For Her Mother' (1909) (*CP I*) the female speaker returns to her family home bringing news of her impending marriage. She tells us of her thrilled and also nervous excitement, so 'That I bound | Like a ball or leaf or lamb along the ground' (ll.13-14). As she approaches her home, these heady emotions are connected to the family brewed alcohol, as she imagines: 'Apples fine, | And the cider wrung to-year will be as wine' (ll.-67). At the same time, Hardy represents drinking as a reoccurring pleasure which, despite the death of individuals, will be enjoyed by successive generations. In 'Farmer Dunman's Funeral' (1925) (*CP III*),

[97] Cited in Gibson, p.135.

the old man of the poem's title writes a note to his soon-to-be mourners 'On ten rum-bottles one day, | "*Drink for my funeral*."' (ll.7-8). He instructs it to be held on a Sunday, not a Monday, leading the mourners to celebrate, in the poem's concluding line, 'But now we gain, being Sunday, | A jolly afternoon' (l.20).

The role of alcohol in brightening the darker aspects of life is implied by Hardy in 'Shortening Days at the Homestead' (1925) (*CP III*). The opening stanza depicts the coming of autumn and the suffering of fauna and flora:

> The first fire since the summer is lit, and is smoking into the room:
> The sun-rays thread it through, like woof-lines in a loom.
> Sparrows spurt from the hedge, whom misgivings appal
> That winter did not leave last year for ever, after all.
> Like shock-headed urchins, spiny-haired,
> Stand pollard willows, their twigs just bared.
>
> Who is this coming with pondering pace,
> Black and ruddy, with white embossed,
> His eyes being black, and ruddy his face,
> And the marge of his hair like morning frost?
> It's the cider maker,
> And appletree-shaker,
> And behind him on wheels, in readiness,

His mill, and tubs, and vat, and press.

The initial longer line of the first stanza is followed by two shorter ones, the pattern then repeating and resembling the receding foliage of a tree. This connects to the language of the poem, as Hardy's speaker describes how 'Like shock-headed urchins, spiny-haired, | Stand pollard willows, their twigs just bared'. As the poem continues, however, the promise of cider helps it achieve a more human, hopeful mood, which is emphasised if contrasted with similar imagery used in Housman's Poem XXXI from *A Shropshire Lad* (1896). This poem details the effect of a winter gale upon Shropshire woodland, as 'On Wenlock Edge the wood's in trouble; | His forest fleece the Wrekin heaves'. [98] Housman references the ancient British city of Uricon, built by the Roman Empire, and imagines a stationed centurion who would have suffered then, just as Housman's speaker appears to suffer. Richard Gaskin has noted the poem's connection to the poetry of Horace while Kenneth Womack has also traced the wind blowing through human history to the atomic theory of Epicurus and Lucretius. [99]

Hardy's 'Shortening Days at the Homestead', which offers a similarly bleak woodland scene in its introduction, subverts this mood in the second stanza. Hardy demonstrates how humans do not merely suffer, as in Housman's poem, showing instead how rural pleasures such as drinking can potentially counter such empty scenes. The second stanza introduces an approaching human character, creating a more hopeful atmosphere, asking 'Who is this coming with pondering pace'. Here, the poem's structure appears to

[98] A.E. Housman, 'XXXI', *A Shropshire Lad and Other Poems*, p. 41, ll.1-2.
[99] Gaskin, p.14; Womack, p. 82.

shape a cup, four longer lines followed by two short lines, which inform us 'It's the cider-maker, | And appletree-shaker' before being followed by two final longer lines. This more pleasurable image is enhanced by Hardy's notes from 1873 which document how he 'assisted at his father's cider-making – a proceeding he had always enjoyed from childhood' (*LIFE*, p.99), describing a process 'whose sweet smells and oozings in the crisp autumn air can never be forgotten' (*LIFE*, p.99). Similarly, in William Barnes's poem 'Teaken in Apples' from his 'Fall' section of *Poems*, his speaker describes a rambunctious series of scenes in which a group of apple-pickers fight and play as they gather the apples and take them to the cider-house. [100] Later, such cider is drunk in 'Fanny's Be'th-day' from the 'Winter' section of poems, Barnes's speaker describing a further series of comic scenes that occur as 'How merry, wi' the cider cup, | We kept poor Fanny's be'th-day up!' [101] Hardy's poem does not describe such merriment, the entrance of the cider-maker described more soberly as 'coming with pondering pace'.

Hardy avoids the kind of pessimism, however, displayed in Philip Larkin's six-line poem 'As Bad as a Mile' (1960), in which he describes throwing an apple core towards a bin, yet missing. The implication in Larkin's poem is that, like the fall, his miss with the apple speaks 'Of failure spreading back up the arm', being indicative of wider human failings. [102] In his own evaluation of Hardy, as I discussed in the introduction chapter, Larkin argued that 'it surely cannot be denied that the dominant emotion in Hardy is

[100] William Barnes, 'Teaken in Apples', *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect*, pp.91-92.
[101] William Barnes, 'Fanny's Be'th-day', *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect*, pp.107-108, ll.1-2.
[102] Philip Larkin, 'As Bad as a Mile', *Collected Poems*, 7th edn, ed. by Anthony Thwaite (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2001), p.125, l.4.

sadness'. [103] Yet the latter's fallen apples, while not producing the scenes of mirth encountered in Barnes's poems, instead imply some kind of new beginning or possible enjoyment that lies in wait, the final two lines lengthening as it describes 'And behind him on wheels, in readiness, | His mill, and tubs, and vat, and press'. In this sense, Hardy's poem lies tonally between Housman and Barnes, acknowledging hardship and transience, but also implying the possibility of fun. While birds and trees appear set to suffer at the coming of winter, the promise of the forthcoming cider also provides a sense of hope that juxtaposes the melancholy mood of the first stanza. The poem juxtaposes a Lucretian awareness of transience with the possibility of future enjoyment, as apples are turned into a vital juice that subverts the pessimism of winter.

The role of drinking in accentuating shared pleasures is more directly expressed in 'Great Things' (1917) (*CP II*), in which, over four stanzas, the speaker extolls his love for cider, dancing and love. The structure reflects this giddy, celebratory mood, containing short lines with alternating three and four stressed syllables, giving each eight-lined stanza a light ballad quality that would suit a drinking party. Hardy describes 'Spinning down to Weymouth town' (l.3) to enjoy drinking cider, reflecting the third stanza of Housman's poem LXII (1896) in which he rather playfully describes attending 'Ludlow fair', drinking 'Pints and quarts of Ludlow beer' and lying 'down in lovely muck'. [104] Yet Housman's poem darkens as he awakes to face reality, writing:

[103] Philip Larkin, 'Wanted: Good Hardy Critic', *Required Writing: Miscellaneous Pieces 1955 – 1982* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1983), pp. 168-174 (p.172).
[104] Housman, 'LXII', l.29, l.32, l.35. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Then I saw the morning sky:

Heigho, the tale was all a lie;

The world, it was the old world yet.

(ll.37-39)

In Housman's work, life's pleasures are unsustainable so that a harsher draught is preferred, which will prove to be 'The better for the embittered hour' (l.54). Similarly to the structure of 'We Field-Women', however, in 'Great Things' each pleasure, such as 'Sweet cyder' (l.1), is emphasised at the end of every stanza with an exclamation mark, reaffirming its enjoyable importance. The first two lines of each stanza are partially repeated in the final stanzaic couplet, so that 'O cyder is a great thing, | A great thing to me!' (l.7-8)

The second stanza moves from drinking to dancing, indicating the ways in which Hardy connected these two forms of pleasure. For example, in 'The Night of the Dance' (1909) (*CP I*) Hardy's speaker relays how 'spigots are pulled and viols strung' (l.16) as preparations for the dance begin. This poem, and the second stanza of 'Great Things', therefore, reflect Hardy's recorded enjoyment of dancing, his notes describing that, by as early as nine or ten, he was 'wildly fond of dancing' (*LIFE*, p.24). Much later, he records dancing the 'Blue Danube' Waltz with Lady Grove in 1896, amongst promenaders 'who eyed them with a mild surmise as to whether they had been drinking or not' (*LIFE*, p.298). For Hardy, dancing is analogous to both the heady effects of alcohol and the thrill of romance. The third stanza of 'Great Things' thus links dancing upon a green to the imagined presence of Cupid, relaying:

When, having drawn across the lawn
In darkness silently,
A figure flits like one a-wing
Out from the nearest tree.
(ll.19-22)

In addition, each enjoyment listed in the poem appears to ape the act of dancing, Hardy using active, exhilarating verbs, stanza by stanza, such as ‘Spinning’ (l.3), ‘dancing’ (l.15) and ‘flits’ (l.21). The poem thus resembles a giddy, raucous song being played, sang and danced to by a group of revelers.

The fourth and final stanza shifts from the corporeal to partially engage with the metaphysical before returning again to the physical world. It further moves from the present to the future tense, marking a key shift in the poem which emphasizes its meaning:

Will these be always great things,
    Great things to me?...
Let it befall that One will call,
    “Soul, I have need of thee”:
What then? Joy-jaunts, impassioned flings,
    Love, and its ecstacy,
Will always have been great things,

Great things to me!

(ll.25-32)

This concluding stanza also reflects and contrasts Hardy's readings, and the ways in which he engaged with certain texts right up until his death. On January 10, on the evening before he died, Hardy 'asked that Robert Browning's poem, "Rabbi Ben Ezra", should be read aloud to him' (*LIFE*, p.480). Browning's poem (1864) was very probably an attack on the hedonism of Edward Fitzgerald's *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (1859), which Hardy also requested to be read to him.[105] Certainly, Browning's speaker rebuts the position taken by Fitzgerald:

Fool! All that is, at all,

Lasts ever, past recall;

Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure. [106]

The fourth stanza of the earlier composed 'Great Things', however, appears to directly contrast Browning's spiritual position. At the start of this stanza the speaker asks 'Will these be always great things, | Great things to me?...', the ellipsis placing the answer in apparent doubt as the sentence is left hanging. While the speaker's question is succeeded by the phrase 'Let it befall that One will call, | "Soul, I have need of thee"', this is not a

[105] See the footnotes in Robert Browning, 'Rabbi Ben Ezra', *Robert Browning's Poetry: A Norton Critical Edition*, pp.286-292 (p.286).
[106] Browning, 'Rabbi Ben Ezra', ll.157-159.

poetic petition that the worth of such things should be spiritually confirmed. At the end of the stanza, having imagined the presence of a possible afterlife and stating 'What then?', the speaker reworks the first two lines to answer his original question. This time an exclamation point is used instead of a question mark as the speaker decidedly and confidently answers his own query, affirming that such things 'Will always have been great things, | Great things to me!' The future perfect used here contrasts the present continuous tense in 'Rabbi Ben Ezra', signaling the way in which Hardy's poem differs from Browning's notion of unchanging theological perpetuity. Instead, Hardy's poem indicates something less metaphysical but no less hopeful. While the future tense is used in the uncertain opening to the stanza, the future perfect tense is used at its conclusion to indicate the teller's confident affirmation that, when death comes, regardless of the possible existence of an afterlife or no, these shared, human pleasures such as drinking and dancing will still have been great things for him. There is therefore no need for an external other to corroborate the value of such 'great things', as the speaker has the confidence in their unchanging importance and their enduring greatness to affirm it himself.

In the group of poems I have been discussing, Hardy's emphasis is placed upon celebrating the warmth of community gatherings, but also the joyous, heady pleasures which further brighten these experiences, such as music, laughter and drinking. In several of these poems, Hardy implies that such things will be continue to be shared by successive generations of ordinary groups of people. This sense of continuity and endurance is illustrated most directly and hopefully in one of Hardy's most famous poems, 'In Time of "The Breaking of Nations"' (1917) (*CP II*). This poem, which will conclude my discussion in

this section, demonstrates Hardy's thought regarding the endurance of ordinary but universal aspects found in rural life:

I

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

II

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

III

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

Taylor, in his analysis of the poem, has noted the poem's biblical references and connected the title to passages in Jeremiah 51:20 and 'God's harrowing of Babylon'. [107] Unlike the type of biblical wars and holy events that feature in scripture, it is the corporeal and mundane in Hardy's poem that achieves an eternal mood. This sense of endurance is signified by the direct trajectory in the poem between age and youth, with the 'old horse' and 'man' replaced by 'a maid and her wight'. These references may have been drawn from Hardy's courtship of Emma at St. Juliot. He records in his notes that 'the poem entitled "The Breaking of Nations" contains a feeling that moved me in 1870, during the Franco-Prussian war, when I chanced to be looking at such an agricultural incident in Cornwall' (*LIFE*, p.408). Hardy's rural setting, therefore, and his poetic arc that moves from the stumbling old man and horse to the youthful couple, sees the constancy of rural life emphasized hopefully. Wedded to the land, in accord with their environment, the rural denizens reap and sow the ground upon which they inhabit, and indeed (as the poem seems to indicate through its transition from old age to youth) procreate and endure while armies wax and wane around them.

In particular, this survival of the ordinary is the effect of natural balance between living things and the land that they inhabit, and is further connected to the working harmony that is displayed by humans and animals, such as the man and horse tilling the field. An 'old horse that stumbles and nods' and 'a man harrowing clods' are brought together in mutual harmonious dependence. Harrowing can have a negative meaning, used to describe the emotional experience of warfare, especially as this piece is dated as '1915' (*CP II*, p.296) and so set during the First World War. But Hardy seems to deliberately establish this initial

[107] Dennis Taylor, *Hardy's Poetry, 1860-1928* (London: Macmillan, 1981), p.90.

negative meaning in order to subvert it, and accentuate the more hopeful aspects of the rural experience. While not necessarily pleasurable, there is a quiet dignity in the labour of the man and the horse working and 'harrowing' together. Further, unlike the term's additional reference to 'a biblical harrowing of souls', these lifeforms' vocational harrowing, while not spiritual, does appear hopeful. [108] Hardy has poetically gifted them universal properties. That is to say, as they plod across the Wessex countryside they seem to become quasi-Platonic forms which are juxtaposed against passing events, so that 'war's annals will cloud into night | Ere their story die'. This transmutation, this elevation of the commonplace to the eternal, is not however a spiritual beatification of rural horse and man. This is illustrated when again compared to Browning's more religious 'Rabbi Ben Ezra'. Unlike Browning's use of the present continuous tense, which describes an unchanging, eternal notion of life, Hardy's future tense instead indicates flux and the passing of time. Nevertheless, despite the death of individuals, his poem shows how more general patterns of life, such as rural communities and groups will still go onward. In this sense Hardy's poem should instead be seen as an indication of the enduring capability of the ordinary based on natural harmony. By working in tandem with their surroundings, and being fitted or suited to its demands, the old man, horse, maid and wight endure while dynasties come and go.

This slow, natural endurance of ordinary types reflects Hardy's engagement with evolutionary ideas. Darwin argued in *The Origin* that being suited to the environment was an important factor for a species' survival but, due to the timespan involved, such processes were not clearly discernible, Darwin noting that 'We see nothing of these slow changes in

[108] Taylor, *Hardy's Poetry, 1860-1928*, p.89.

progress'. [109] Hardy was aware of how this was also indicative of the slow, unseen processes of human change. In October 1898 he wrote a letter to Edward Clodd praising his anthropological book, *Tom Tit Tot: An Essay on Savage Philosophy in Folk-Tale* (1898):

> It incidentally shows, too, what often occurs to me down here, how vast & striking is the body of unwritten human experience in this so called literary age. It is only necessary to become familiar with the outlying cottagers of a remote district to be let into this subterranean world of impressions, fancies and knowledge. (*CL II*, p.202)

Hardy's interest in these slow, unseen processes connects to the way in which a number of his poems emphasize the gradual continuation of ordinary but universal patterns across time.

This hopeful sense of the endurance of the ordinary is further accentuated when Hardy's poem is directly compared to how rural life is poetically depicted by one of his direct contemporaries. In *A Shropshire Lad*, Housman's pessimistic poem XXVII (1896) sees the speaker voice a series of questions from below ground, having passed away. He thus asks:

> Is my team ploughing,
> That I was used to drive
> And hear the harness jingle
> When I was man alive? [110]

[109] Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, p.133.
[110] A.E. Housman, 'XXVII', *A Shropshire Lad and Other Poems*, p. 35-36 (ll.1-4).

By eschewing the personally tragic perspective in his more panoramic rendering of rural life, Hardy's poem possesses much greater scope. The final line of the initial stanza tells us that man and horse are 'Half asleep as they stalk', the verb appearing to connote the sense of a slow, stumbling but unerring pursuit. Hardy's ploughing team are gradually chasing down and succeeding 'Dynasties', so that as the horse and man endure, the 'Dynasties' will pass and hence suffer extinction. Hardy's use of the word 'Stalk' may also possess an implied further meaning, as read as a noun it describes the main stem of a plant, possibly connoting, if seen as an improvised verb, the growth of crops or grasses that will follow their ploughing. Certainly 'couch grass' is the main image of the succeeding stanza, and Hardy indicates that the harrowers are part of a cycle of growth and rebirth.

This contrasts some of the more exceptional characters who often stand out as the protagonists or antagonists of Hardy's novels. Passionate and fiery characters such as Frank Troy and Eustacia Vye perish, being unsuited to their rural environs, while more homely types such as Gabriel Oak and Tomasin Yeobright marry their partners and likely continue their lineage.The brighter that Hardy's fictional Wessex characters shine, the quicker that they burn out, whereas this poem illustrates a slower, cosmic rhythm. In the second stanza, the descriptions of 'couch grass', convey a sense of slow-burning continuation. This image is used very differently in *Desperate Remedies* (1871), where a heap of such grass was 'lighted in the customary way' (*DR*, p.175), but grows into an unchecked fire and burns down The Three Tranters Inn which collapses 'into a mere heap of red-hot charcoal' (*DR*, p.181). Hardy's slow-burning couch grass in his poem also contradicts the way in which fire is used in another novel, *The Return of the Native* (1878). Here, Eustacia's bonfire acts as a symbol

of fiery passion, drawing Wildeve to her Wessex hill, he telling Eustacia 'I knew it was meant for me' (*RN*, p.63). Eustacia's desire for Wildeve and then Clym, however, is immediate and soon extinguished, just as her own lifespan is cut short and ends dramatically. Yet in Hardy's poem, the descriptions of slow-burning couch grass are juxtaposed with 'a maid and her wight' who 'Come whispering by' but will, through procreation and repetition, outlast 'War's annals'. Similarly, the ambling rhythms of the old horse 'that stumbles and nods' connect with the lover's courtship, the horse of the first stanza, the smoke of the second stanza and the lovers of the third stanza. The ploughing, burning and loving together combine to embody a sense of corporeal birth, death and rebirth, emphasising the slow, yet vital processes and pleasures of rural life. Hardy's poem thus connects to his comments regarding ploughmen in 'The Dorsetshire Labourer' offering us a 'perfect insight into the conditions of existence' (*PV*, p.39) and, indeed, the notion that such country life bequeaths 'the sustenance which tends to produce the sound mind and body' (*PV*, p.41).

What Hardy's poetry of this sort gives us, therefore, is the sense that these ways of life offer shared pleasures that are important and must be seized. For Hardy, universal human joys, such as communal warmth, and the enjoyment of music, laughter and drinking, are not to be cheapened as provincial or superficial, but instead deeply savoured. This helps us to understand his poetry more broadly. When reading his more tragic pieces, where the denial or cessation of such pleasurable instances leads to sadness, we can further understand the important value of enjoying such experiences. Moreover, while people continually age and die in his poetry, and while tragedies keep occurring, newer lovers also keep courting, wedding ceremonies and births keep being celebrated, parties and feasts are

perpetually enjoyed, and people continue to sing, laugh, drink and dance as time goes on. These living experiences are often encountered in Hardy's poetry in their earthiest and most visceral form when wedded to the land and the changing seasons. While rural people will endure privation and tragedy, they also see the value of life's pleasures. By playing the 'sure game' of accepting that the worst may happen, Hardy's poems accentuate universal human enjoyments and these aspects are vividly and powerfully expressed. Such ordinary pleasures appear not just temporarily joyous but abidingly hopeful, signposting a way of life that will continue and endure.

CHAPTER 3: THE ONGOING CREATIVITY OF ART

1. INTRODUCTION

Hardy's poetry reimagines the lives and works of deceased artists and historical personages in hopeful ways. He creatively interacts with such figures and their works, bringing them to life, and at the same time colouring his own present experiences. While a number of his poems were published during the modernist period, his view of humankind's cultural tradition differs from the pessimism of T. S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land' (1922), whose speaker claims 'I will show you fear in a handful of dust'. [1] Instead, many of Hardy's poems creatively engage with works of art that form an important part of human cultural memory. In so doing, his poetry does not merely remember the past but engages in a continuing and evolving artistic conversation.

Hardy's frequent focus upon the past has been judged by several critics to be evidence of his pessimism. Tim Armstrong, Catherine Robson and Galia Benziman have discussed Hardy's poetry in relation to its focus upon elegy, graves and death. [2] Yet others have discussed the ways in which artistic influences can offer Hardy's characters and poetic speakers a temporary sense of succour. Jane Thomas argues that Hardy's interest in visual art sees the characters in his novels transformed into 'living tableaux', which 'holds them,

[1] T.S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land', *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), pp.25-51, 1.30.
[2] Tim Armstrong, *Haunted Hardy: Poetry, History, Memory* (London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2000); Catherine Robson '"Where Heaves the Turf": Thomas Hardy and the Boundaries of the Earth', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 32 (2) (2004), 495-503 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150304000622>; Galia Benziman, *Thomas Hardy's Elegiac Prose and Poetry: Codes of Bereavement* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

briefly, in a suspension from which they must move into sadness, separation and even death' [3] Andrew Radford notes that Hardy's poetic response to architecture and archaeological sites has 'the potency to relay "fitful gleams" […] from bygone generations'.[4] Laurence Estanove, meanwhile, in his analysis of 'To Life', observes that Hardy uses music in his poetry as a harmonizing force which will 'come to substitute for a disappointing reality, allowing the poet to shift from a painful consciousness to a soothing *vision*'. [5] What these critical approaches share, therefore, is the recognition that art can offer Hardy's characters and poetic speakers temporary succour from pain. Yet, as I will argue in this chapter, Hardy's poetry does more than this, drawing upon art to obtain pleasure. Moreover, in creatively building upon past artists and their works Hardy becomes part of an ongoing artistic process. This indicates a significant feature of Hardy's work, within which we can trace a thematic arc from solace towards enjoyment, and to a stronger sense of hope.

In this chapter I will discuss how artistic works frequently offer Hardy's poetic speakers the pleasure of a shared sense of creative cultural experience. This is indicated in the third stanza of 'Let Me Enjoy' (1909) (*CP I*). While, the first stanza of this poem concerns the natural world, and the second addresses intense experiences, the third draws imaginatively upon the realm of cultural memory:

> From manuscripts of moving song

[3] Jane Thomas, 'Thomas Hardy and the Visual Arts', *Thomas Hardy in Context*, ed. by Phillip Mallett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp.436-445 (p.444).
[4] Andrew Radford, 'Making the Past Wake: Anthropological Survivals in Hardy's Poetry', *Science in Modern Poetry*, ed. by John Holmes (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), pp. 167-180 (p.172).
[5] Laurence Estanove, 'From Pessimism to Idealism: The Pressure of Paradox' in *Thomas Hardy, Poet: New Perspectives*, ed. by Adrian Grafe and Laurence Estanove (Jefferson: McFarland, 2015), pp.82-99 (p.91).

Inspired by scenes and dreams unknown

I'll pour out raptures that belong

To others, as they were my own.

(ll. 9-12)

This aspect of Hardy's joy and hope, as the stanza above tells us, involves placing creative importance upon 'scenes and dreams unknown' and old 'manuscripts'. The latter are music manuscripts that indicate both literature and old songs and hymns. While this references antiquated or high art, Hardy's usage of the word 'moving' in 'moving song' (l.9) indicates, when read adjectivally, art which is not just elite or classical but more universally comprehendible at an emotional level. But, read as a verb, the word also references how both aspects of art are part of a creative, fanciful continuum. The stanza therefore illustrates not just how Hardy enjoys imaginatively interacting with art objects, but signposts the hopeful ways in which he might become part of an ongoing creative process. This latter aspect is further confirmed as he declares, 'I'll pour out raptures that belong | To others, as they were my own' (ll.11-12). Such art is not limited by space or time, being able to be read and performed again and again in different ways. In contrast with 'The Waste Land', Hardy's speaker in poems such as 'Let Me Enjoy' is not fearful of the future, as art works are not reduced to mere dust but can become part of an inspiring and 'moving' process.

Hardy's poems of cultural memory demonstrate a creative means to attempt to revivify older life and enjoy it in the present or the future. This is demonstrated in 'On an Invitation to the United States' (1901) (*CP I*) where Hardy's speaker explains his

preference for the history of the old world over the new. In the second stanza his speaker describes the old country, 'Enchased and lettered as a tomb, | And scored with prints of perished hands' (l.10-11). The value of such an experience is placed in a brighter context in the following lines, as Hardy's speaker explains in terms similar to 'Let me Enjoy' that:

> I trace the lives such scenes enshrine,
> Give past exemplars present room,
> And their experience count as mine.
> (l.14-16)

These lines also reflect a note Hardy made in September 1877, recording that '[a]n object or mark raised or made by man on a scene is worth ten times any such formed by unconscious Nature', which is deemed less important than 'the print of a hand' (*LIFE*, p.120).

In the following sections I discuss how Hardy's poetry celebrates and builds upon the art objects of a range of architects, writers and musicians, drawing upon such works not to highlight their imaginative futility but to access their powerful and inspirational faculties. Hardy demonstrates these cultural influences across his narrative works, but David Ball has observed how they appear particularly prevalent in his three so-called novels of ingenuity, *Desperate Remedies* (1871), *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876) and *A Laodician* (1881). [6] Ball explains that these three novels illustrate 'a meticulous density of realistic allusion' towards

[6] David Ball, 'Hardy's Experimental Fiction', *English: The Journal of the English Association*, 151 (35) (1986), 27-36 (p.27) <https://doi.org/10.1093/english/35.151.27>

topics such as architecture and art history. [7] Hardy makes these references to illuminate scenes in romantic, comic or emotional fashion. In *Desperate Remedies* and *A Laodician* the main male protagonists are architects, the former novel featuring the setting of a stately manor house. In *The Hand of Ethelberta* the protagonist visits the Gothic Cathedral at Rouen (*HE*, p.204-6) and also wanders around the ruined Corfe Castle in Dorset, making 'a pencil sketch of the landscape as it was revealed between the ragged walls' (p.270). In *A Laodician* the architect George Somerset, views the architectural sights of Europe, and in Britain visits Castle De Stancy, where he contemplates such 'living power in architectural art as the world may never again see' (*LD*, p.18).

Desperate Remedies is, as Frank B. Pinion observes, strewn with quotations from a number of poets including Wordsworth and Keats, and Hardy describes Edward Springrove and Cytherea's encounter with lines from Browning's 'The Statue and the Bust' (*DR*, p.43), which I earlier discussed in chapter 2. [8] In *The Hand of Ethelberta*, the literary circle compare Ethelberta's poems to the works of Shakespeare and Sappho (*HE*, p.56) and quote Wordsworth's 'Milton! Thou should be living at this hour' (p.211) before visiting Milton's tomb at Cripplegate Church. In *A Laodicean* the protagonist George Somerset, resembling Hardy, begins the novel as a poet writing 'Wordsworthian sonnets' (*LD*, p.6).

Most powerfully of all, music is used in these novels to create dramatic sensations. When Somerset attends the Hunt Ball in *A Laodicean*, the narrator describes how the 'whirling young people meant not to know that they were mortal. The room was beating like a heart' (*LD*, p.195). Further, when Aeneas Manston begins to seduce Cytherea in

[7] Ball, p.27.
[8] Frank B. Pinion, *Thomas Hardy: Art and Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p.10.

Desperate Remedies he plays Beethoven's 'Pastoral Symphony' (*DR*, p.140), Hardy describing how 'The power of the music did not show itself so much by attracting her attention to the subject of the piece, as by taking up and developing as its libretto the poem of her own life and soul' (p.139). In these three novels, as well as generally across his narratives, Hardy demonstrates his view of the cultural importance of different art forms, past and present, for the enhancement of different moods.

Like these novels, Hardy's poetry often details the ways in which old buildings, literature and music can provide powerful moments of stimulus in varied settings. While in a number of Hardy's poems, past figures and their artistic works are enjoyed through the creative powers of the human mind, these poems encompass two general groups, centred firstly on architecture and secondly on literature and music. Firstly, several of Hardy's poems illustrate the way in which architecture can flesh out the past, bringing to life in the present historical figures who may have inhabited such sites. Aesthetic spaces can also inspire metaphysical fancy, allowing Hardy's speakers to inhabit an imagined spiritual experience. Secondly, a number of poems demonstrate the ongoing inspirational effect of non-spatiotemporal art such as literature and music. Hardy's speakers participate in a process by which fresh art is made from old, ensuring a constant sense of vibrant new life. These two sets of poems directly connect to the central theme of joy and hope which underpins my thesis. When examined together, they trace a thematic arc from a retrospective enjoyment of historical art to a more forward-looking, and ultimately more hopeful, celebration of its inspirational and enduring power. In sections 3 and 4 of this chapter, therefore, I will address these two interconnected aspects of Hardy's poetic

treatment of art. Before discussing these trends, I will show in the following section how Hardy's imaginative poems of this type are influenced by what he referred to as his 'Idealism of Fancy' (*PV*, p.210).

2. HARDY'S IDEALISM OF FANCY

In a 1901 letter to an Italian journalist, later published in Italian, Hardy opined that:

> there may gradually be developed an Idealism of Fancy; that is, an idealism in which Fancy is no longer tricked out and made to masquerade as Belief, but is frankly and honestly accepted as an imaginative solace in the lack of any substantial solace to be found in life. (*PV*, p.210)

In the above passage, Hardy outlined his 'Idealism of Fancy', distinguishing his personal sense of idealism from any metaphysical definition. Sandra Den Otter has observed that by the mid-1870s idealism had become the 'primary school of thought in Britain', while Peter Garratt traces this to the 'religious metaphysics' of F.H. Bradley and T.H Green. [9] Hardy's 'Idealism of Fancy', however, was secular and did not align itself with this religious tradition. As Hardy outlined in an earlier 1892 letter to Roden Noel, he held 'a mistrust of metaphysic' and would 'prefer to regulate such thoughts to the domain of fancy, & to

[9] Sandra M. Den Otter, *British Idealism and Social Explanation: A Study in Late Victorian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford Historical Monographs, 1996), p.1; Peter Garratt, *Victorian Empiricism: Self, Knowledge, and Reality in Ruskin, Bain, Lewes, Spencer, and George Eliot* (Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010), p.44, p.45.

recognize them as pure imagination' (*CL I*, p.261). In *Two on a Tower* (1882), therefore, the astronomer Swithin St Cleeve's remarks to Lady Constantine that while 'the imaginary picture of the sky […] is grand, simply grand', he, like Hardy, knows that 'the actual sky is a horror' (*TT*, p. 34).

At the same time, while Hardy was not deceived by idealism, and although he cited Comte amongst others as an important influence (*CL VI*, p.259), he was a curious but ultimately sceptical positivist. He declined to become an associate of the Rationalist Press Association in 1899 (*PV*, p.200), and his letter, read out in absentia at a 1904 gathering of the RPA, expressed his hope that 'emotional fancy – which may be called make-believe […] will not be destroyed' (p.200-201). He was to become increasingly estranged from the rationalist Edward Clodd due to his inability to commit fully to the same philosophy. This led Clodd to describe Hardy after his death as 'A great author: he was not a great man'. [10] However, Hardy's view of the universe can be equated with Swithin's remark that 'It is better – far better – for men to forget the universe than to bear it clearly in mind!' (*TT*, p.36)

While not a positivist nor an idealist, therefore, Hardy remained sympathetic to the creative uses to which idealism could be put. In 1881 he recorded passages from Friedrich Lange's *History of Materialism* (1866), which acknowledged that 'by deliberately recognising that idealism is idealism there ought to be no difficulty' (*LN I*, p.139), and Hardy underlined part of the following sentence which recommended the reader to 'Recognise that all happiness lies in self-deception – & the value of fancy or idealism will

[10] Cited in James Gibson, ed., *Thomas Hardy: Interviews and Recollections* (London: MacMillan, 1999), p.74.

be apparent' (p.139). Further, while criticising Henri Bergson in a 1915 letter to Caleb Saleeby, Hardy explained that:

> You must not think me a hard-headed rationalist for all this. Half my time (particularly when I write verse) I believe – in the modern use of the word – not only in things that Bergson does, but in spectres, mysterious voices, intuitions, omens, dreams, haunted places, &c., &c. But then, I do not believe in these in the old sense of belief any more for that. (*CL V*, p.79)

Hardy's distinction between two senses of the word 'believe' is important, appearing to connect the 'old sense of the word' to metaphysics, a realm which, as a rationalist, he had reluctantly but definitively abandoned. Conversely, his modern definition of belief can be placed within the context of what John Holmes has referred to as 'Hardy's promise that poetry can provide re-enchantment within the disenchanted Darwinian world'.[11] Idealism proved to be illusory but also aesthetically attractive for Hardy's art, and can therefore be understood, Estanove argues, as that which 'believes in the power of the individual mind to create parallel realities, without letting itself be "tricked by its own dreams," i.e., remaining alert to the illusory nature of such creations'. [12]

In order to unpack Hardy's 'Idealism of Fancy', I will examine each of these terms in more detail. I will therefore first discuss the two oppositional but overlapping artistic

[11] John Holmes, *Darwin's Bards: British and American Poetry in the Age of Evolution* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 2009, reprinted 2013), p.240.
[12] Laurence Estanove, 'From Pessimism to Idealism, p.92.

elements which broadly influence Hardy's own secular and creative use of the term idealism. One of these influences was the high cultural tradition of Matthew Arnold, and his entreaty to apply noble and perfect ideas to one's life. The second of these was the poetry of William Wordsworth, who championed more provincial, universal aspects of art and life. I will then discuss how, in drawing upon and also diverging from these two elements, Hardy qualifies his own creative notion of idealism by connecting it to fancy, which is in turn influenced by the writings of Walter Pater and the poetry of John Keats.

Hardy's use of the term idealism, and its relation to the artistic imagination, both connects to and contrasts with the influence of Matthew Arnold. In *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), Arnold championed the worth of the high or ideal cultural tradition. [13] As already discussed in chapter 2, Hardy's notebooks illustrate that he read Arnold extensively, while in an 1881 note Hardy outlined artistic style as pursuing realism 'by means of the imagination […] It is, in short, reached by what M. Arnold calls "the imaginative reason"' (*LIFE*, p.151). Like Arnold, Hardy viewed art as an intellectual, moral and imaginative substitute for faith, offering something essential for the nourishment of human life. Further, Hardy's poem 'On an Invitation to the United States' (*CP I*), which placed more importance upon artistic tradition than America's 'modern coast' (l.3), can be connected to Arnold's 1888 essay 'Civilization in the United States', as Hardy recorded Arnold's damning quote, 'The United States. – The want is such as to make any educated man feel that many countries, much less free & prosp[s] […] have more to say to the soul' (*LN I*, p. 204).

[13] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. by R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965), p.112.

Hence, Hardy's novels sometimes satirised members of the educated classes who failed to appreciate the value of historical art. In *Culture and Anarchy* Arnold had dismissed the aristocracy, the middle classes and the working class as respectively 'Barbarians, Philistines, Populace', and in several places Hardy's treatment of the middle classes appears to resemble Arnold's notion of the Philistine.[14] In *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876), Hardy humorously satirises the ostensibly urbane classes but also more general dispositions towards art. When the musician Christopher Julian enters the British Museum, for instance, his romantic fixation upon Ethelberta ensures that he is oblivious to the Assyrian treasures which surround him – the subject of a real-life nineteenth-century Assyrian boom fuelled by A.H. Layard's bestselling *Nineveh and Its Remains* (1849). [15] His sister Faith explains in great detail the relics of Nineveh, being stimulated enough to exclaim 'Don't you feel as if you were actually in Nineveh; that as we now walk between these slabs, so walked Ninevites between them once?' (*HE*, p.189) Yet he is unaware of Faith's comments, or the grandeur of the relics, responding with talk of Ethelberta. Later, in an 1891 trip to the British Museum, Hardy noted with disapproval the courting young men and women who 'stand under Rameses the Great, joking' (*LIFE*, p. 247), remarking 'when these people are our masters it will lead to more of this contempt, and possibly be the utter ruin of art and literature!' (p.247)

Arnold's perfected view of classical art, however, exceeded Hardy's sense of its value in proportion to life. As I discussed in chapter 2, the rural, demotic world of Hardy's

[14] Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 143.
[15] Julia Reid, 'Archeology and Anthropology', *The Routledge Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century British Literature and Science*, ed. by John Holmes and Sharon Ruston (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 357-371 (p.358).

poetry differs from Arnold's idealised poetic representations of country scenes interwoven with classical references. These differences in representing life are also illustrated by both men's respective attitudes towards art; Hardy's 'Idealism of Fancy', and his broader view of the role of art, can be distinguished from Arnold's idealism. In *The Function of Criticism At the Present Time* (1864) Arnold asked 'what will nourish us in growth towards perfection?" and pointed towards the role of the discerning literary critic whose role should be 'to see the object as in itself it really is' [16] Arnold placed primary emphasis upon art objects and ideas from ancient Greek culture, which as Linda Dowling observes, enjoyed significant 'prestige […] among educated middle-class Victorians' [17] But these ideas, such as the philosophical revival of Plato, had become, as Frank Turner observes, by the end of the nineteenth century, 'broadly associated with idealist outlooks'. [18] At Oxford, for example, one of the key influences upon the transmission of Plato's ideas was Benjamin Jowett, Professor of Greek, whose translations of Plato were employed to further the aims of Anglican idealism. [19] Richard Jenkins notes that Arnold viewed Plato and the Greeks approvingly as exponents of truth, beauty and perfection, and, as an alumni of Oxford, also held that 'this Hellenic ideal was still realized in his old university' [20] For Arnold, Greek

[16] Matthew Arnold, *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time*, *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time by Matthew Arnold and An Essay on Style by Walter Pater* (New York: Macmillan, 1895), pp. 3-86, p.84, p.3 <https://archive.org/details/functionofcritic00arno/page/n7/mode/2up> (accessed 14 July 2021)
[17] Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (London: Cornell University Press, 1994, reprinted, 1996), p.28.
[18] Frank M. Turner, *Contesting Cultural Authority: Essays in Victorian Intellectual Life*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.325.
[19] Turner, p.351-3.
[20] Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1980), p.248.

culture, such as the ideas of Plato, could thus fill the gap vacated by the Christian faith as a perfect set of critical ideals.

For Hardy, however, both Arnold's poetic idealising of life, and his Platonic idealism in relation to culture, proved problematic. Although Hardy's notebooks illustrate that he was reading Jowett's *Dialogues of Plato* around 1876 (*LN I*, p.45), he was well aware that art, while able to represent perfect momentary images and emotions, was a simulacrum which contained no overarching spiritual or Platonic truth. His later notes from 1889 include a passage copied out from Plato's *Cratylus* which argues 'The fact is that nearly all things are falsely, or rather inadequately, named' (*LIFE*, p.226-227). Therefore, in his poem 'At the Royal Academy' (*CP II*), Hardy's speaker describes a summer landscape canvas where, 'The saps that in their live originals climb: | Yester's quick greenage here set forth in mime' (ll.7-8), while being aware that the original foliage is already 'browned and buried' (l.14).

Thus, although Hardy agreed with Arnold on the importance of classical works – his notebooks, for example, including a passage from *Literature and Dogma* (1873) on 'Hellenic or Greek culture = a culture comprehending body & soul in equal measure' (*LN 1*, p. 13) – he viewed both aspects of Arnold's didactic idealism with reservation. Hardy took issue with Arnold's criticism of provincialism, for example, and his notion of Arnold as too rigid reflected his opinion of him formed at an 1880 meeting as having 'had a manner of having made up his mind upon everything years ago' (*LIFE*, p.137). Further, Hardy appeared to mock Arnold's Platonic idealism in *A Laodicean* (1881). When Paula Power's medieval castle burns down she questions Arnold's famous ideas, as outlined in 'Pagan and

Medieval Religious Sentiment' (1864), asking whether she should now be 'a perfect representative of ''the modern spirit"' becoming 'what a finished writer calls "the imaginative reason"' (*LD*, p.379).

Hardy's broader, less perfect stance towards art reflects his own provincial background, his definition of idealism signalling cultural figures who represented more commonplace, universal aspects of human life. In particular, Hardy was significantly influenced by the imaginative poetry of William Wordsworth. This divergence also provides a sense of continuity, however, as Wordsworth's poetry was famously championed by Arnold. The best of Wordsworth's poetry, Arnold argued in *Essays in Criticism* (1865), achieved greatness through 'his powerful application to his subject of ideas "On man, on nature, and on human life,"'. [21] Arnold's comments here reveal a contrast that appears latent in his own Platonic sense of perfection. He excludes provincialism from his narrow schema, and yet valorises Wordsworth's broader representation of such topics as a definite example of artistic perfection. Hardy copied Arnold's comments into his notebooks (*LN I*, p.118), and the contradiction evident in this passage helps perhaps explain why Hardy's creative use of idealism partly diverges from Arnold and also draws upon Wordsworth's wider representation of human life.

This influence of Wordsworth upon this aspect of Hardy's poetry also follows idealist, rather than materialist antecedents. Hardy likely read Wordsworth when very young, describing 'Domicilium', his earliest attempt at verse, as being 'Wordsworthian' (*LIFE*, p.8). Wordsworth's influence upon Hardy was long-lasting; in a 1916 letter to

[21] Matthew Arnold, *Essays in Criticism: Second Series* (London: Macmillan, 1888), p.141. <https://archive.org/details/essaysincriticis00arnorich> (accessed 12 Sept 2019).

Thomas Wise, a 76-year-old Hardy still referred to himself as 'a Faithful Wordsworthian' (*CL V*, p.192). In 1862 he received from Horace Moule a copy of Palgrave's *The Golden Treasury*, containing many of Wordsworth's poems.[22] Hardy's copy contains markings next to 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality', Wordsworth's speaker describing religious intimations as 'shadowy recollections | Which, be they what they may' are remembered and 'Uphold us'. [23] Hardy underlined the words 'Which' and 'Uphold us', further marking 'and which uphold' in the margin. [24] While indicating his growing religious doubt, Hardy's markings also indicate his interest in questioning whether artistically remembered memories could serve to imaginatively revitalize an individual. This probing stance towards Wordsworth's art reflected a more powerful and widespread public reaction during the 1860s. As Darwin's theory of natural selection became better known, the poetry of Wordsworth experienced a revival in popularity in the decades after his death. Robert M. Ryan argues that, 'Rather than being diminished by the challenge of Darwinian science', Wordsworth's position was 'enhanced when he became an intellectual resource for those who resisted the materialistic implications'. [25] While providing a form of religious belief which appeared compatible with Darwin's account of nature, Wordsworth's poetry also offered succour from materialistic explanations of life and death through its imaginative treatment of commonplace perspectives and memories.

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[22] Dennis Taylor, 'Hardy's Copy of "The Golden Treasury"', *Victorian Poetry*, 37 (2) (1999), 165-191 (p.165) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40003761> (accessed 25 June 2019).
[23] William Wordsworth, 'Intimations of Immortality', Francis Turner Palgrave, ed. *The Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language,* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1861), pp.301-305, ll.153-54, l.157. Dorset Country Museum. H.2018.133.0238.
[24] Wordsworth, 'Intimations of Immortality', p.305. Dorset Country Museum.
[25] Robert. M. Ryan, *Charles Darwin and The Church of Wordsworth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p.12.

Hardy's more secular representation of provincial perspectives, however, also reflects additional realist influences which connect thematically to Wordsworth. This balanced aspect of Hardy's art is indicative of the thought of George Eliot, who Francis O'Gorman has observed 'defined realism as the central mode for the English novel', and less reflective of the sophisticated style of George Meredith, Tabitha Sparks noting that 'one critique that followed Meredith throughout his career was the charge of impenetrability'. [26] Lawrence Jones has therefore noticed a number of pastoral similarities between Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) and *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874). [27] Moreover, Eliot, like Hardy, shared an affinity with Wordsworth's championing of universal experiences, Stephen Gill observing that both 'Eliot and Wordsworth habitually move from experience towards "general Truths"'. [28] These truths, Gill observes, are outlined in Eliot's 'The Natural History of German Life', which was influenced by Wordsworth, in 'her conviction that it is the artist's duty to direct "our sympathy with the perennial joys and struggles, the toil, the tragedy, and the humour in the life of our more heavily-laden fellow-men"'. [29] These balanced influences thus help give Hardy's poetry a part-imaginative, part-realistic flavour, in which he creatively integrates the worlds of high and low culture.

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[26] Francis O'Gorman, 'Thomas Hardy and Realism', *Hardy in Context*, 2nd edn, ed.by Phillip Mallet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.113-121 (p.114); Tabitha Sparks, 'Realism After Sensation: Meredith, Hardy, Gissing', *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, ed.by Pamela K. Gilbert (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), pp.603-613 (p.606); While Meredith was a personal acquaintance of Hardy's, and - as I discussed in chapter 2 - influenced his comic spirit, Hardy appeared to disapprove of his general style, recording in 1915 how, despite the faults of Henry James, 'I can read James when I cannot look at Meredith' (*LIFE,* p.401).

[27] Lawrence Jones, 'George Eliot and Pastoral Tragicomedy in Hardy's "Far from the Madding Crowd"', *Studies in Philology*, 77 (4) (1980), 402-425. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4174054> (accessed 3 Aug 2020).

[28] Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.148.

[29] Gill, p.151.

Hardy believed that culture possessed a democratising capacity to represent all people, and to stimulate vital feelings in everyone. Hence, in 'The Science of Fiction' (1891), he wrote of the importance of grasping 'a sympathetic appreciativeness of life in all its manifestations' (*PV*, p.110). Hardy's artistic attitudes also followed popular political events of his time. Jane Thomas notes that Hardy's 1883 'The Dorsetshire Labourer', in which he particularized and defended the Dorset worker, was written against the backdrop of the forthcoming Third Reform Act, which was debating extending the vote to rural areas. [30] In the essay Hardy explained that a sojourner staying in the midst of such people would find 'men of many minds […] some clever, even to genius […] some mutely Miltonic, some Cromwellian' (*PV*, p.40). These passages refer to the lines in Thomas Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' where the speaker describes how, 'Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest | Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood'. [31] This is true of Hardy's novels, where some of his rural characters, such as Ethelberta, Clym Yeobright and Jude, demonstrate a general aptitude for culture and learning. While Jude memorises and recites the Nicene Creed, and Clym becomes a scholar and teacher, Ethelberta becomes a writer and is feted by literary society. In using the language of Gray's *Elegy* to express his points in 'The Dorsetshire Labourer', and in drawing upon cultural figures such as Milton, this aspect is also true of Hardy himself.

Such passages further anticipate the way in which Hardy's poetry mixes the urbane and the provincial, merging both personal and culturally historical spheres. In 'In the

[30] Jane Thomas, '*The Mower*, *The Sower*, and *The Mayor*: Thomas Hardy and Hamo Thornycroft, Encounters and Affinities', *Word & Image*, 34 (1) (2018), 7-15 (p.8). <https://doi.org/10.1080/02666286.2017.1327306>
[31] Thomas Gray, 'Elegy Written in a Country Graveyard', *Selected Poems of Thomas Gray, Charles Churchill and William Cowper*, ed. by Katherine Turner (London, Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 12-16, ll.59-60.

British Museum' (1914) (*CP II*), the speaker, a labouring man, stares at the base of an Athenian pillar 'From a far old hill men used to name | Areopagus' (ll.11-12). The pillar further inspires the teller to imagine that:

> – I know no art, and I only view
>
> A stone from a wall,
>
> But I am thinking that stone has echoed
>
> The voice of Paul.
>
> (ll.13-16)

Here, the speaker tells us that 'I'm a labouring man, and know but little, | Or nothing at all' (ll.25-26), representing the provincial classes expressly championed by Hardy in 'The Dorsetshire Labourer'. He can even, perhaps, be seen as one of the folk whom Hardy's refers to in that essay as 'clever, even to genius'. What Hardy's speaker achieves when asked 'What do you see in that time-touched stone, | When nothing is there' (ll.1-2) is to imagine what others do not. He identifies the obscure stone's potential importance as a cultural object, not because of who made it but by envisioning who may have interacted with it. Moreover, he realizes how those viewing the stone in the museum are connected across time to a figure from an ancient period. This insight is not abstract or complex, his comments merely revealing that art can connect lives across time in tactile and moving ways, this universal emotion being potentially accessible by all who view it.

This focus upon the ways in which art could represent common shared experiences also reflects Hardy's reading of Leo Tolstoy's essay on the power of art. In *What is Art?*

(1897) Tolstoy argued that the sole purpose of the creative act was 'the transmission, not of feelings which are natural to people of the upper classes only, but of feelings that may unite every one without exception'. [32] Hardy's notes relay that he attended a London lecture on Tolstoy given by Sergius Stepniak in 1893 (*LIFE*, p.273) and later, in 1899, read Tolstoy's *What is Art*?, his own copy, according to Lennart A. Bjork, having 'extensive pencil markings' (*LN II*, p.495). Tolstoy's argument echoes the earlier position outlined by George Eliot in 'The Natural History of German Life' (1856) in which she argued that 'The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies'. [33] Hardy quite possibly read this essay, while he recorded and underlined details of a 1901 Dorchester lecture given on Eliot and literature, the latter being described as 'permanent because it has seized upon and given in language effective shape and colour to what is indestructible in human life and character' (*LN II*, p.121). He further noted passages from Eugene-Melchior de Vogue's 'De la Litterature Realiste, a propos du Roman Russe' (1886) which directly associates Eliot and Tolstoy by 'the accent of sincerity & of sympathy', also arguing that '[b]y the sole virtues of naturalness & emotion the realist Tolstoi arrives, like G. Eliot, at making of the most banal histories a tranquil epopee' (*LN I*, p.223). For Tolstoy, Eliot, Wordsworth and Hardy, the function of art was to relay common human emotion, art being, as Eliot argues, a 'mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot'. [34] While Eliot and

[32] Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art?,* trans. by A. Maude, ed. by W. Gareth Jones (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1994), p.201.
[33] George Eliot, 'The Natural History of German Life', *George Eliot Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings*, ed. by A. S. Byatt and Nicholas Warren (London: Penguin Classics, 1990), pp.107-139 (p.110).
[34] George Eliot, 'The Natural History of German Life', p.110.

Tolstoy were realist writers, the emphasis which they place on universal sympathy - and its resonance for Hardy - reflects his affinity with Wordsworth. At the same time, where Eliot and Tolstoy take this to lead to realism, Hardy, like Wordsworth and Locker, sees poetry as an art form that lends itself to a great degree of idealization.

For Hardy, therefore, what Wordsworth's poems helped to convey was that ordinary experiences could be relayed in artistically powerful ways, being just as important as Arnold's high and noble ideas. Hence, while Wordsworth's poems relayed commonplace events they did so as influential works of art, becoming part of a greater, publicly shared cultural memory. Wordsworth's poems offered Hardy the same type of artistic inspiration as Gray's 'Elegy'. This is demonstrated in 'The Self-Unseeing' (1901) (*CP I*), where Hardy's poem combines Wordsworth's influence with an additional art form as the speaker remembers the music of his father's violin. In an 1880 letter to Frederick Locker, Hardy praised Locker's 1874 poem 'The Old Stonemason' in conjunction with Wordsworth's 1800 poem 'Two April Mornings' (*CL I*, p.69) and Hardy's poem of childhood and memory reflects, as John H. Schwarz has observed, the influence of both works. [35] In Hardy's 'The Self-Unseeing', the speaker relays:

> Here is the ancient floor,
> Footworn and hollowed and thin,
> Here was the former door
> Where the dead feet walked in.

[35] John H. Schwarz, 'Wordsworth, Hardy, Locker-Lampson, and Quirky Minds', *Colby Quarterly*, 24 (1) (1988), 4-13 (pp.7-12) <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/cq/vol24/iss1/3> (accessed 25 June 2019).

She sat here in her chair,

Smiling into the fire;

He who played stood there,

Bowing it higher and higher.

Childlike, I danced in a dream;

Blessings emblazoned that day;

Everything glowed with a gleam;

Yet we were looking away!

Schwarz argues that Hardy's poem, with the lamentation that, while such times were happy, 'Yet we were looking away!' illustrates how, by looking back at the past in this way, 'Time seems even crueler than usual'. [36] While Hardy is aware that events are ironically often unappreciated until they are long past, the poem also demonstrates something additional to pathos, and this aspect is evident in the pieces by Locker and Wordsworth. Hardy wrote to Locker 'I unhesitatingly affirm that nothing more beautiful or powerful for its length than "The Old Stonemason" has been done by any modern poet' (*CL I*, p.69), and in this poem, an old man and child are shown as seated in pitiful style next to a grand architectural pile. The fourth stanza of Locker's poem relays:

[36] Schwarz, p.7.

A worn-out workman needing aid; —

A blooming child of light; —

The stately palace steps;—all made

A most pathetic sight. [37]

At the same time the fifth and final stanza offers a more imaginative and spiritually consoling conclusion, relaying 'But none could see a Shining Form | That watch'd beside them there'. [38]

As previously referenced, Hardy compared this poem to Wordsworth's 'Two April Mornings', another poem featuring a commonplace father and daughter, as the 'only poem which has ever affected me in at all the same way' (*CL I*, p.69). 'Two April Mornings', one of the 'Matthew poems', is included in *The Golden Treasury*, being a poetic meditation on nature, youth and memory, and like Locker's poem, Wordsworth's use of light indicates a religious presence, but here it is more organic and elemental in its artistic representation. In Wordsworth's opening lines, the speaker tells how:

We walked along, while bright and red

Uprose the morning sun;

And Matthew stopped, he looked, and said,

"The will of God be done!"' [39]

[37] Frederick Locker, 'The Old Stonemason', *The Poems of Frederick Locker* (New York: White, Stokes, & Allen, 1885), p.219, ll.13-16 <https://archive.org/details/cu31924013517093/page/n15/mode/2up> (accessed 20 October 2020).
[38] Locker, ll.19-20.

Wordsworth uses sunlight to prompt the poem's affective memories which, while shown to be painful as the poem proceeds, are also given a sense of imaginative succour by the overarching religious theme. This creative quality, like Locker's work, informs the poem's imaginative conclusion, Wordsworth's speaker concluding 'Matthew is in his grave, yet now, | Methinks, I see him stand'. [40] Both Locker and Wordsworth's poems, in the final stanza, draw upon art to balance pathos with a sense of comfort.

Conversely, Hardy's 'The Self Unseeing', creates a sense of pathos at the poem's conclusion as the speaker laments looking away from precious events in childhood. At the same time, Hardy, like Locker and Wordsworth, illuminates the past not through realism but by drawing upon artistic imagination. Thus Hardy's speaker describes how the present 'ancient floor | Footworn and hollowed and thin' (l.1-2) becomes transformed as he remembers his childhood by describing how 'Everything glowed with a gleam' (l.11). Wordsworth's personal poem therefore becomes, for Hardy, a shared artistic experience, as the speaker recalls the music of his father, which offers creative inspiration. A number of Hardy's poems draw upon emotional artistic influences in this same way to enhance his own personal experiences.

While Hardy's 'Idealism of Fancy' encompasses the various elements I have discussed here, therefore, such as Arnold's high notion of art and Wordsworth's cultural representation of commonplace experiences, he avoids committing to its Platonic or

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[39] William Wordsworth, 'Two April Mornings' *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, 4th edn, ed by Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.381. ll.1-4.
[40] Wordsworth, 'Two April Mornings', ll.57-58.

spiritual implications. This also reflects the way in which Hardy's work diverges from the religious poetry of Robert Browning, whose 'Andrea Del Sarto' (1855) intimated that the creative ends of art should be spiritual: 'Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, | Or what's a heaven for?' [41] At the same time, Hardy's poetic style was not copyist and, as O'Gorman argues, he 'reflected diversely on the world that Eliotian realism had described […] and mourned it as lacking, as necessarily and tragically detached from the chances of vision'. [42] Instead, Hardy qualifies his 'Idealism of Fancy' as signifying the creative workings of the secular imagination, drawing upon ideas, such as the Platonic ideal, for his own ends. In this way Hardy's fancy, the second of these two terms, functions as a solution to both problems; it avoids becoming ensnared by the metaphysical or spiritual aspects of idealism but also remains unfettered by the confines of materialism, leaving him free in his poetry to exercise his own creativity.

In this respect, Hardy's notion of fancy draws upon Romantic antecedents. The Romantic concept of fancy, and its juxtaposition with the imagination, has been traced by R.L. Brett to the thought of Locke and Hobbes, but, as Adam White observes, noting the different and contrasting uses of the idea by poets such as Leigh Hunt, John Reynolds and John Clare, 'a full history of fancy in the Romantic period still remains to be written'. [43] One of the most famous accounts was developed by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in his 1817

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[41] Browning, 'Andrea Del Sarto', *Robert Browning's Poetry: A Norton Critical Edition*, pp.236-242. ll.97-98; Browning's religious stance irritated Hardy, who remarked in 1899 to Edmund Gosse, 'How could smug Christian optimism worthy of a dissenting grocer find a place inside a man who was so vast a seer & feeler when on neutral ground?' (*CL II*, p. 216)

[42] O'Gorman, p.210.

[43] R. L. Brett, *Fancy & Imagination* (London: Methuen, 1969; Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), p.13-15; Adam White, ''High-Commission'd' Fancy in the Poetry of Leigh Hunt, John Keats, John Hamilton Reynolds, and John Clare', *The Keats-Shelley Review*, 27 (1) (2013), 15-21 (p.15). <https://doi.org/10.1179/0952414213z.00000000021> (accessed 27 July 2020).

Biographia Literaria, where he subordinated fancy to the imagination. While Wordsworth, in his 1815 introduction to his *Poems* attributed to fancy a creative faculty, Coleridge argued that the imagination should be placed in a higher, creative category, while fancy was used to describe the brain's associative processes. [44]

Hardy, however, appeared to possess a rather cautious stance regarding Coleridge's philosophical categorizations. He copied out into his notebooks a short excerpt of a 1907 article from *The Times* which noted that 'Coleridge's thought was disconnected from his passion, and seldom became poetry', this being because 'philosophy cannot be heightened into poetry until it has grown to be part of the poet's life, and not merely a game of his intellect' (*LN II*, p.410-411). Moreover, in his notes, while stating that a writer's philosophy should emanate from his own experience, Hardy cautioned 'Let him remember the fate of Coleridge, and save years of labour by working out his own views as given him by his surroundings' (*LIFE*, p.333). The comment may well critique Coleridge's extensive borrowing from German metaphysical ideas, but it also expresses Hardy's intention to avoid drawing upon rigid philosophical concepts from earlier figures.

Hardy's use of fancy, therefore, eschews Coleridge's commitment to metaphysics, and draws inspiration from the way it is used more imaginatively in the poetry of John Keats. This appears to represent the two categories of fancy and the imagination as indistinguishable, Keats's view being quite different to Coleridge's. [45] Richard Monckton Milnes' *The Life and Letters of John Keats* (1848) served to bring the poet to widespread public and critical attention, and Hardy would have, at the very least, encountered Keats by

[44] Brett, p.49, p.43.
[45] Brett, p.61.

the time he read Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* in 1862. [46] Like Wordsworth's, Keats's influence upon Hardy was long lasting; in 1887 Hardy paid homage to Keats's grave in Rome (*CL I*, p.163) while much later Sidney Cockerill was to report on listening to an aged Hardy talk '"as usual" about Shakespeare, Keats, and Shelley'. [47]

What chiefly attracted Hardy to Keats was, as he wrote in a letter to Sir George Douglas in 1923, 'the dreams and fancies raised by his verse' (*CL VI*, p.203). These aspects offer respite from what Hardy, in *Desperate Remedies*, quoting Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale' (1819), describes as 'leaden-eyed despairs' (*DR*, p.54). Keats's notion of the value of art is clearly detailed in the poem 'Fancy' (1820), where the poet juxtaposes the unchanging, perfect pleasures of the mind with the passing seasons and the aging of human flesh:

> Summer's joys are spoilt by use,
> And the enjoying of the Spring
> Fades as does its blossoming. [48]

While faces, cheeks and eyes lose their glow, Keats's speaker implores the reader, 'Let, then, winged Fancy find | Thee a mistress to thy mind'. [49] In seeking a 'mistress', Keats's fancy roams across the classical world, visioning the daughter of Ceres, Proserpina, before

[46] James Najarian, *Victorian Keats: Manliness, Sexuality, and Desire* (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.140.
[47] Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: A Biography Revisited* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004), p.496.
[48] John Keats, 'Fancy', *John Keats: The Complete Poems*, 5th edn, ed. by John Barnard (London: Penguin Books, 2006) pp.307-309, ll.10-12.
[49] Keats, 'Fancy', ll.79-80.

she descended to Hades. Thus, fully aware of life as being in flux, Keats employs classical art to create his own world of unchanging mental perfection. This poetic representation of art which conveys 'the possibility of intoxication' is as Adam White observes 'distinctly Keatsian'. [50]

Keats's notion of fancy, however, was also one of the major Romantic influences upon the Platonic idealism of Jowett and others. [51] At the same time, Keats's own poetic engagement with such ideas contrasts with his fellow Romantic Percy Bysshe Shelley's Platonic Ideal. [52] As I discussed in chapter 2, Hardy's poetry was inspired by Shelley's treatment of love and his social and political beliefs. His affectionate but wary position towards the Shelleyan Platonic Ideal, however, is evidenced by *The Well-Beloved* (1897), in which Jocelyn Pierston idealises and vainly pursues three generations of women. Hardy noted in 1896 that the novel was composed years before its published date, 'when I was comparatively a young man, and interested in the Platonic Idea, which, considering its charm and its poetry one could well wish to be interested in always' (*LIFE*, p.304). This interest can also be traced to Shelley, Lennart A. Bjork noting that this is 'from whom the epigraph of *The Well-Beloved* is taken' (*LN I*, p.294). Ultimately, Hardy defines the earnest pursuit of this idea as a 'Tragi-comedy', possibly referencing Shelley as he notes that 'There is, of course, underlying the fantasy followed by the visionary artist the truth that all men are pursuing a shadow, the Unattainable' (*LIFE*, p. 304).

[50] White, p.17.
[51] Leslie Armour, 'Poetry and the Philosophical Imagination', *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by William J. Mander (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp.587-618, p.599; Najarian, p.140.
[52] Jennifer Wallace, 'Shelley, Plato and the Political Imagination', *Platonism and the English Imagination*, ed. by Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, reprinted 1996), pp.229-241, p.230-31; Jenkyns, p.233-238.

Unlike Shelley's, Keats's stance towards such ideas fails to perceive, as Brett argues, any 'neo-Platonic belief that we catch glimpses in and through the world of our senses of a transcendent reality beyond'.[53] Instead, Keats has faith in art's inspirational and exhilarating power, as demonstrated in poems such as 'Ode to a Grecian Urn' (1820) where a classical art form is celebrated as a perfect representation for corporeal beings who have passed away. Here, past human moments are perfectly captured, frozen in time so that they cannot be subject to ongoing change or deterioration. Musicians are shown as 'For ever piping songs for ever new;' while lovers enjoy:

> More happy love! more happy, happy love!
> For ever warm and still to be enjoyed,
> For ever panting, and for ever young. [54]

While Jenkyns has noted that Keats's concluding lines 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,' appear indicative of Plato, 'distantly echoing the *Symposium*' Keats focused upon the personally imaginative uses to which art could be put. [55] Such figures from antiquity become perfect moments of imaginative rather than Platonic beauty, captured in poetic amber. Hardy would have been very familiar with Keats' famous and oft-quoted phrase from Book I of *Endymion* (1818):

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[53] Brett, p.62.
[54] John Keats, 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', *John Keats: The Complete Poems*, pp.344-346, l.24; ll.25-27.
[55] Jenkyns, p.228; Brett, p.62.

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:

Its loveliness increases; it will never

Pass into nothingness. [56]

Hardy used stanza five from Book IV, or the 'Ode to Sorrow', as an epigraph to *The Return of the Native* (1878). He also records reading 'Ode to a Grecian Urn' during 1887 (*LIFE*, p.212), but this is unlikely to have been the first time he had encountered it. Like Keats' 'thing of beauty', such as the figures upon his Grecian urn, Hardy's work often represents past art objects through his own poetic imagination, further reflecting his lifelong interest in the study of art such as portrait painting. Keats' poetic speakers are often unable to sustain their mental celebration of past art and must recycle the imaginative process repeatedly, so that, as Kostas Boyiopoulos argues, 'in his quasi-lamentation, he can only *imagine*'. [57]

Yet while Hardy's poetic speakers imaginatively draw upon past art objects and artists they also engage in more forward-looking acts of artistic participation. This aspect of Hardy's poetic fancy draws upon the aesthetic thought of Walter Pater, whose influence I briefly discussed in chapter 1. Although Hardy did not meet Pater until 1886, he likely encountered his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) around 1876 or earlier. [58] Pater was one of a number of later writers who was influenced by Keats's notion of fancy.

[56] John Keats, 'Endymion: A Poetic Romance: Book I', *John Keats: The Complete Poems*, pp.107-133, ll.1-3.
[57] Kostas Boyiopoulos, ''Enchanted Wine': Symons, Dowson, and Keats's Intoxications' in *Decadent Romanticism: 1780-1914*, ed. by Kostas Boyiopoulos and Mark Sandy (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), pp. 59-74, p.68.
[58] Suzanne. J. Flynn, 'Hardy in (a Time of) Transition' in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Rosemarie Morgan (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 87-99 (p.95).

[59] In relation to Arnold, however, while Stefan Collini holds that Pater 'absconded with part of his legacy' Pater's philosophy eschewed the Arnoldian historical ideal, instead favouring a relativist approach which attempted to highlight the importance of isolated moments of artistic experience. [60] As Jenkyns argues, 'Arnold talked constantly of light when he discussed the Greeks, […] he seems to have seen Hellenism as a *source* of illumination, radiating outwards; but Pater fixed his attention less on the origin of the light than on the way it fell upon objects.' [61] This aesthetic approach chimed with Hardy, and it is evidenced by the numerous passages from Pater's writings found in his notebooks, including the claim in *Marius the Epicurean* (1885) that 'The individual is to himself the measure of all things […] The exclusive certainty to himself of his own impressions' (*LN I*, p.206). Hence, as Mark Asquith observes, while 'deterministic laws may govern humankind's activities', Pater concentrates his attention upon 'exhorting the artist to focus on the momentary manifestation of these forces'. [62]

While Arnold celebrated past artistic perfection Pater focused upon the individual artistic experience, placing importance upon the creative present. This is specifically outlined in the 'Conclusion' to Pater's *Studies*, which, in its aesthetic analysis of famous Italian paintings, contains, in its earliest version, the following famous passage:

[59] Leslie Armour, 'Poetry and the Philosophical Imagination', p.599; Najarian, p.140.
[60] Stefan Collini, *Matthew Arnold: A Critical Portrait*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p.110.
[61] Jenkyns, p.147.
[62] Mark Asquith, 'Philosophy, Metaphysics and Music in Hardy's Cosmic Vision', *The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Rosemarie Morgan (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 181-197 (p. 182).

> Of this wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake has most; for art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake. [63]

For Pater, discrete moments, while transient, contained a power which could be culturally transmitted by the artist. Hardy's fancy connects to Pater's sentiments, capturing in his poetry individually experienced aesthetic moments but also, in reworking them as further poetic art, becoming part of a creative process.

As Hardy's poetic speakers engage with past moments they often demonstrate the knowing awareness that, through an 'Idealism of Fancy', they are re-imagining or perfecting these experiences. They can nevertheless draw solace and enjoyment from such creative illumination. This Pateresque aspect of Hardy's poetry can be compared and contrasted with Arthur Symons's 'The Last Memory', published in *Images of Good and Evil* (1899). Symons did not exert a formative influence upon his work, but as Gillian Beer notes, such late nineteenth-century comparisons with Hardy can help us detect 'resonances in his poetry and his fiction that we may otherwise miss'. [64] Further, Marion Thain has observed several poetic connections between Hardy and Symons, specifically noting how Hardy's 'The Minute Before Meeting' which was 'dated 1871 but not published till 1909, has great resonance with Arthur Symons's "The Broken Tryst" (published in the first

[63] Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.121.
[64] Gillian Beer, 'Hardy and Decadence', *Celebrating Thomas Hardy: Insights and Appreciations*, ed. by Charles P.C. Pettit (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996) pp.90-102, p.90.

Rhymers' Club anthology of 1892)'. [65] Hardy's later interest in Symons' poems also helps emphasise the influence of Keats and Pater upon this aspect of his own poetry. As Boyiopoulous argues, Symons, in both his 'Introduction' to *Poems of Keats* (1907) and 'The Romantic Movement in English Poetry' (1909), held Keats to be 'a forerunner of "art for art's sake"', but also heeded Keats 'in being concerned with the aesthetic problem of reconciling consciousness, sensation, and the timeless beauty of Art'. [66] Moreover, David Perkins links the Rhymers Club, of which Symons was a member – and whose first anthology, by Thain's inference, Hardy likely read – to the influence of Pater. [67]

In particular, Symons's 'The Last Memory', which Hardy praised in a 1900 letter to the poet (*CL II*, p.259), reflects Pater's writings on the artistic process. In the famous passage from the 'Leonardo Da Vinci' chapter of *Studies*, Pater describes the mysterious, 'unfathomable smile' of Leonardo's *The Mona Lisa*, further noting, 'we might fancy that this was but his ideal lady, embodied and beheld at last'. [68] Symons appears to draw upon this as his poetic speaker imagines being old and looking into a flickering fire. In it, he further fancies the image of a lover with a mysterious, smiling face: 'Wondering, was it Leonardo wrought | That stealthy ardency'. [69] In referencing a painting, Symons's future image appears perfected and yet, through being gradually beautified, tragically artificial. In

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[65] Marion Thain, 'Affective Form: Hardy's Poetry and a Sculptural Aesthetic', *The Thomas Hardy Journal*, (30) (2014), 66-82, p.67; p.69. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48569490> (accessed 14 June 2020).
[66] Boyiopoulos, p.59, p.68.
[67] David Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry: From the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1977)., p.37; Marion Thain, 'Affective Form: Hardy's Poetry and a Sculptural Aesthetic', p.69.
[68] Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, pp.69-70.
[69] Arthur Symons, 'The Last Memory', *Images of Good and Evil* (London: William Heinemann, 1899), pp. 165-166, ll.7-8 <https://archive.org/details/imagesgoodandev01symogoog/page/n6/mode/2up> (accessed 14 May 2020).

flux, it appears as 'something strange, | And beautiful, and full of helpless change'. [70] Symons's speaker demonstrates his rather rueful awareness of the inevitable way in which experience is aesthetically perfected by the artistic process. His final and abiding memory of this face will come to resemble a painting, so that 'you will come to seem, | As pictures do, remembered, some old dream' (ll.13-14). The speaker knows that he will gradually perfect the reality of a former lover instead of remembering accurately, forecasting a 'dim pain' which will chill him when he is old (l.20).

While Hardy's poetic 'Idealism of Fancy', such as the famous poems on his late wife Emma found in *Satires of Circumstance* (1914), illustrates this awareness, he can nevertheless derive pleasure from his own fanciful remembrances. This is demonstrated in 'The Self-Unseeing' (1901) (*CP I*), which I previously discussed in relation to the imaginative influence of Wordsworth. The poem's self-aware aspect lends its title a second possible meaning, referencing the speaker's past but also present perception of events. The speaker laments that 'we were looking away!' and hints at the direction in which these figures face, relaying that while his father played violin, 'Childlike, I danced in a dream' (l.9). His father and the poetic teller, conveyed by the art form of music, are thus looking forward, the child playing at being an adult dancer and hence dreaming of the future. Conversely, his mother's glance is likely turned in the opposite direction, being shown 'Smiling into the fire' (l.6). In Symons's poem, which Hardy read just three years before the publication of his own verse, the speaker describes how, when old, 'I shall see, smiling

[70] Symons, 'The Last Memory', ll.15-16. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

out of the pale fire, | One face, mysterious and exquisite'. [71] Hardy's speaker appears to creatively manipulate this process, showing his mother gazing into the fire and remembering the past. Another poem, Hardy's 'A Church Romance' (1909) (*CP I*), gives us a strong clue as to which figures she may have been wont to remember. It describes how his mother would often recall first seeing his father play violin in church:

> At some old attitude of his or glance
> That gallery-scene would break upon her mind,
> With him as minstrel, ardent, young, and trim,
> (ll.11-13)

In 'The Self-Unseeing', as her husband plays violin, Hardy's mother gazes into the fire and by association likely remembers – or imaginatively perfects – the image of his past figure. While music conveys the future, the fire, and its illuminated and suggestive forms, conveys the past.

In looking back at another who is also looking backwards, Hardy's speaker may also be fire-gazing. His poem gives us an emotionally intelligent and meta-aware picture of the artistic process. As the poem's title conveys, if one reads its second possible meaning, the poetic self is frequently unseeing the past, or, in other words, seeing the past in an imaginative, perfected and fire-gazing fashion. Thus, like the three remembered figures, the speaker is also 'looking away'. Hardy demonstrates, like Symons, how past moments are

[71] Symons, 'The Last Memory', ll.4-5.

not merely remembered in poetry, but likely reimagined more perfectly through the power of artistic seeing. While Symons's poem, however, imagines a future geriatric speaker crouching over his fading memories, telling us, 'I shall bend above | My little fire, and shiver, being cold,' Hardy's speaker takes pleasure in fancying a past where 'Blessings emblazoned that day; | Everything glowed with a gleam'.[72] Here, the speaker is self-deceiving, and yet, to take his attention away from a reality which is 'Footworn and hollowed and thin,' is also well-aware of the deception and its artistic necessity. This, like Symons's poem, also draws upon the legacy of Pater, who, in his *Studies*, saw the importance of appreciating life and art, declaring 'To burn always with this hard gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy'.[73] Unlike Symons's description of 'helpless change', Hardy's poem, in recalling his father playing the violin, his younger self dancing, and indeed his mother dreamily fire-gazing, indicates the more pleasurable aspects of the artistic imagination. Hardy's speakers can illuminate past experiences and also creatively rework them in present moments.

Hardy's 'Idealism of Fancy' further demonstrates a more hopeful quality, in which individuals can engage with and become part of a greater artistic whole. This aspect draws creatively upon Platonic aspects, but also once again the influence of Pater. Benjamin Jowett's translations of Plato – along with theories of heredity, which were taught at Oxford from around 1854 – likely influenced Pater's *The Mona Lisa* passage from

[72] Symons, 'The Last Memory', ll.20-21..
[73] Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, p.120.

Studies.[74] Pater was a student of Jowett's from 1858 to 1862 and, while, as Higgins notes, the two were to become ideologically estranged, his writings also draw partly upon the influence of his former teacher. [75] Pater described Da Vinci's painting as the perfect artistic representation of numerous successive and evolving moments, a 'beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions'. [76] In this sense, Pater's *The Mona Lisa* is indicative of both a series of non-integrated evolving instances in flux and a perfected evolved Platonic form, in the shape of a painted image.

These ideas find their echoes in Hardy's 'Heredity' (1917) (*CP II*), in which the speaker describes how:

> I am the family face;
> Flesh perishes, I live on,
> Projecting trait and trace
> Through time to times anon,
> And leaping from place to place
> Over oblivion.
> (ll.1-6).

[74] Turner, p.351-3; Michael Wainwright, 'Oscar Wilde, the Science of Heredity, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 54 (4), (2011), 494-522 (p.494). <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/445329> (accessed 16 Mar 2020).
[75] Lesley Higgins, 'Jowett and Pater: Trafficking in Platonic Wares', *Victorian Studies*, 37 (1) (1993), 43-72 (p.45) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3829058> (accessed 25 June 2019).
[76] Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, p.70.

The speaker appears to resemble a gene, travelling across the generations, but, as 'The eternal thing in man, | That heeds no call to die' (ll.11-12) it can also be understood as a fanciful Platonic form, contrasting with the generations it describes who are in flux. Moreover, this form, or 'family face' is suggestive of being a portrait, but in a private picture gallery, where successive moments in a familial pedigree are lined up as new paintings upon the hall of a stately home. Hardy's poem resembles Pater's image of *The Mona Lisa*, which he describes as embodying both 'modern thought', such as evolutionary ideas, and 'The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences'. [77] It indicates the ways in which life and art are continually advancing, both family dynasties and art objects being reborn. This contrasts with Arnold's notion of art as finished and eternally unchanging, and indicates the way in which individual artists, and Hardy's poetic speakers, can become a creative part of a potentially unceasing artistic process.

Thus, while Hardy's use of the term idealism illustrates the influence of Arnold's classical notions of art, and Wordsworth's representation of provincial scenes through modes of imaginative expression, his fancy takes inspiration from the aesthetic legacy of Keats and Pater. These sources helped shape the way in which Hardy's poetic 'Idealism of Fancy' brings people and things back from the artistic past. This has been judged to exemplify a rather limited stance by some critics. While Dwayne Howell holds that Hardy's reimagining of figures and things from the past represents a 'stubborn contention that

[77] Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, p.70.

neither a poetic "fancy" not a belief in dualism […] can penetrate external reality', [78] Estanove further, notes that 'what it celebrates is rather the futile powers of imagination than the grandeur of artistic creation'. [79] As I will argue in this chapter, however, Hardy's poetic 'Idealism of Fancy' can demonstrate more than backwards-looking imaginative solace, as his individual speakers engage with artistic figures and their works, becoming part of a creative continuum.

As I have mentioned in the introduction, Hardy's fanciful engagement with art in his poetry follows two general but interconnected tendencies. Examining these two groups in turn will help us to trace a thematic arc in Hardy's poetry which ranges from succour to more powerful moods of joy and hope. In poems where Hardy's speaker encounters various forms of architecture, which past artistic or historical figures have built, inhabited or entered, he is placed within an interconnected matrix of meaning; while he is looking backwards he is not cut off from the world but imaginatively re-oriented. In Hardy's most hopeful poems of this sort, however, his speakers draw imaginative enjoyment from transportable, non-spaciotemporal forms of art such as literature and music. In some of these poems in particular, art does not just offer imaginative pleasure, as Hardy's poetic speakers appear able to become part of an ongoing teleological process. Viewing Hardy's poetry of art in this way reveals his enjoyment of past artists and their works and also demonstrates a forward-looking, creatively interactive and hopeful stance towards art's enduring power.

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[78] Dwayne Howell, 'Dogma and Belief in the Poetry of Thomas Hardy', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 19 (1) (1976), 5-14, (p.6) <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/374378/summary> (accessed 25 June 2019); Estanove, p.89.
[79] Estanove, p.92.

3. THE AESTHETIC POWER OF ARCHITECTURE

A number of Hardy's poems focus upon the aesthetic importance of architectural structures from different eras of human history, such as mansions, palaces, Gothic churches, cathedrals and Roman ruins. They reflect Hardy's lifelong interest in the ways in which imaginative craft went into architectural creation. While Hardy trained as an architect as a young man, in his later years, from 1907 to 1911 he undertook a series of English cathedral tours with his brother (*LIFE*, p.357, p.382). As I discussed in Chapter 1, Hardy's poetic representations of the natural world were part-inspired by Gothic architecture, and also creatively influenced by the ideas of John Ruskin and the designs of William Burgess. Hardy was also interested in much earlier periods of architecture, and during his 1887 trip to Rome he detailed how 'he was on the whole more interested in Pagan than in Christian Rome' (*LIFE*, p.198). Gothic churches, mediaeval and Roman architecture therefore functioned for Hardy as powerful artistic stimuli which shaped his poetic 'Idealism of Fancy' in different ways.

Of Hardy's various poems of this type, a number are inspired by artistic or structural detail, some focus upon aesthetic spaces, while others celebrate the ways in which architecture memorialises artists and artisans. For example, in some of these poems his speakers respond imaginatively to structural spaces, such architecture providing aesthetic inspiration which brightly reminds them of the artists who made them or the figures who lived there. While Hardy's speakers may be lonely, or disengaged from the

present, such experiences serve to offer pleasure, re-anchoring and reinstating them in the world. Some of these structural spaces also provide Hardy's speakers with aesthetic experiences which yield imaginative opportunities for pleasurable metaphysical fancy. More hopefully, in some of these poems Hardy's impersonal speakers look forwards, celebrating not just the achievements of the deceased architects and artisans behind physical art, but the way in which they can appear to live on in secular fashion through their work.

Several of Hardy's poems which focus upon architecture of the past are inspired by aesthetic images and sculptural detail, taking these poems in imaginative and fanciful directions. Hardy's speaker observes the importance of architectural details even as they are ignored by others. For example, in 'Rome: Building a New Street in the Ancient Quarter' (1901) (*CP I*), Hardy's impersonal speaker describes the Roman remains as important historical signifiers which 'Outskeleton Time's central city, Rome' (l.2). These structures place the present and thus human life in context by illustrating the power of the Roman past. In the second stanza the speaker's attention is drawn towards the structures' architectural details:

> And cracking frieze and rotten metope
> Express, as though they were an open tome
> Top-lined with caustic monitory gnome;
> 'Dunces, Learn here to spell Humanity!'
> (ll.5-8)

The friezes and metopes of a classical Greco-Roman structure were traditionally decorated with images, which often told a tale or relayed a myth in the form of pictures. The speaker in the next line uses a simile to describe these aspects as akin to a book. The phrase 'learn to spell humanity' indicates the poet's opinion that architectural art has something important to relay about the creative nature of humans. In his notebooks Hardy had recorded an unidentified Matthew Arnold quote, which implored the artist to 'Address your writings to the generations yet unborn' (*LN I*, p.179) and Hardy's speaker appears to agree with Arnold's general view regarding the important cultural legacy of classical art. This powerful architectural effect upon the speaker in the third stanza is contrasted with the actions of the seemingly oblivious singing workers in the fourth, who 'With no apparent sense that years abrade, | Though each rent wall their feeble powers invade' (ll.12-13). Such important images appear destined to be increasingly ignored by those who were unborn when they were created, but this is not the case for the poet. Instead, he highlights the creative act involved in producing such art objects and the important message such acts leave for later generations.

Hardy's poetry bemoans the fading of artistic culture, but, unlike some of his contemporaries who tackled this theme, his poetry also highlights the imaginative way in which, for the speaker at least, such art can be kept alive and enjoyed. In Eliot's 'The Waste Land' , the church of St. Magnus Martyr is represented in 'The Fire Sermon' section as an unfathomable memento of Christian history. Here, the ancient seer Tiresias wanders modern London and describes 'Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls | Of

Magnus Martyr hold | Inexplicable splendor of Ionian white and gold'. [80] While Tiresias remembers its past mysteries, those who now live beside it do not appear to do so. As Hazel Atkins argues, the 'beauty of the church and the life of spiritual redemption it symbolizes is unfathomable, something wholly incomprehensible, in the modern waste land'. [81] This sense of confusion is not true of Hardy's poems which feature architectural detail. Unlike Eliot, the older Hardy's view of Church architecture was chiefly secular, but also strongly shaped by his early vocational experience.

In an 1878 article for the *Boston Literary World* he outlined his regret at his participation in 'church "restoration"', noting how 'under colour of restoring and renovating for a good cause' he 'was instrumental in obliterating many valuable records in stone of the history of quiet rural parishes, much to his regret in later years' (*PV*, p.12). In his later poetry, however, such obliteration was able to be imaginatively reversed as aspects of the architectural past were illuminated in the present. At the same time, Hardy was aware that attempting to glimpse such historical aspects relied partly upon the imagination, recording in his notes a passage from Walter Pater's 'Appreciations' (1889) which stated, 'Your historian, for instance, with absolute truthful intention, […] must needs select, & in selecting assert something of his own humour, something that comes not of the world without but of a vision within' (*LN II*, p.17). For Hardy's speakers, while architectural art is divested of its religious connections, imaginative fancy provides a secular link which creatively transmits the lives and culture of past figures.

[80] T.S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land', ll.263-5.
[81] Hazel Atkins, 'Ways of Viewing Churches in "The Waste Land" and "Little Gidding"', *Religion & Literature*, 44 (1) (2012),167-173, (p.170) < https://www.jstor.org/stable/23347067> (accessed 05 Jun 2021).

Sculptures and statues set within architectural spaces also help to illuminate the vanishing artistic past for Hardy's speakers. In 'A Cathedral Façade At Midnight' (1925) (*CP III*), published just three years after Eliot's 'The Waste Land', Hardy's teller describes a moonlit visit to Salisbury Cathedral: 'Along the sculptures of the western wall | I watched the moonlight creeping' (ll.1-2). By the third and final stanza the speaker has imagined 'a frail moan from the martyred saints there set' (l.15) at the dwindling of faith:

> Under the sure, unhasting, steady stress
> Of Reason's movement, making meaningless
> The coded creeds of old-time godliness.
> (ll.19-21)

Nevertheless, the light of the moon, while symbolising the advance of reason and the clearing away of the shadows of religion, also briefly illuminates the sculptures in the middle stanza. This causes the speaker to clearly visualize the objects as corporeal and vocational human figures:

> The lunar look skimmed scantly toe, breast, arm,
> Then edged on slowly, slightly,
> To shoulder, hand, face; till each austere form
> Was blanched its whole length brightly
> Of prophet, king, queen, cardinal in state,

That dead men's tools had striven to simulate:

And the stiff images stood irradiate.

(ll.8-14)

The eleven commas used in the stanza help to create a slow, broken up mood in which hidden details are piece by piece gradually revealed as the darkened shadows are lit up. What is ultimately illuminated in this poem is the slow death of religious belief as the world appears to be becoming more enlightened. But while religion is described here as made 'meaningless', the speaker, inspired by such art objects, also insinuates another meaning. The many commas in this stanza accentuate the numerous discrete artistic details described such as hands, feet and faces. The sculptures therefore appear physically realistic in the poem because the speaker sees how they represent past human forms. These are 'dead men' who had 'striven to stimulate' ideas in physical form, and while representing actual types from the past they also symbolise a religion which was once fervently believed in as real. In addition, these human figures signify their 'dead' human creators. While such artists have passed away, and the culture that the architectural sculptures symbolise may be disappearing, the detailed craft that went into their composition illustrates its previous imaginative power, and, further, the creative power of the people who made it. Illuminated by the moon, the sculptures resonate imaginatively for Hardy's speaker as both cultural symbols of the past and as examples of creative art made by past artists. As imaginative works of art which appear physically real, the sculptures connect the poetic speaker as artist with the sculptors from the past even as their culture begins to dwindle.

To emphasize these aspects further, statues of past cultural figures are sometimes imaginatively brought to life in Hardy's poems. While past artists laboured to create lifelike statues of humans, Hardy's speakers poetically envision them as living beings. Hardy employs them as exemplars of past artistic craft which carry forward the cultural memory of the times in which they were created. In 'Christmas in the Elgin Room' (1928) (*CP III*), the Parthenon statues are imagined as reminiscing about the classical Athens of antiquity. Such memories are threatened by the Christmas bells which carry the sounds of the religion that has supplanted theirs. The poem is subtitled 'British Museum: Early Last Century', Hardy imagining the sculptures' anthropomorphic reaction to encountering the Christian religion shortly after their arrival in England. Nevertheless, the statues are imagined as actually standing in for the mythical figures they represent, including Helios and:

> Demeter too, Poseidon hoar,
> Persephone, and many more
> Of Zeus' high breed.
> (ll.31-34)

The speaker imagines such figures as being alive, similar to the way in which the gods were believed by the Athenians to physically exist and hence encapsulated anthropomorphically in marble by sculptors. The statues personify the cultural myths and legends of antiquity, the speaker grasping how, as art objects, they personify the artistic culture of the people and times in which they were made. Crucially, they function as powerful imaginative stimuli in

Hardy's poem, even as he is aware that the culture they represent is threatened with anonymity.

Furthermore, some of Hardy's brighter poems which respond to architectural art focus upon the wider framing of space for aesthetic effect. Such spaces offer Hardy's speakers a sense of time being interconnected, as they envision architecture in terms of places where previous generations have lived. They also offer a means to imagine a compassionate spiritual or metaphysical presence. In such pieces monumental rather than small details are noticed and used in creative ways. As a writer, Hardy was especially attentive to the aesthetic experiences that architecture could engender. This interest was reflected in his sightseeing trips around Europe to view cathedrals and medieval structures, providing details which found their way into passages from *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876) and *A Laodicean* (1881). In the former text, Ethelberta climbs the spire of Rouen Cathedral with Lord Mountclere, and Hardy describes a foggy scene reminiscent of Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog* (1818). As the mist clears the cathedral materializes into view, as 'Out of the plain of fog beneath, a stone tooth seemed to be upheaving itself: then another showed forth. These were the summits of the St. Romain and the Butter Towers' (*HE*, p.295-96). In *A Laodicean*, Paula Power walks down a street of medieval buildings in Lisieux, and, exposed to the overall aesthetic effect, Hardy tells us, 'She was transported to the Middle Ages […] It was a street for a medievalist to revel in, toss up his hat and shout hurrah in' (*LD*, p. 350).

In several of Hardy's poems the speaker is imaginatively transported due to being exposed to architectural spaces that are affected by the elements. Hardy appears able to

fancy and revivify the individuals who inhabited such architectural structures, these vibrant figures implying a continuum with the present. In 'A Spellbound Palace' (1925) (*CP III*), set in the Palace of Hampton Court, the imagined figures appear less like ghosts than real, albeit momentary, figures, and this effect is preceded by the use of natural time imagery. This contrasts with Hardy's use of a clock in the more pessimistic 'Copying Architecture in an Old Minster' (1917) (*CP II*), which reminds the poetic speaker of the unavoidable ticking of time as he images ghosts rising from their church tombs to comfort the living.

Instead, in 'a Spellbound Palace', the first stanza describes the poem as taking place on a bright winter's day, and the sun's rays send shadows and light along the walls of Hampton Court. The lines are reminiscent of the passage from *A Laodician* in which Paula Power encounters the medieval street, large timber beams overhanging the walkways so that 'A blue misty obscurity pervaded the atmosphere, into which the sun thrust oblique staves of light' (*LD*, p.350). In Hardy's poem the sunlight is more powerful, creating a different effect, the brickwork being described as 'fired vermillion' (l.5). This illustrates two aspects, highlighting the way in which it was crafted as an architectural object, being fired in a kiln, but also the aesthetic effect which the sun has upon it. Here, therefore, as architectural features interact with the elements the past and the present appear to combine.

While there is no clock here, the second stanza gives a greater clue to the exact time of the year, telling how 'Two or three early sanguine finches tune | Some tentative strains, to be enlarged by May or June' (ll.6-7). The first two stanzas, therefore, convey the image of new life, taking place in later winter or very early spring, which revitalizes both the brickwork of the building and the creatures which surround it. At the same time, the

speaker tells us that ‘an enfeebled fountain somewhere within is heard’ (l.10). It is this architectural feature, the fountain, unlike the mechanical clock in ‘Copying Architecture’, which organically draws the speaker back into the past. The fountain, as a further object of craft, audibly reminds the attentive viewer of the fact that both it and Hampton Court were made by past human beings. It provides the palace with an acoustic feature which serves as a human voice from the past. In addition, it provides the poem’s imaginative inspiration. The sound of water continuously trickling from the Hampton Court fountain presents a double image, being symbolic of the flowing nature of time but also, as the water traverses in a looped circuit, evoking a timeless quality.

Hardy’s fountain inspires fancy, leading the poetic teller to think backwards towards the past. In the fourth stanza his speaker envisions the image of Henry VIII and Cardinal Wolsey, who seem to actually appear in his line of vision. Unlike in ‘Copying Architecture’, where the imagined ghosts are somewhat gloomily reflective of the old church and its tombs, here the ghosts are indicative of the same vibrant mood as the present. Standing in an inner court the speaker describes, in fleshy, energetic terms:

> And there swaggers the Shade of a straddling King, plumed, sworded, with sensual face,
> And lo, too, that of his Minister, at a bold self-centred pace:
> Sheer in the sun they pass; and thereupon all is still,
> Save the mindless fountain tinkling on with thin enfeebled will.
> (ll.18-21)

There is no doubt that the tone here is comic, the descriptions of Henry VIII as swaggering and straddling, and Wolsey as self-centred, representing their confidence, lust and arrogance as the object of humour.

Hardy's poem, however, further links these past figures to the natural world of the present. By being described as 'plumed' Henry VIII can be connected to the birds in the second stanza. The King and Wolsey, his Minster, stride forward with what appears a greater sense of purpose than the 'tentative strains' of the birds, and yet, as we know, their corporeal forms now cease to exist. Hence the final line of the poem tells us that all again becomes quiet, 'Save the mindless fountain tinkling on with thin enfeebled will' (l.21). The fountain here reminds us of Arthur Schopenhauer's blind will, as found in natural forces.[82] As I have discussed in the Introduction, some critics have connected Hardy's view of the Will, in which all living things were impelled forward by unseen impulses, to the negative influence of Schopenhauer. [83] Yet in Hardy's poetry it is not just the blind Will which appears to persist, such lived-in architectural structures providing a perpetual marker of human art and life, and provoking the creative powers of human imagination. The 'Shade' of the King is fanciful, reminding us of Wordsworth's 'Miltonian shades!' in 'At Vallombrosa' (1842), in which, like Hardy's poem, a fountain is used as a metaphor for

[82] Christopher Janaway, 'Schopenhauer' in *German Philosophers: Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsch*e, 2nd edn, ed. by Keith Thomas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, reprinted 2010), pp.215-338 (pp.226-227).
[83] Mary Ann Kelly, 'Hardy's Reading in Schopenhauer: Tess of the D'Urbervilles.' *Colby Quarterly*, 18 (3) (1982), 183-198 <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/cq> (accessed 25 June 2019); Dan Jacobsen, 'Thomas Hardy: The Poet as Philosopher', *The American Scholar*, (65)1 (1996) 114-118 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41212448> (accessed 25 June 2019).

time. Further, the descriptions in the fourth stanza of 'A Spellbound Palace' convey a powerful and bright image of life. [84]

This poetical 'Idealism of Fancy', which involves reimaging the lives and works of the dead, recalls Hardy's interest in Pater. Hardy copied out a passage from *Marius the Epicurean* (1885) where Pater defined 'That secondary sort of life which we can give to the dead, in our intensely realized memory of them – the "subjective immortality"' (*LN I*, p.205). By using his imagination, Hardy can also envision figures from the past to enhance the present, and to give his poetry colour. Thus, while Hardy's tone is part-mocking, the king and his minister appear 'Sheer in the sun they pass' (l.20), their image shining as brightly as the birds and trees. Napoleon, in *The Dynasts*, laments his failure to impose his lineage upon Europe, but he also acknowledges that 'Great men are meteors that consume themselves | To light the earth' (*DY*, p.700). This Promethean illumination is personally finite, Napoleon calling it 'my burnt-out hour' (p.700), but is ultimately achieved through being remembered in historical annals and creatively recast in art. The memory of Henry VIII and his minister, imagined through their associations with Hampton Court, also provide the speaker with creative inspiration which in turn rekindles them brightly in the present.

The poem's 'spellbound' and fanciful atmosphere also reflects the influence of John Keats, and his early poem 'On Receiving a Curious Shell, and a Copy of Verse, from the Same Ladies' (1817). In this poem, addressed to G.F. Matthew, Keats associates fairy imagery with sunlight and running water, asking whether Matthew has a gem the bright

[84] William Wordsworth, 'At Vallombrosa' *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, pp.287-288, l.29.

colour of 'the humming-bird's green diadem, | When it flutters in sunbeams that shine through a fountain?' [85] Keats is reported to have remarked, during an experience at St. Thomas's Hospital, that 'there came a sunbeam into the room, and with it a whole troop of creatures floating in the ray'. [86] These 'creatures' whether insects or motes of dust, were envisioned by Keats as fairies, and he is reported as remarking, 'I was off with them to Oberon – and fairyland'. [87] The diadem is therefore an analogy for a fairy crown, Keats's poem being influenced by Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Night Dream.* [88] Keats imagines a shell as owned by King Oberon, relaying how 'There, oft, would he bring from his soft-sighing lute | Wild strains to which, spell-bound, the nightingales listened'. [89] In Keats's imagination, Oberon's music is retained by the shell, so that:

> In this little dome, all those melodies strange,
> Soft, plaintive, and melting, for ever will sigh;
> Nor e'er will the notes from their tenderness change;
> Nor e'er will the music of Oberon die. [90]

In Hardy's poem, the architecture of Hampton Court, magically enhanced by the sunlight, creates a similar effect to the shell, in which the memory of King Henry VIII, rather than

[85] John Keats, 'On Receiving a Curious Shell, and a Copy of Verse, from the Same Ladies' *John Keats: The Complete Poems*, pp.46-47, ll.3-4.
[86] 'Notes', *John Keats: The Complete Poems,* pp.555-720 (p.561).
[87] 'Notes', *John Keats: The Complete Poems*, p.561.
[88] J. Burke Severs, 'Keats's Fairy Sonnet', *Keats-Shelley Journal: Keats-Shelley Association of America,* 6, (1957), 109-113 (p.111) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30210031> (accessed 18 May 2019).
[89] Keats, 'On Receiving a Curious Shell, and a Copy of Verse, from the Same Ladies', ll.29-30.
[90] Keats, 'On Receiving a Curious Shell, and a Copy of Verse, from the Same Ladies', ll.33-36.

King Oberon, persists. Just as the sun creates bright spots and shadows which stretch out across the walls of Hampton Court, so Henry VIII's shadow, or 'Shade', stretches onwards across the palace. The outstretched shape of the stanza, with its longer first line and then shorter, uneven successive lines reflects this shadowy image. But the elongated metre of line eighteen with its alliterative 's's also evokes the sense that this presence is persisting in some remembered form. Henry VIII and Wolsey thus appear comically fallible, and yet also brightly present through their connection to this architecture. Hampton Court gives inspiration to the speaker and he, in turn, imagines these figures due to their being synonymous with this architectural space. Their imagined presence allows the speaker to briefly, as if by magic, enter the past and walk alongside famous figures from history. This effect therefore emphasises the passing of time, but also indicates the power of architectural art to subvert this. Hampton Court is seen as an aesthetic space which combines with the elements and surrounding nature to inspire fanciful, vibrant and comic historical moments in the present.

This aspect is further emphasized in 'In a Whispering Gallery' (1917) (*CP II*), in which aesthetic space inspires the speaker's metaphysical fancy. He enters St Paul's Cathedral, which, although famously designed by Christopher Wren, resonates less because of who built it and more through its specific association with Paul himself. While Ethelberta climbs the spire of Rouen Cathedral amidst a foggy scene, the speaker of this poem ascends the whispering gallery during what appears to be a murky day:

And from this gaunt gallery

A tabernacle of worth
On this drab-aired afternoon,
When you can barely see
Across its hazed lacune.
(ll.12-16)

Despite the murkiness of the scene, the speaker transforms this into a brighter vision which contrasts several of the effects encountered in 'Copying Architecture'. Wimborne 'Minster's cavernous hollows' (l.8) remind us of St. Paul's 'hazed lacune', but while the former poem concludes with spirits who 'waste to fog as I stir and stand' (l.31) the latter commences upon a 'drab-aired afternoon' and ends more brightly. In the Minster the speaker uses rather unsettling terms for the imagined ghostly sounds, telling us 'I catch their cheepings, though thinner than | The overhead creak of a passenger's pinion' (ll.23-24). This description hints at the idea of obsolescence, referring to the extinction of the passenger pinion both in its mention of a pinion, or wing, and in its echo of the bird's name. Instead, in 'In a Whispering Gallery' the actual whispered sounds in St. Paul's are echoed throughout the empty dome, and are thus imagined to possibly 'Be a soul's voice floating here' (l.21).

Several of the fanciful aspects of the poem, and indeed the language, further reflect the poetry of Arthur Symons. While Hardy's correspondence with Symons can be traced to June 1st 1900, where he wrote to congratulate him on *Images of Good and Evil* (*CL II*, p.258-59*)*, his reading of the poet likely far preceded this date. In 1892 Symons had written

the love poem ‘Nocturne’, published in *Silhouettes***,** which described a carriage ride through the London evening. While the title can be read as meaning night-time, it also implies a dreamy musical composition. Both readings neatly fit the events of the poem; in the opening lines Symons, while framing the scene as beneath a night ‘dome’, describes how the wheels heightened the whispers and beating hearts of the lovers:

> One little cab to hold us two,
> Night, an invisible dome of cloud,
> The rattling wheels that made our whispers loud,
> As heart-beats in the whispers grew; [91]

In Symons’s poem, the background sound heightens (or causes the lovers to increase) the volume of the whispered conversation and with it their passion, taking the form of music and lyrics. In Hardy’s more metaphysical poem the acoustics of St Paul’s upper dome, combined with the way in which its structural space becomes filled with a haze, produces an aesthetic effect in which ‘That whisper takes the voice | Of a Spirit’s compassionings’ (ll.1-2). Despite this gloom and because of his restricted sight, the speaker, upon hearing the whisperings of other visitors, imagines the ‘soul’ as the voice of St. Paul. This lifts the speaker:

> And throws me under a spell

[91] Arthur Symons, ‘Nocturne’, *Silhouettes*, 2nd edn (London: Leonard Smithers, 1896) p. 63, ll.1-4 <https://archive.org/details/silhouettes00symo/page/n7/mode/2up> (accessed 14 May 2020).

At the kindling vision it brings;

And for a moment I rejoice.

(ll.4-6).

This sense of dreamy hopefulness, and its association with architecture, also connects to Hardy's 'In the British Museum' (1914) (*CP II*), in which the workman imagines that the Areopagus stone once heard 'The voice of Paul' (l.16). Both of Hardy's poems further connect to Frederick Locker's 'The Old Stonemason' (1874) which Hardy, in his 1880 letter to the poet, described as emotionally affecting (*CL I*, p.69). The first stanza introduces a worn-out workman 'seated near a scaffolding | Where marble blocks are piled' but the final stanza ends hopefully as the workman is presided over by a 'Shining Form'. [92] While Hardy's 'In a British Museum', narrated by a workman, associates a religious figure with Greek marble, Locker's poem indicates a more purely spiritual presence hovering over both the workman and old relics. In 'In a Whispering Gallery' however, Hardy's speaker attempts to imagine a metaphysical presence through its association with an architectural structure and the aesthetic and acoustic effects it produces. This allows the speaker to be inspired by a sense of fancy, telling us that 'for a moment I rejoice, | And believe in transcendental things' (ll. 6-7). Architectural space, and the aesthetic effects it produces, replaces natural phenomena in 'In a Whispering Gallery', and St Paul's presence here appears, as the speaker imagines, eternal, the cathedral being 'A spot for the splendid birth | Of everlasting lives' (ll.9-10). These lines reflect Hardy's own

[92] Locker, l.3-4, l.19.

philosophical stance, his speaker upon the whispering gallery occupying a position which appears to illustrate Hardy's 'Idealism of Fancy' (*LIFE*, p.333). Hence Hardy's speaker imagines the voice of Paul, which provides joy as it emanates from the upper gallery.

Jan Jedrzejewski has argued that the poem indicates an 'illusion of religious belief, soon quietly dismissed as unrealistic', but this reading appears too literal. Indeed, the illusion contained within the poem has no clear termination point. [93]In Symons's 'Nocturne', set during the events of one night, the brief moment of romance cannot last, despite the speaker imploring: '"O last for ever!" my heart cried; | It ended: heaven was done'. [94] In Hardy's poem, however, the teller speaks in the present tense, and while the fanciful rejoicing is 'for a moment' there is no clear termination point where this moment of fancy explicitly ends. Hence, as a poem without any clear ending the experience can appear both momentary and perpetual. In the poem's final line, in which the speaker imagines a whispering voice to 'Be a soul's voice floating there', he uses the present continuous, the grammar implying that this experience, now set down in poetry, is not bound by the normal rules of time. Instead the illusion appears as if is continually present, providing an aesthetic space in which the poet balances reality and fancy, both listening to human whispers and hearing the voice of St. Paul. Here, therefore, architecture provides an inspirational aesthetic effect. In turn, the poetic speaker responds to these aesthetic aspects by momentarily, and perpetually in poetry, drawing pleasure and hope from an imagined spiritual experience.

[93] Jan Jedrzejewski, *Thomas Hardy and the Church* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), p.118.
[94] Symons, 'Nocturne', ll.21-22.

Hardy's most hopeful poetry which features architecture draws upon its inspiration to imagine human life as part of an interconnected and ongoing continuum. He states in his notes that, 'makers of things, e.g. painters, writers, builders, furniture makers, are present as ghosts before their works' (*PMN*, p.15), implying that art structures may allow artists to live on in some form and inspire later generations. While Hardy's poetry celebrates how architects can seem to endure through their work, he also acknowledges their builders. This is evidenced in one his more famous novels *Jude the Obscure* (1895), where the protagonist works as a stonemason. Similarly, Hardy's father, Thomas Hardy senior, was a self-employed builder and stone-mason, and while Hardy may not have been outwardly proud of his humble origins both *Jude* and his poetry indicate an approving view of such figures. His notes relay how he spent the winter of 1893 'designing his father's tombstone, of which he made complete drawings for the stonemason' (*LIFE*, p.267). This passage also indicates that the episode may have given him the inspiration for Jude's vocation, recording that it was 'possibly his contact with the stonemason that made him think of the trade for his next hero' (p. 267). Jude builds walls which, at Christminster, will symbolically and physically keep him on the outside, but, at the same time, he also performs decorative carving, which, if it remains, will allow him to leave an anonymous but enduring mark.

While Jude's work is not celebrated by society, it was certainly celebrated in Hardy's novel, and several of his poems pay homage to such figures. They relay the pride of artisans and celebrate what their labour has achieved, highlighting the way in which such workpeople can construct lasting monuments. In such cases, artisans resemble artists, or at least workers in the sense of those who craft something. While Hardy's poems credit the

ways in which artisans build and take pride in structures which may endure, they further celebrate how artists craft architectural art objects which stimulate. What is celebrated is the way in which both types can appear to live on through the legacy of their artistic work. In Hardy's poems, creative individuals appear to bequeath an artistic legacy of sorts which, while they may become personally anonymous, gives them an influence which can be transformative and inspirational.

Artisans such as anonymous builders, who may be from lowly stock, are celebrated in Hardy's works, while he uses his imagination to bring them back to life. In the short story 'A Tryst at an Ancient Earthwork' (1885) (*CS*), Hardy's narrator approaches 'Mai-Dun, The Castle of the Great Hill', or Maiden Castle, an iron age hill in Dorset, said to be the 'Dunium of Ptolemy' (p.646), to keep a nocturnal appointment. As he journeys through the remains of Mai-Dun he asks 'Who was the man that said, "Let it be built here!"' before proceeding to envision him. Further, in 'The Old Workman' (1922) (*CP II*), an anonymous artisan is positioned as the personal speaker of the poem. Hardy's mason is shown bent and haggard due to the work carried out in building a mansion house. He appears doubly ill-fated, crippled in life and doomed to anonymity in death. Hence in the sixth stanza the old man tells us, regarding the occupants of the mansion, 'They don't know me, or even know my name' (l.21). The mood of the concluding line of each stanza is pessimistic, relaying sad refrains from the workman such as 'It was that ruined me' (l.8), 'That my life's ache came so' (l.20) and 'Though it has broke me quite' (l.24). In each final stanzaic line, moreover, the metre is truncated, giving the impression of life ending or dwindling away.

However, the poem also celebrates the old man's spirit, despite being crippled by the house he has built. This aspect of Hardy's work again reflects the influence of Wordsworth. In particular, Hardy named Wordsworth's 'Resolution and Independence' (1807) as a cure for despair (*LIFE*, p.59). In the poem, the speaker tells how 'We Poets in our youth begin in gladness; | But thereof come in the end despondency and madness'. [95] Then he encounters an old man who physically resembles Hardy's workman, so that 'His body was bent double, feet and head'. [96] Yet the old man's resolution to carry on regardless in the face of poverty moves the speaker. A similar resolution is encountered in Hardy's workman, who is also bent but unbowed. The aged mason points to the mansion that he built, and in the final stanza tells us that, in spite of the work having crippled him, he is not embittered but 'proud':

> Yes; that I fixed it firm up there I am proud,
> Facing the hail and snow and sun and cloud,
> And to stand storms for ages, beating round
> When I lie underground.
> (ll.25-28)

The pride of Hardy's workman indicates an awareness that his labour will live on, achieving a lasting impression. The final truncated line of the stanza hence gives us the double-image of a grave beneath the house but also its foundation. If the first three uniform

[95] William Wordsworth, 'On Resolution and Independence', *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, pp. 155-157, ll.48-49.
[96] Wordsworth, 'On Resolution and Independence', l.66.

lines of each stanza shape it as a mansion house, the final shorter line can be seen to represent the old crippled worker who will sink underground and yet also, as the builder, he architecturally underpins and supports this work.

Despite the toil and suffering experienced by the workman, and despite his death, his mansion will 'stand storms for ages', indicating that he has left a creative imprimatur upon the earth that makes his own life worthwhile. This is strongly indicated by the start of the fourth stanza, beginning with the affirmation 'Yes;' the semi colon being used to separate the word from the rest of the line and place emphasis upon it. Moreover, the first two lines, which resemble the higher parts of the house, end with the rhyming words 'proud' and 'loud', while final two lines end with the deeper pronounced vowel sounds 'round' and 'ground', accentuating the sense that the worker lies, or will lie, far beneath such heights. Nevertheless, the final sounding couplet also appears as an echo of the earlier vowel sounds, and indeed the more optimistic images that these words convey. Moreover, all four lines serve to qualify the workman's 'Yes;' which begins the stanza. The workman is thus connected to the world through his work, rather than severed, living on in echoed form through his building.

Hardy also shows how architects can achieve a more enduring legacy. It is artistic or creative ability, rather than breeding, which appears to achieve this effect in human memory and the imagination. In 'A Question of Marriage' (1928) (*CP III*), a sculptor's proposal towards a countess is rebuffed, she replying in the first stanza '"We dine our artists; but marry them – no."' (l.4) Yet by the third stanza he has achieved artistic renown,

the anonymous speaker relaying how ‘As a master-mind | The world made much of his marching fame’ (9-10). The countess instead marries someone:

> In rank and wealth of her own degree,
> And they moved among the obscurely great
> Of an order that had no novelty.
> (ll.14-16)

Finally, facing anonymity, while her earlier lover’s reputation continues to brighten, she gloomily regrets her mistaken choice, reflecting ‘“Far better for me had it been to shine | The wench of a genius such as he”’ (ll.22-23).

Even anonymous artists in Hardy’s poems can achieve a sense of endurance, and this effect is emphasised in the much longer ‘The Abbey Mason’ (1914) (*CP II*), where the impersonal speaker celebrates the anonymous master-mason of Gloucester Cathedral and father of the English perpendicular style. The master-mason is brought back to life by Hardy, who traces how this figure was pivotal in midwifing the architectural transition from Gothic decorated towards perpendicular. In addition, the legacy of his creative work, the spread of a new architectural style, is celebrated. Hardy, therefore, contrasts his ignominious corporeal death with the transcendent power of his art:

> – When longer yet dank death had wormed
> The brain wherein the style had germed

From Gloucester church it flew afar –

The style called Perpendicular .–

To Winton and to Westminster

It ranged, and grew still beautifuller.

(ll.187-192)

Like the old workman, the mason's life is juxtaposed by Hardy's speaker with the longevity of his legacy. In the case of the latter figure, this serves not just to salute the work of an artisan, his labours sheltering future families from the cold, but to spread the idea of an artist far and wide. For example, line 193, which describes the way in which the perpendicular style 'grew still beautifuller', emphasises the aesthetic power of architecture as art. In highlighting the spread of such ideas this illustrates the Abbey Mason's important influence on later works. Further, in inspiring Hardy's poem, architecture as art affects poetry, underpinning the ways in which such the ideas behind art objects transcend physical structures and locations.

This is not generally true in Hardy's novels, where architectural structures provide a background for the characters rather than engendering further works of art. In *A Laodicean* (1881), the topic of perpendicular art is relegated in importance beneath the exigencies of the plot, being the subject of a battle of wits which takes place between George Somerset and Mr. Havill, each wishing to impress Paula Power. While Havill describes a specimen of

Perpendicular work as ‘wonderfully undercut’, Somerset retorts ‘“I have never seen much undercutting in Perpendicular stone-work; nor anybody else, I think”’ (*LD*, p.60). Instead, in Hardy’s poem the legacy of the master-mason’s work is shown as wide-reaching, the speaker imploring the reader to ‘enter Gloucester’ (l.203) to view the work of one ‘who crystalized on this spot | His visionings, but lies forgot’ (ll.213-214). The mason’s identity may be forgotten, but in Hardy’s poem he is creatively revivified through the poet’s imaginative fancy. Further, his artistic essence, in the form of a powerful architectural legacy, lives on and is celebrated.

The mason’s architectural work serves to inspire structural design, but also influences different forms of art. In Hardy’s poetry, such architectural ideas and art objects engender an ongoing creative legacy. Having worked as an architect, Hardy displays a personally keen appreciation for how such figures can live on through physical works, but also how such structures can provide inspiration for future, less concrete or localised art. Hardy’s speakers visit works of architecture, and from these stationary influences draw an inspiration which can be transformed into a poetic ‘Idealism of Fancy’. Imaginings influenced by architecture, but not physically bound by it, can be encapsulated in poetry. Figures from the past can be poetically brought back to life through their locational and structural associations, while anonymous builders and architects can be reimagined in the present just as their legacies are celebrated and transformed into poetic art. Architecture thus presents Hardy with a number of important creative influences which take his poetry in joyous and hopeful directions.

4. THE REVITALISING EFFECT OF POETRY AND MUSIC

It is in Hardy's works which focus upon non-physical art, such as poetry and music, where the greatest source of his poetic hope is found. While some of Hardy's poems on architecture may celebrate remembered images of dead figures, they are prioritised by his backwards-looking speakers over the living. Elsewhere, his more forward-looking speakers celebrate the ways in which the works of great writers and musicians become part of an ongoing performative experience in the present. Such figures, some of whom Hardy had met, and some of whom he had not, are not so much remembered as subjectively and creatively used in his work, becoming part of the speaker's own aesthetic 'Idealism of Fancy'. The works of musicians and poets are not bound by physical or localized constraints, being instead reproducible and transformable. Hardy was writing his poetry during the period which saw the invention of the phonograph and the gramophone, but his poems do not mention such devices. His works which focus upon music instead deal with how it is played by musicians, received by audiences or imaginatively recalled. There is a continual revitalisation whenever music is performed and re-played or when poetry is re-read, and Hardy creatively demonstrates these aspects by the ways he re-imagines them as part of an ongoing artistic process. Therefore, some of Hardy's most hopeful poems strongly indicate that poetry and music, and indeed by implication his own work, will continue into the future.

This aspect is highlighted by his poetic observations regarding the lack of permanent connection between literary figures and their past or supposed places of

habitation. In ‘Meditations on a Holiday’ (1922) (*CP II*), the speaker muses upon where is best to visit on a fine May morning. Stanza by stanza he considers visiting a number of locations due to their literary associations. Yet, he rejects visiting the Lyonnesse of Tristan and Isolt, the Stratford-on-Avon of Shakespeare, the Lakeland of Wordsworth, the Scotland of Burns, and the town street of Percy and Mary Shelley. The reason given for this is that such figures can no longer be connected to the places they once inhabited. Indeed, Hardy’s speaker suggests that any attempt to pay homage to past figures at these locations would be rather foolish, as such personages are long departed:

> Laughters in a volley
> Greet so fond a folly
> As nursing melancholy
> In this and that spot,
> Which, with most endeavour,
> Those can visit never,
> But for ever and ever
> Will now know not!
> (ll. 65-72)

In the final stanza these figures are imagined as reacting, from beyond the grave, disdainfully to such pilgrimages. The last line of the poem, voiced by these deceased luminaries towards such visitors, concludes ‘“How weak of you and small!”’(l.88) But in

adopting the voice of these figures, the speaker acts as a transmitter of their values and, moreover, articulates his own suspicion of why they might react this way. Musing upon a house occupied by the Shelleys, he notes, 'For a Mary dwelt there, | And a Percy felt there' (53-54). The teller thus juxtaposes the vibrant feelings of these figures in life with the melancholy, rather lifeless act of paying homage to their previous places of habitation. In grasping this, he does not undermine these figures, instead implying that it is the vibrancy of their essence and works, and not the empty location of their remains, which should be remembered and honoured. This unshackles the artistic power of these figures from such locations, making their aesthetic inspiration transferable. In writing 'a Mary' and 'a Percy', rather than Godwin or Shelley, Hardy also generalizes their experience, suggesting that as living human beings their feelings were universal. Rather than being uniquely intense they resemble the villagers in Gray's Elegy, or the unknown characters who people Hardy's novels and several of his poems. In becoming portable, and indeed ubiquitous, these artists can be successfully adopted as part of Hardy's own imaginative fancy.

Those poems which attempt to pay homage to dead poets in specific locations appear to offer less to Hardy than those which he poetically adapts in creative conjunction with locations and objects of his own 'Idealism of Fancy'. This is illustrated in his attempts to memorialize Keats, composing 'Rome: At the Pyramid of Cestius Near the Graves of Shelley and Keats' (1901) (*CP I*), in honour of his Roman burial spot. Here Keats and Shelley are described as 'immortal Shades' (l.23), but Cestius's pyramid, in providing a physical mark which leads tourists to their graves, takes the focal point of the poem. Later, Hardy wrote 'At a House in Hampstead' (1922) (*CP II*), to celebrate the garden where a

nightingale inspired Keats's famous poem. Hardy notes that, in visiting this garden, more of Keats's essence lingers than 'Where day and night a pyramid keeps | Uplifted its white hand' (ll.26-28). Keats's Hampstead house thus provides a more acute inspiration for Hardy but even this location now threatens the memory of Keats, the opening stanza asking:

> O Poet, come you haunting here
> Where streets have stolen up all around,
> And never a nightingale pours one
> Full-throated sound? (ll.1-4)

While Hardy's visits to Keats' house and grave provide poetic inspiration, the image of Keats himself appears elusive. Further, in paying homage as a tourist, Hardy as poet fails to achieve his own artistic connection with Keats in his poetry. But when Hardy repositions Keats's image within his own local environment, using it portably as part of his own aesthetic imagination, he appears to succeed in reimagining Keats and forming a connection with him. Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate note that in 1914 Sir Sidney Colvin wrote to Hardy to ask if he could 'identify from Joseph Severn's description the part of the Dorsetshire coast visited by John Keats during his voyage from England to Italy in September 1820' (*CL V*, p.31). Hardy replied that Severn, in his description of '"splendid caverns & grottoes"' must have been referring to '"Durdle Door", close to Lulworth Cove' (p.31). Hardy's choice for this spot could have been accurate, but it remains little more than a speculative guess.

This idea made its way into the verse ‘At Lulworth Cove a Century Back’ (1922) (*CP II*), which Hardy composed in 1920 regarding Keats’s possible 1820 visit. In the poem Hardy imagines visiting the spot one hundred years before, noting ‘I might have gone, as I have gone this year’ (l.2). Hardy thus transforms a familiar local environment into a place of artistic significance, suddenly aligning the figure of Keats with himself and his own art. He imagines the figure of Time asking him:

> *‘You see that man?’* – ‘Why yes; I told you; yes:
> Of an idling town-sort; thin; hair brown in hue;
> And as the evening light scants less and less
> He looks up at a star, as many do.’
> (ll.9-12)

Hardy imagines Keats in a more fully realised form than elsewhere, ‘an idling town-sort; thin; hair brown in hue’. Here, Keats is no longer an ‘immortal shade’, and divested of his memorialised or entombed status, he is transformed into a living poet placed within a localised context.

This partly reflects Hardy’s interest in and criticism of Matthew Arnold’s writings on poetry. Hardy copied out into his notebooks several passages from the 1875 edition of his *Essays in Criticism* (*LN I*, p.364), recording Arnold’s note that ‘The grand power of poetry is in its interpretative power’, further underlining the passage where Arnold states that this power deals with things in such a way as it inspires people to ‘feel ourselves to

have their secret' (*LN I,* p.128). Yet, in another passage recorded and elsewhere, as noted earlier, critiqued by Hardy, Arnold extoled the reader to possess urbanity and 'Get rid of provinciality' (p.128). Hardy's own interpretation of Keats demonstrates an affiliation with Arnold's comments on the interpretive power of poetry but is also a direct rejection of his narrower views on urbanity. Instead, Hardy's attempts to interpret Keats did not just localize his travels but may have also involved provincializing his heritage. Llewelyn Powys later recalled a talk with Hardy in which the poet allegedly recalled a nearby family of saddlers named Keats and thus he 'often wondered whether this Dorset family could not have been relations of the poet' and, indeed, speculated that members of the 'saddlering family had, he had often thought, a remarkable facial resemblance to those of the author of "Endymion"'. [97] Placing Keats, both geographically and possibly biologically, within Hardy's own context allows the speaker to combine high art with common aspects, fancifully fleshing out his image as an 'idling town-sort; thin; hair brown in hue.' In doing this Hardy is able to forge a very human connection with a dead poet.

More significantly, Hardy's poem demonstrates that this link is not just physical and geographical but also artistic, joining both poets through their creative art. The speaker does not just depict Keats visiting the cove but, more importantly, tells us, 'He looks up a star'. Keats is reimagined as being inspired by the spot to compose one of his last poems, 'Bright Star, Would that I Were Steadfast as Thou Art', eventually published in 1838. Hardy places less emphasis upon the dusty memory of Keats, instead focusing upon the act of poetic creation. Keats does not just visit the same scene as Hardy, as he is inspired by the

[97] Cited in Gibson, p.232.

same location to create art. For Hardy, therefore, the image of Keats and the artistic heritage of 'Bright Star' are transportable, and he repositions them in Lulworth. In doing so he brings a famous event in poetic history to the same place he himself frequents. More importantly, he artistically connects himself to Keats as a poet engaged in the action of composing a poem. Keats's poetry and Keats as poet both become part of Hardy's imagination, offering him a sense of shared artistic experience.

In addition to poets, poetic and dramatic characters repeatedly provide Hardy with inspiration, regardless of location, being employed in creative ways. While Hardy's speaker in 'Meditations on a Holiday' cannot access the world of Tristan and Isolt in Cornwall, his poetry elsewhere, such as 'When I Set Out for Lyonnesse' (1914) (*CP II*), demonstrates that such dramatic and vibrant aspects are portable and can be superimposed upon objects and locations of the poet's fancy. This cultural heritage is applied by Hardy's speakers to contrast or brighten different objects and locations. The use of such vital poetic heritage is illustrated in Hardy's 'The Clasped Skeletons', subtitled in parenthesis '(In an Ancient British barrow near the writer's house)' (1928) (*CP III*). In depicting prehistoric remains, the poem recreates a real-life experience documented in Hardy's notes. When in 1883 Hardy purchased the Max Gate site, his team of diggers unearthed an ancient pagan barrow grave and 'came upon Romano-British urns' and also a pair of skeletons (*LIFE*, p.169). His speaker thus enquires of the discovered skeletal couple 'O Why did we uncover to view | so closely clasped a pair' (ll.1-2). These prehistoric human remains are imagined as a romantic couple from the opening lines, but by the end of the poem these figures have been placed in a more profound historical context, as the speaker realizes:

Once breathed this atmosphere

Those fossils near you, met the gleam

Of day as you did here.

(ll.38-40)

Hardy's use of the fossils gives greater perspective to the fragility of human existence, performing both as a geologically stratified time capsule and as a petrified memento mori. The reason for this juxtaposition is clear; extinction is represented as a natural and continual facet of existence.

Hardy draws upon the prehistoric world of the skeletal couple to balance them against the fossils, just as they too place the clasped lovers in context. Andrew Radford has argued that Hardy's imaginative representation of prehistory can be compared to the work undertaken by E.B. Tylor in *Primitive Culture* (1871), while at the same time moving into an 'intensely private realm […] where direct memory exists alongside various hoary trinkets, rubble and "residue"'. [98] More than this, however, Hardy combines his personal experiences with the collective artistic realm of mythical drama and poetry, juxtaposing it with prehistoric remains. This aspect of Hardy's art also appears to reflect one of his most famous narrative passages from *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873) where Henry Knight hangs upon the precipice and sees a trilobite. Time is described as having 'closed up like a fan before him' and Knight imagines past figures as 'Fierce men, clothed in the hides of beasts'

[98] Radford, 'Making the Past Wake: Anthropological Survivals in Hardy's Poetry' (p.168, p.171).

(*PBE*, p.214). Hardy then draws upon literary inspiration, describing negatively how Knight imagines the prehistoric men as 'like the phantoms before the doomed Macbeth' (p.214). But in this respect, Hardy's poem directly contrasts his use of literary description in *A Pair of Blues Eyes*. Instead, pessimism is contrasted by the creative powers of Hardy's fancy as he poetically imagines more passionate characters from Shakespeare's historical drama, the skeletons juxtaposed with Anthony and Cleopatra:

> Cleopatra with Anthony,
> Resigned to dalliance sheer,
> Lay, fatuous he, insatiate she,
> Long after you'd lain here.
> (ll.21-24)

The language here, such as 'fatuous' and 'insatiate', indicates uncontrollable and somewhat grotesque star-crossed passion. In addition, the word 'sheer' implies great but potentially perilous heights, but also indicates something clear and unmitigated, and is reminiscent of the way Hardy's speaker describes Henry VIII and Wolsey walking 'Sheer in the sun' (l.20) in 'A Spellbound Palace'. In this poem, therefore the skeletons from prehistory are not just contrasted with fossils but reimagined as part of a romantic literary context, the speaker juxtaposing the 'closely clasped' lovers with not only Antony and Cleopatra but also Paris and Helena, David and Bathsheba, and the medieval Abelard and Heloise.

The romantic couples from history which Hardy lists signify a literary, dramatic and poetical tradition. Paris and Helena appear indicative of renaissance poetry and drama, reflecting the lines from Christopher Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* in which the protagonist addresses Helen of Troy, stating 'And all is dross that is not Helena. | I will be Paris'. [99] Indeed, further aspects of Faustus's speech, in which he describes Helen as 'More lovely than the monarch of the sky' are reflected in Hardy's 'At a Lunar Eclipse' (1901) (*CP I*). In this poem the moon is used as a cinematic screen, or shadow show, upon which the pessimism of 'Nation at war with nation' (l.13) is juxtaposed with the optimism that celebrates 'brains that teem, | Heroes, and women fairer than the skies?' (l.14) Hardy's mention of David and Bathsheba reflects his careful and attentive reading of The Bible. The Biblical Bathsheba also inspired the naming of his female protagonist in *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874), a book which Timothy Hands notes contains 'no fewer than twenty-one allusions to Genesis and Exodus'. [100] The medieval romance of Abelard and Heloise featured in Alexander Pope's 1717 *Eloisa to Abelard*, which Hardy may or may not have read, but his notebooks record a short reference to it taken from Marie Liechtenstein's *Holland House* (1874) (*LN I*, p.187).

What these couples more generally represent are vibrant moments of feeling, the listing of them giving form to passion personified and repeated. In his notes, Hardy records the 'Chorus of any future drama – Ghosts of Helen, Potiphar's wife, Bathsheba, Jael, Cleopatra, Faustina, M. Magdelene' (*PMN*, p.65). It may be that Hardy was considering

[99] Christopher Marlowe, *Dr. Faustus*, ed. by Maurice Etherington (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1937), V.1.ll. 97-98.
[100] Timothy Hands, *Thomas Hardy: Distracted Preacher?: Hardy's Religious Biography and its Influence on His Novels* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), p.45.

this group as contenders for what would become the spirits in *The Dynasts*, but here Hardy employs this list of figures as a kind of romantic chorus which form part of a continuing tradition alongside the clasped couple. This juxtaposition of intense passion and repetition reminds us of Hardy's interest in Walter Pater, and the famous conclusion to his *The Renaissance* (1873) where he included passion among his definition of precious intervals, describing how '[h]igh passions give one this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love'. [101] Further, in his descriptions of *The Mona Lisa*, he placed these 'fantastic reveries and exquisite passions' within a historical artistic context (p.70). When such moments are added to the poem's list and reckoned collectively, it suggests that such human love will, from classical antiquity onwards, experience perpetual repetition exemplified in narrative art. Pater also included the romance of Abelard and Heloise, mentioned in Hardy's poem, amongst this tradition, celebrating Abelard as 'the great clerk and the great lover' (p.10).

In this way, despite the comparison to the fossils, this sense of historical romance repeating itself questions whether, unlike the earlier lifeforms, such couples will ever really become extinct. The historical perspective experienced by the poem's speaker is therefore less impersonally overpowering than the sensations Henry Knight experiences upon the cliff face. Unlike the fossilized trilobite and precipitate cliff face, the repetitive vitality of the historical and literary lovers' 'sheer' passion implies something more vital and hopeful than mere extinction. While Hardy's speaker perceives the immense backcloth of time, and the strangeness of the past, he also softens this historical perspective by drawing upon the realm of narrative art. In doing so, this not only places the skeletons within a more human

[101] Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, pp.120-1. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

context, but offers a more hopeful prospect for his poetic speaker. As the inheritor and possessor of these vital artistic traditions, he can carry them with him and creatively apply them to new locations and objects.

Elsewhere Hardy employs the artistic legacy of music in tandem with poetic tradition to achieve comparable effects. Pater claimed in his essay on 'The School of Giogionne' from *Studies* that art in general aspired to the condition of music and that it was 'In music, then,' where 'is to be found the true type or measure of perfected art' (p.127). Hardy artistically, and indeed emotionally, associated poetry with music, reflecting the way in which music became represented in poetry from the Romantic-era onwards. As Mark Asquith has noted:

> Whereas in the poetry of the eighteenth century music was treated as a decorative metaphor lacking any real substance, to the Romantics its capacity to move the listener without being seen made it the ideal artistic medium with which to characterize the Kantian 'thing in itself'. [102]

Asquith further notes the ways in which Hardy, as poetic inheritor of this tradition, employed musical allusion as an artistic and emotional signifier in his novels. [103] This dual aspect is more powerfully demonstrated in Hardy's poetry, and reflects the way in which he saw the two art forms as connected. As Hardy's second wife Florence noted, in his final year, Hardy's 'only ambition, so far as he could remember, was to have some poem or

[102] Mark Asquith, *Thomas Hardy, Metaphysics and Music* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), p.3.
[103] Asquith, *Metaphysics and Music*, p.4.

poems in a good anthology like the *Golden Treasury*'. [104] Florence continues that, 'The model he had set before him was "Drink to me only," by Ben Johnson'. [105] Interestingly, the poem forms the lyrics set to a popular old love song, implying the pleasurable ways in which poetical and musical forms could connect in Hardy's thought.

In several Hardy poems which combine musical and poetic art he represents them as harmonising with and revivifying older, physical works of art. This is demonstrated in the poem 'Rome: On the Palatine' (1901 (*CP I*). Here, Hardy's speaker visits the Roman architectural remains and, in the second stanza relays how the vision of ruin upon ruin affected 'The outer sense, and shape itself as though | It wore its marble gleams' (ll.6-7). The remains appear dead, lifeless, lacking in vitality so that the teller begins to see 'its pristine glow | Of scenic frieze and pompous peristyle' (ll.7-8). In this sense, this first half of the poem is reminiscent of another piece. 'In The Old Theatre, Fiesole' (1901) (*CP I*) Hardy's speaker describes walking around the Roman Circus. At this point he is shown a coin by a child, this connecting the ruins and relics of Rome to such coins found buried in Dorset. These physical relics, Hardy's teller reflects, flash upon his mind 'The power, the pride, the reach of perished Rome' (l.14). Yet, encased in a coin, this powerful legacy also appears dead, as if its reach has stiffened, hardened and become fossilised. In the second half of 'Rome: On the Palatine', however, the third stanza denotes a turn in mood as the speaker hears the sounds of music:

[104] Dennis Taylor, 'Hardy's Copy of "The Golden Treasury"', *Victorian Poetry*, 37 (2) (1999), 165-191, p.165. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40003761> (accessed 25 June 2019).
[105] Taylor, 'Hardy's Copy of "The Golden Treasury"', p.165.

When lo, swift hands, on strings nigh overhead,
Began to melodize a waltz by Strauss:
It stirred me as I stood, in Caesar's house,
Raised the old routs Imperial lyres had led.
(ll.9-12)

Hardy's trip to Rome took place in 1887, meaning that the music would have been by Johann Strauss II, composer of many types of dance music, including waltzes, polkas, quadrilles and the famous 'The Blue Danube'. This vibrant music would usually accompany the kinds of dances Hardy had passionately enjoyed in his youth, and still savoured, reminding him of life in all its abundance. It is thus music, harmonised with architecture, which brings the older, physical art back to life. While the frozen image on the coin tells of a culture which has become hardened and lifeless, music animates the frozen scenes depicted in the stone imagery, conveying powerful visceral sensations. The two art forms combine strongly here, so that the speaker continues, in the final couplet, 'And blended pulsing life with lives long done, | Till Time seemed fiction, Past and Present one' (ll.13-14). Hardy's capitalisation of the past and the present places both in an equally vibrant context, which, when exposed to such art forms, he can imaginatively access.

Hardy's technique of overlaying such forms of art upon older, architectural structures also intensifies the sensations of his speakers. Hence, this can afford experiences which, in combining the past and the present, are personally revivifying. For example, in 'The Bridge of Lodi' (1901), composed in 1887 (*CP I,* p.139), Hardy's speaker reminisces

about first hearing the titular song when young. His poem, written in tetramer quatrains takes the form of a marching song, poetically basing his art upon a piece of music which is in turn set in a particular architectural structure. Yet, when visiting the scene of the famous Napoleonic battle upon which the song is based he finds 'But alas! not anybody | Seems to know of such a fray' (ll.31-32). While the connection between the song and the physical location of the event appears severed, Hardy's speaker determines, in the concluding stanza, to persist in his singing of the song:

> Nay; I'll sing 'The Bridge of Lodi' –
>
> That long-loved, romantic thing,
>
> Though none show by smile or nod he
>
> Guesses why and what I sing!
>
> (ll.65-68)

While the last line of the opening stanza tells us how the original song 'Brought a strange delight to me' (l.4) the final stanza describes it as 'That long-loved, romantic thing'. There is from beginning to end, despite the speaker's bump with reality, a continuity of the same passionate and fanciful mood. In his decision to keep singing, he is determining to stay constant not so much to the memory of Lodi as to the memory and essence of his own youth. The music has become external to the place itself, and, as a transportable piece of art, is internalised by him. The 'Bridge of Lodi' song is hence used to bridge the gap between

the mature and youthful Hardy. In doing this, Hardy is able to creatively use such art for his own fanciful ends, revivifying his own youth.

Some of Hardy's most hopeful poems draw upon the legacy of poetry and music not just to revivify his poetic speakers but to demonstrate the ongoing vibrancy of art itself. In this way, Hardy's poetry shows us how art is a potentially never-ending process. It continues to inspire future generations and lives on in later creative works, transforming from one form such as architecture, for example, to another such as music or poetry. In 'Barthélémon At Vauxhall' (1922) (*CP II*), Hardy honours François-Hippolyte Barthélémon, the composer of the popular 'Morning Hymn', based on Thomas Ken's 1695 'Awake my Soul and With the Sun'. Hardy draws upon the language of Ken's original poetic hymn, the first lines, in depicting Barthelemon embarking on his act of composition, relaying how 'He said : "Awake my soul, and with the sun"' (l.1). The poem indicates that musical and poetical art can blend in complementary ways with older architectural works. Although French, Barthelemon was active in England, and in spreading from church to church his hymn again connects poetry, instrumental music and singing to architecture. This harmonising effect serves to further revivify older architecture, such as the perpendicular structures designed by the anonymous central figure in 'The Abbey Mason'. Similarly, Hardy celebrates how the artist achieves a form of endurance through his work, his music also memorializing the earlier poem, voicing the composer's certainty that 'This strain to Ken will count when I am clay!"' (l.12) In addition, the final couplet of Hardy's poem also celebrates the widespread legacy of Barthelemon's art, as 'caught by echoing lyres | It spread to galleried naves and mighty quires' (ll.13-14).

‘Barthelemon At Vauxhall’ is more hopeful than ‘The Abbey Mason’, as while the latter poem looks back at an architecture style completed, the former indicates a sense of artistic continuation. Barthelemon’s hymn has survived the Abbey Mason’s architecture style, being an art form which has been transferred not from building to building but from person to person across the generations. These art forms such as music and poetry therefore appear persistent, and indeed potentially immortal, in their ability to transcend space and time. They can defy the ravages of time more successfully than physical art, avoiding damage and deterioration. Moreover, they do not have to be visited in a specific location, being transportable across physical, cultural and linguistic space. Having been sung in different ‘galleried naves’ by ‘mighty quires’, the hymn can continue to be re-read and re-played, again and again. In singing or even mentally reciting it, the speaker is not just connected to the artist but joins a human chorus whose notes stretch back through the generations. Such players and singers do not passively view this art; through fiddling, such as in ‘The Self-Unseeing’, playing the organ or singing they actively participate in it. A choir or a group of musical players will together not just perform a song but re-make it again and again.

This is not necessarily the case in Hardy’s poems which feature architecture. As I have previously discussed, Hardy’s writings reveal his regret at his previous work in Gothic restoration, displaying his awareness that such renewal involved the destruction of past architecture (*PV,* p.12). This sentiment appears reflected in his architectural poems, where the speaker is drawn back to people from the past and away from people and scenes in his

present. In his poems featuring music, however, it is indicated that fresh art is made from old through performance, ensuring a constant sense of vibrant new life.

Acting as Hardy's own poetic inspiration, the hymn demonstrates the power of music to traverse beyond the pages of a notation book, or a physical performance, to become a mentally creative form of art. For example, in 'To a Lady Playing and Singing in The Morning' (1922) (*CP II*), Hardy's speaker describes how listening to a woman's voice is fruitful because it will bring him future joy as a memory, 'When sounds nowhere that carolled air | My idled morn may comfort me!' (ll.15-16) The singing, once finished, can be replayed in the speaker's mind at a future date to mentally revivify a less pleasant situation. Hardy's first stanza of '"Any Little Old Song"' (1925) (*CP III*) further demonstrates the way in which his speakers desire to stand outside of time and inhabit their own imaginative world:

> Any little old song
> Will do for me,
> Tell it of joys gone long,
> Or joys to be.
> (ll.1-4)

This kind of desired song will remind the speaker of past pleasures but will also allow him to fancifully encourage a hope in future enjoyment. Listening to such music aids his ability to inhabit a joyous state outside of the passing of time. Hardy's preference for music

therefore illustrates his awareness of how music is timeless. It can revivify people and scenes as it travels onward and is repeated across the generations, regardless of context. As this musical baton passes down across the ages, past pleasures can perpetually be remembered and future joys continually looked forward to.

Crucially, 'To a Lady Playing and Singing in the Morning' illustrates not just the ways in which Hardy's speaker draws upon music for continual enjoyment but the process by which he and other artists achieve creative immortality. Hearing the voice of the woman inspires an aesthetic memory, which, being infinitely relivable, will last as long as a human life. More importantly, the woman's voice lives on through poetry, potentially forever. It will outlive the singer and the poet, becoming part of a larger collective and cultural memory. Hardy's poem, inspired by a voice, illustrates how one art form can evolve and transform, inspiring others in a potentially unending process.

This theme is further expanded in Hardy's 'In a Museum' (1917) (*CP II*), likely composed in 1915, which implies the possibility of art as part of a continuingly evolving aesthetic process. [106] The poem pieces together the imagined song of a fossilised *Archaeopteryx*, a bird long deceased, and the voice of a concert performer from the near present. Hardy's speaker tells us:

I

Here's the mould of a musical bird long passed from light,

Which over the earth before man came was winging;

[106] Taylor, (1999) 'The Chronology of Hardy's Poetry', p.50.

There's a contralto voice I heard last night,

That lodges in me still with its sweet singing.

II

Such a dream is Time that the coo of this ancient bird

Has perished not, but is blent, or will be blending

Mid visionless wilds of space with the voice that I heard,

In the full-fugued song of the universe unending.

The coo of the bird is described as having 'perished not', its voice being twinned with the singing of a woman Hardy had likely heard the night before entering the museum. The voice of the woman provokes Hardy to imaginatively bring the bird back to life, similarly to how Strauss's music adds new vibrancy to the Roman remains in 'Rome: On the Palatine'. The expression 'full-fugued' also implies that the bird's song and the woman's voice are in some way musically connected. In addition, 'blent, or will be blending' conveys not just a connection but the sense, at least in the teller's imagination, of some sort of evolution.

The description of the birdsong as a 'coo', which is made by unmated birds, such as doves who are often identified with love, seems to imply a form of courtship or mating call. This effect is juxtaposed with, or answered by, the 'sweet singing' of the female contralto. The poem was composed three years after the death of Emma, and the memory of their courtship and early marriage was, as I have argued, bound up in Hardy's mind with musical

associations. While, as I discussed in chapter 1, Hardy's treatment of creatures was partially inspired by Darwin's *The Origin*, the way in which the poem connects a long deceased bird to a human voice does not appear particularly indicative of its influence due to its fanciful and teleological imagery. While Hardy praised Darwin in his 1924 letter to Ernest Brenecke, he placed him within a select group of reading sources which also included Herbert Spencer (*CL VI*, p.259). As outlined in the introduction chapter, Spencer's notions of evolution should be differentiated from Darwin's theory and placed alongside a number of nineteenth-century Lamarckians. [107] While his theory of evolution is seen as optimistic he did not occupy an extreme Lamarckian position. [108] Hence Spencer's more moderate stance proved attractive for some of Hardy's influences such as Walter Pater, and also appealed to Hardy's hopeful 'Idealism of Fancy'. [109] In an 1893 letter to Lena Milman Hardy described Spencer's importance to him, crediting Spencer's theories more for their fanciful inspiration than pessimism, noting 'Whether the theories are true or false, their effect upon the imagination is unquestionable, and I think beneficial' (*CL II*, p.24-25).

Several ideas expressed in *First Principles*, which Hardy recorded a passage from (*LN II*, p.108), connect to his representation of musical development in 'In a Museum'. For example, in his 1900 edition Spencer describes such origins as what he calls a rhythm of motion, tracing musical development from the 'chants of savages' to how, 'among civilized

[107] James. R, Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America 1870-1900*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.175.
[108] Moore, p.175.
[109] Kate Hext, *Walter Pater: Individualism and Aesthetic Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p.136.

races, a long series of different musical phrases combined into one whole'. [110] He later continues by asserting that, 'Rhythm in speech, rhythm in sound, and rhythm in motion, were in the beginning, parts of the same thing' [111] These ideas are expressed at more length in Spencer's essay 'The Origin and Function of Music' (1857) and additionally developed in the much later 'The Origin of Music' (1890). From around 1876 Hardy amended his research habits, and in focusing more on articles he became aware of the ideas of musical theorists such as Spencer amongst others. [112] Asquith notes the influence of the former article, and its explanation of the origin of music, upon Hardy's treatment of music in his novels. [113] The latter article, however, is of more interest for this discussion. Spencer composed it in part as a rebuttal of Darwin's *The Descent*. In the essay, Spencer rejected Darwin's assertion that bird-song originated solely from noises produced for courtship. Instead, he suggested that Edmund Gurney, who had criticised his 'The Origin and Function of Music', should have read *First Principles*, where, he noted, it was explained that 'the rhythmical tendency which is perfectly displayed in musical utterance, is imperfectly displayed in emotional speech'. [114] Spencer thus connected all music with emotion, likening modern music to early emotional sounds and identifying similarities in the way that human music and the rhythmical nature of birdsong had separately developed (p.454). Spencer imaginatively compared the two, claiming 'Simply that like the whistling

[110] Herbert Spencer, *First Principles: Sixth and Final Edition* (London: Watts & Co, 1900, reprinted 1946), p.240, p.291 <https://archive.org/details/firstprinciples035476mbp/page/n3/mode/2up> (accessed 27 Jul 2020).
[111] Spencer, *First Principles*, p.319.
[112] Asquith, *Thomas Hardy, Metaphysics and Music*, pp.8-10.
[113] Asquith, *Thomas Hardy, Metaphysics and Music*, pp.85-88; Asquith, 'Philosophy, Metaphysics and Music in Hardy's Cosmic Vision', p.189.
[114] Herbert Spencer, 'The Origin of Music', *Mind*, 15 (60) (1890), 449-468 (p.460) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2247370> (accessed 19 Jul 2020). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

and humming of tunes by boys and men, the singing of birds results from overflow of energy' (pp.452-3).

Hardy's speaker in 'In a Museum' brings the emotional vibrancy of the bird's song back to life and juxtaposes it with a woman's voice. As noted, Hardy seems to have in mind here the imaginative influence of Spencer. The description of the birdsong as a 'coo' does not just reference courtship but a linguistic connection, using the first two letters of contralto. While both a coo and a contralto voice are low, sweet and emotional, the latter is a far more sophisticated expression of emotion. Hence the 'coo' appears the first short note in a developing song that, having been imagined to have 'perished not' will continue to be sung. Hardy's poem, like Spencer's more optimistic view of evolution, appears to be working upwards, imagining that life is becoming more civilized through the creation and evolution of art. This works forwards and backwards; the emotional sound of the woman's contralto produces a reactive emotion in Hardy's speaker that sees him further able to reimagine the movement and sound of the ancient bird. In this sense, like Spencer, he traces complex music backwards to earlier, much simpler sounds and movements. This does not just revivify an ancient bird cast, therefore, but places the singer at the top of an artistic pyramid. The bird's song may not be the direct ancestor of the woman's voice, but it is imaginatively connected, through its ancient musical production, as part of an earthly artistic process. In addition, it serves, through its evolutionary link to later songbirds, as a source of emotional artistic inspiration which has influenced writers, poets and musicians. In this imaginative sense, the bird appears part of an evolutionary process, functioning as the ancestor of much later and more significant musical and poetical muses. Amongst those

inspired is Hardy, leading him to compose a poem which imagines the sounds of an *Archaeopteryx* and a contralto as part of a series of notes moving forwards in time and space. In doing so, he uses musical art as an inspirational muse for the creation of his poetry, which may in turn come to enjoy the same potentially timeless state of endurance and, through influence, artistic evolution.

The *Archaeopteryx* is imagined as 'winging', and the metaphor of flight and birdsong is additionally expressed in Hardy's poems about the artistic legacy of poets. Amongst the reading sources which Hardy expressed a preference for, several poems, such as Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale' (1819) and Symons's 'In the Wood of Finvara' (1899), concern the aesthetic effects produced by birdsong. Hardy further composed his poem 'Shelley's Skylark' (1901) (*CP I*) in honour of Percy Bysshe Shelley's own poem 'To a Skylark', celebrating the bird 'For it inspired a bard to win | Ecstatic heights in thought and rhyme' (ll.23-24). While Matthew Arnold critiqued Shelley, in his 1881 essay on Byron, reprinted in 'Essays in Criticism: Second Series', as a 'beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain', Hardy's poetry demonstrates that the influence of Shelley and others can take flight and inspire. [115]

Such ideas are not just spatially portable, but, as the speaker of 'In a Museum' implies regarding music, can travel forwards into the future. For example, in 'George Meredith' (1909) (*CP I*), the last stanza relays optimistically how 'His words wing on – as live words will' (l.18). In 'To Shakespeare: After Three Hundred Years' (1917) (*CP II*), Shakespeare's origin is described in similar terms to 'The Abbey Mason', being mysterious

[115] Matthew Arnold, *Essays in Criticism: Second Series*, (London: Macmillan, 1888), pp.203-4 <https://archive.org/details/essaysincriticis00arnorich> (accessed 12 Sept 2019).

and ‘So, like a strange bright bird we sometimes find’ (l.31). The avian metaphor is extended as Hardy’s speaker continues, ‘Into man’s poesy, we wot not whence, | Flew thy strange mind’ (l.35). Like ‘The Abbey Mason’, however, whose influence ‘From Gloucester Church it flew afar’, and similar to Hardy’s poem on Meredith, Shakespeare’s artistic legacy both endures and inspires:

> Through human orbits thy discourse to-day,
> Despite thy formal pilgrimage, throbs on
> In harmonies that cow Oblivion,
> And, like the wind, with all-uncared effect
> Maintain a sway.
> (ll.7-12)

The poem can be compared to Arnold’s sonnet to ‘Shakespeare’ (1849), in which the playwright is elevated above the masses:

> Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
> Spares but the cloudy border of his base
> To the foil’d searching of mortality. [116]

[116] Matthew Arnold, ‘Shakespeare’ , *Matthew Arnold (The Oxford Authors)*, ed. by Miriam Allott and Robert H. Super (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 8, ll.6-8.

Unlike Arnold's stellar and cosmic metaphors, Hardy's Shakespeare, described as a common bird, is shown as an unknown commoner who has worked his way up to achieve greatness through his art. This Shakespeare does not look down upon the masses, being humbly envisioned as one of them, remembered faintly by neighbours as '"Ah, one of the tradesmen's sons, I now recall."' (ll.28) Crucially, he is also able to endure artistically because of the way in which his art is celebrated by later generations, posthumously climbing in reputation 'Through human orbits'. Hardy's poem links Shakespeare to the sounds and discourse of the commonplace public, situating him less as a person than as an artistically evolved representative of his roots, but also connecting him to future, more advanced generations. This additionally places him alongside Hardy as a poet from humble origin, linking both artists together in the sense of having a common past, but also a shared ability to 'wing on' and leave a future legacy.

The 'winging' bird in 'In a Museum', which is creatively brought back to life by Hardy's speaker, implies a similar state of continual influence. The bird's music, the woman's voice, and by implication, Hardy's own art appear able to endure. In 'The Occultation' (1917) (*CP II*) Hardy had speculated whether he himself, as the day darkened, may 'Live on somewhere' (l.8), and it is 'In a Museum' where an answer to this question appears partially possible. In 'The Occultation' the teller imagines living on 'In upper air' (l.6), and in 'In a Museum' this is what the bird and the singer appear to do through music. Both sounds are imagined as travelling outwards into the universe, implying that music, and indeed art, is not terrestrially bound but cosmically portable. While sound waves cannot pass through the vacuum of space, Hardy here imagines music, in the form of sound

waves, as carried forward in a continual stream into the cosmos. His elongated line structure, which is hypermetric, being broadly iambic pentameter, but with frequent anapaestic intervals, suggests such spacial distance. At the same time, the long sentences also imply the evolving relationship between past and present music, described as 'the full-fugued song of the universe unending'. This aspect of Hardy's poem, and its connection to the word fugue, again reflects the influence of Spencer. While claiming in his 1890s *Mind* article on music that harmony could not be considered as an evolving process, Spencer conversely argued in his 1900 version of *First Principle*s that multi-part music developed from single-part. [117] In doing so, he observed that a key stage in this evolution was the development of harmony in Christian church-music, where a 'very partially harmonious fugue satisfied the ears of that age', which, through further stages of development saw these fugues achieve a level of complexity and heterogeneity. [118]

The expression 'full-fugued' also broadly implies something significant about imaginative art, and how themes are able to be creatively remade by the poet, and indeed successive artists, in potentially infinite ways. The speaker tells us that 'Such a dream is time', allowing him, through fancy, to step outside of its flow into his own imaginative state in which he can see ancient birdsong and a contralto voice as part of one fugue. In Hardy's poem, therefore, the use of 'full-fugued' can be understood as intimating a sense of evolutionary continuation but also artistic development, in which the past harmonises with and adds complexity to both the present and the future. Drawing upon the inspiration of art,

[117] John Offer, 'Dissonance Over Harmony: A Spencer Oddity', *Sociology*, 17 (2) (1983), 274-277 (p.275) <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038583017002009>
[118] Spencer, *First Principles*, p.322, pp.322-3.

Hardy's speaker imagines that past birdsong and the present contralto voice will musically and artistically evolve far into the distant horizon. The use of long vowel sounds in the final line reflects this sense of music stretching out its echoing influence through time, the repetitive use of musical 'u' sounds, such as 'full-fugued' and 'universe' chiming phonetically with the bird's original 'coo'. Further, the use of 'blending' here is stylistically important, juxtaposed as it is in direct rhyme with 'unending'. These effects strongly suggest that the 'full-fugued' music in the poem will become part of a collective artistic memory, and will be inherited and carried forth into the future by the yet to be born. In writing poetry about the limitless power of art, Hardy leaves the way open for his own art, and for himself as a poet, to become part of this fugued artistic process, and for his work to endure and inspire.

While Hardy describes time as 'such a dream', therefore, this is not merely because he is envisioning the dead in the present. He is also hopefully imagining the legacy of the past harmoniously reaching on into the future. Art is used in Hardy's poetry both to bring the past back to life in creative and revivifying ways, and to vision future possibilities which may or may not exist but which can be hopefully imagined. The way that Hardy achieves these effects provides some of his poems about architecture, and a number of his pieces on music and poetry, with a palpable sense of joy and hope. In such poems artists and their art can live on, leaving a legacy which affects and combines with later works. Hardy's poetic 'Idealism of Fancy' positions the role of art in human life as something which is vitally important, offering a powerful sense of inspiration. That is to say, in Hardy's poetry, his treatment of poetry and music offers us intimations of artistic

immortality. Such art does not merely resonate with the revivifying echoes of the past but symbolises a creatively evolving aspect of humanity which appears potentially limitless.

CONCLUSION

What has emerged from my research is evidence of the presence of a surprising amount of joy and hope in Hardy's collected poetry. Hardy's awareness of life's pleasures, and the importance of enjoying them, is clearly evidenced by the number of parties, celebrations, musical scenes and general moments of joy that pervade his works. This sense of fun is further indicated by Hardy's friends and acquaintances in their memories of him. Edward Clodd's 1908 letter to Clement Shorter, for instance, refers to an evening in 1903 when he, along with Hardy and Shorter 'pranced about Tussaud's by night, Hardy wearing the Waterloo cocked hat!' [1] The writer Arthur Compton Rickett described Hardy as 'more often than not, when I saw him, in excellent spirits, full of amusing stories' while further noting that he was 'quicker than the majority to see the humorous side of anything […] To speak of him as a pessimistic philosopher is absurd'. [2] Hardy's sense of playfulness was recalled too by George Bernard Shaw in his reaction to attending Hardy's funeral service at Westminster Abbey on the 16th of January 1928. In the hours after the service, Shaw composed a salutary letter to Hardy's widow Florence in which he described how:

> I tried to look as solemn as possible, but I didn't feel solemn a bit. I rejoice in Hardy's memory; and I felt all the time that he was there – up in the lantern somewhere – laughing like anything at Kipling and me and Galsworthy and the rest of us. If you only knew how I wanted at the end to swoop on you; tear off all that

[1] Cited in James Gibson, ed., *Thomas Hardy: Interviews and Recollections* (London: MacMillan, 1999), p. 74.
[2] Cited in Gibson, p.88.

> that villainous crape (you should have been like the lilies of the field); and make you come off, with him, to see a Charlie Chaplin film! But of course we wouldn't have dared. I had to be content with nudging Cockerell disrespectfully as I passed him.[3]

The playful, slapstick and irreverent humour attributed to Hardy in Shaw's letter indicates a different man to the one often seen by many literary critics as a pessimist. For example, in an article published in *The Manchester Guardian* the day after the service, Alfred Noyes described how Hardy's 'sense of emptiness' towards things 'seemed to chill the whole ceremony'.[4] Conversely, Shaw's remembrance of Hardy is comically disrespectful and life-affirming, his missive concluding, 'Hooray! It's not proper; but that's how he makes me feel'. [5]

Shaw's comments on Hardy's character recall the way in which his fiction often demonstrates a humorous and joyous attitude towards the more serious aspects of human life such as organized religion and officialdom. This sense of comic playfulness is evident in his posthumously published short story 'Old Mrs Chundle' (1929) (*CS*), where a church curate installs a hearing pipe directly below his pulpit so that a deaf old woman will consent to attend his church sermon. This has the unfortunate consequence that he is directly subjected to her breathing in the form of 'a steam rising from the bell-mouth of the tube'

[3] George Bernard Shaw, 'Letter to Florence Hardy', 16 January 1928. The Thomas Hardy Collection, owned by the Dorset County Museum and deposited with the Dorset History Centre, no reference number, see appendix.
[4] Alfred Noyes, 'The Burial of Thomas Hardy', *The Guardian*, 17 January 1928, < > (accessed 23 May 2020).
[5] Shaw, DCM.

(p.837). He is forced to smell a number of unpleasant odors including 'cider' and 'pickled cabbage' (p.838) which finally forces him to abandon the sermon. Similarly, in 'Absent-Mindedness in a Parish Choir' (1891) (*CS*) the church band drink a mixture of beer and hot brandy to keep warm in the gallery, fall asleep, and, upon waking, forget where they are. Thinking they are at a party, their confused leader Nicholas leads a rendition of the popular jig '"The Devil among the Tailors"' (p.507) while the horrified squire and parson appeal in vain for them to stop. What is evident in such comic passages is the relish Hardy takes in humour, and an awareness of the ways in which such comics aspect can briefly brighten, and in some cases even overcome, stern officiousness and tediousness.

His novels also feature a number of passages where tragic characters such as Tess, Jude and Henchard indulge in lighter moments and exemplify a sense of joy. The happy and felicitous aspects of Hardy's character can be located in those brief moments of great beauty and vibrancy, such as the lush Talbothays section of *Tess* (1891) where Tess and Angel fall in love. There also exists in Hardy's fiction a changing tension between enjoyment and tragedy, so that moments of joy can even sometimes emerge during particularly pessimistic episodes. Hardy details this in the Flintcomb-Ash section of *Tess*, where Tess and Marian endure the drudgery of their labour while 'they lived all this afternoon in memories of green, sunny, romantic Talbothays' (*TD*, p.286). These two forces are specifically described by Hardy as 'the inherent will to enjoy, and the circumstantial will against enjoyment' (*TD*, p.286). Both aspects are clearly present in his novels, even if they generally, but not always, conclude more pessimistically.

Hardy's fiction can ultimately be seen as offering object lessons in how not to live, helping us to understand why, as Gillian Beer notes, he frequently ends his plots tragically.[6] Hence, in 'Old Mrs Chundle' the eponymous old woman finally collapses on her way to church and dies, leaving the curate distraught with guilt, while in 'Absent-Mindedness in a Parish Choir' the church players are fired and play no more, being replaced by a barrel organ. In attempting to correct the limitations of society, Hardy makes his characters suffer, summarized by the previously quoted line in 'In Tenebris II' (1901) (*CP I*) which tells us that 'if way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst' (l.14). Hardy is not stylistically melodramatic, unlike a number of the Victorian writers who directly preceded him such as Wilkie Collins or Charles Dickens. He simply shows us the more unpleasant aspects of human life in various tragi-comic forms so that people may behave better towards each other and, ultimately, strive to enjoy life more. The various forms of joy and hope in Hardy's fiction, therefore, which I have touched on in this study, indicate the possibilities for a broader investigation across his whole *oeuvre*, reappraising his novels and short stories as well as his poetry.

In this thesis I have primarily focused my attention for now upon the ways in which Hardy's sense of joy and hope is revealed more strongly in his collected poetry. In doing so, I have drawn upon the ways in which previous scholars have located discrete examples of optimism in Hardy's works to conduct a more wide-ranging and complete study. For example, several of these works of scholarship have unearthed brighter aspects of Hardy's

[6] Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 3rd edn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 223.

thought through examining his interpretation of Charles Darwin's theories. [7] In this study, as we have seen, Darwin's influence upon Hardy's poetic joy and hope forms part of a much wider selection of scientific and artistic works. Thus, while Hardy's poetry displays a realistic awareness of life's sadder and darker aspects, a number of his poems also give us something much brighter. His poetry illustrates an abiding delight in play and fun, conveying a sense of emphasis in the importance of enjoying life's pleasures. As discussed above, while this is evidenced by Hardy's works of fiction, such playful and vital human aspects, as we have seen in chapter 2, are amplified in poems such as 'In the Days of Crinoline' (1914) (*CP II*), 'The Night of the Dance' (1909) (*CP I*), and 'Great Things' (1917) (*CP II*).

Unlike Hardy's prose narratives, many poems contain an abidingly hopeful quality. A number exemplify, I would argue, the speaker's fanciful wish, even in the face of stark reality, that things might one day improve. This aspect is encountered elsewhere in Hardy's work; in the After Scene of *The Dynasts* (1908), the dialogue between the Spirit of the Years and the Spirit of the Pities concludes with the chorus:

But – a stirring thrills the air
Like to sounds of joyance there
That the rages
Of the ages

[7] John Holmes, *Darwin's Bards: British and American Poetry in the Age of Evolution* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 2009, reprinted 2013); George Levine, *Darwin The Writer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 186-210; George Levine, *Reading Thomas Hardy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2017).

Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the darts that were,

Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all things fair!

(*DY*, p.707)

The lines above have been seen by some critics as being out of place amongst Hardy's oeuvre, an aberration amongst his overarching pessimism. This was not how Hardy saw it, writing one year afterwards in 1909, 'on one point I am determined – to exhibit what I feel ought to be exhibited about life to show that what we call immorality, irreligion, &c, are often true morality, true religion, &c, quite freely to the end' (*CL IV*, p.28). Hardy's poetic hopefulness had a serious intent, namely a continuing wish to see the world improve in secular terms, despite growing evidence that it was not.

While *The Dynasts* appears to end hopefully, the First World War shook Hardy's sense of belief in a better future, as it did for many, and very likely affected the pessimistic tone of those poems written in direct response such as 'To the Moon' (1917) (*CP II*). His recorded notes from 1914 tell us, that 'he would probably not have ended *The Dynasts* as he did end it if he could have foreseen what was going to happen within a few years'. The same passage also relates that the 'war destroyed all Hardy's belief in the gradual ennoblement of man, a belief he had held for many years' (*LIFE*, p.398). This conviction appears to have lessened somewhat by the time of his 1915 missive to Florence Henniker in which, quoting a remark from her previous letter, he wrote that his '"faith in the good there is in humankind" – except in isolated individuals, of whom happily there are many – has been rudely shaken of late' (*CL V*, p.121). While indicating how the war had 'rudely

shaken', rather than 'destroyed' his faith in the future, the passage also demonstrates two other important aspects: that Hardy clearly possessed a faith in humanity prior to the war, and still, despite its effect upon him, held on to this conviction in regard to a number of acquaintances who sustained his faith in the good of human individuals more widely. In addition, the cessation of his overall conviction did not fatally compromise the sense of hope which underscored his collected poetry, and which was finally defined in the 1922 'Apology' (*CP II*) as 'evolutionary meliorism' (p.319).

For Hardy, therefore, things could turn out good or ill, meaning that while he increasingly feared the worst, in his poetry he was able to illustrate his wish, or hope, that the better may come to pass. In a 1920 letter he protested against Alfred Noyes's description of his philosophy, which he was 'quite unable to see as "leading logically to the conclusion that the Power behind the universe is malign"', instead describing it as neutral, or '*un*moral' (*LIFE*, p. 439). In Hardy's world, this still meant that while bad things would happen, the potential for good also existed. He further directed Noyes as being able to 'find plenty of these definitions in "The Dynasts" as well as in short poems, and I am surprised that you have not taken them in' (*CL VI*, p.439). Hence in *The Dynasts* the Chorus of the Pities laments the sadness of things and yet, at the same time, sings hopefully of the will:

Yet it may wake and understand
Ere Earth unshape, know all things, and
With knowledge use a painless hand,
A painless hand!

(*DY*, p.437)

Hardy's poetry demonstrates this fanciful, but self-aware hopefulness. In earlier works, such as 'On a Fine Morning' (1901) (*CP I*), Hardy's speaker appears to address those who understand the world with a clear eye, advising that solace is not acquired from reality:

> But in cleaving to the Dream,
> And in gazing at the gleam
> Whereby gray things golden seem.
> (ll. 5-7)

One of his final poetic pieces, 'We are Getting to the End' (1928) (*CP III*), laments the decline of such dreaming, Hardy's speaker telling us 'We are getting to the end of visioning | The impossible within this universe' (ll.1-2). The 'We', however, is ambiguous, as Hardy's speaker appears to position himself, and his own 'visioning', especially apart. As Laurence Estanove has argued, the poem can also be seen 'celebrating the poet's own gift of vision and creation'. [8] The perceived cessation of such imaginative processes also appears to accentuate the importance of Hardy's own creative dreaming. Certainly Hardy's last poem in his final 1928 collection *Winter Words*, entitled 'He Resolves to Say No More' (*CP III*), indicates this. In a farewell to poetry, Hardy's speaker appears cognizant of the

[8] Laurence Estanove, 'From Pessimism to Idealism: The Pressure of Paradox', *Thomas Hardy, Poet: New Perspectives*, ed. by Adrian Grafe and Laurence Estanove (Jefferson: McFarland, 2015), pp.82-99 (p.93).

fact that he will die, and that his vision of the world will die with him. While lamenting the short-sightedness of others, and written from the perspective of old age and approaching death, the last stanza concludes his poetic *oeuvre* with a re-emphasis of its unique value:

> And if my vision range beyond
> The blinkered sight of souls in bond,
> – By truth made free –
> I'll let all be,
> And show to no man what I see.
> (ll. 16-20)

Looking at the world realistically, Hardy's speaker understands the 'truth' of things, but because of this he has also been 'free' to vision and to fancifully hope as he likes without the need for empirical or theological support. In this sense, Hardy's poetic speakers become the creators of their own inner universe, free to decorate and brighten things that they cannot change outside in the real world. As we have seen, therefore, in chapters 1 and 3, in poems such as 'The Darkling Thrush' (1901) (*CP I*), 'An August Midnight' (1901) (*CP I*), 'In a Whispering Gallery' (1917) (*CP II*) and 'In a Museum' (1917) (*CP II*), Hardy's speaker envisions natural creatures and works of art with the curious, imaginative wish that something better may exist elsewhere, or indeed be possibly immanent.

This questioning, hopeful aspect of Hardy's poetic work is further illustrated by the way in which he curiously approached and recorded his readings in his various notebooks.

Hardy's realistic and imaginative enjoyment of life's vitality is indicated by the optimistic sources that proved so important and influential for him. As my study has demonstrated, Hardy's readings show how he participated in a broad cultural discussion, encompassing sources which range across the arts and sciences, and which were optimistic as well as pessimistic. The sources of his enjoyment of the natural world, his appreciation of intense moments and community life, and his celebration of artistic fancy, can be seen as reflecting texts, poems and books published before and during his lifetime. His poems illustrate the ways in which a number of his alluded-to influences directly or indirectly refer to other, older sources, seeing Hardy place himself within a much wider cultural matrix. Hence, in works like 'Proud Songsters' (1928) (*CP III*), Hardy draws upon such influences to create rich and startling effects. While observing the transitory nature of existence, Hardy's speaker also celebrates new life, beauty and natural vitality:

> The thrushes sing as the sun is going,
> And the finches whistle in ones and pairs,
> And as it gets dark loud nightingales
> In bushes
> Pipe, as they can when April wears,
> As if all Time were theirs.
>
> These are brand new birds of twelvemonths' growing,
> Which a year ago, or less than twain,

No finches were, nor nightingales,

Nor thrushes,

But only particles of grain,

And earth, and air, and rain.

In the first stanza, the fanciful imagery Hardy uses to describe the birds seems to indicate that they inhabit an imaginary realm. The word 'Pipe' juxtaposed with spring indicates the image of Pan, illustrating Hardy's interest in classical pastoral poetry, but also the possible influence of Keats's 'Ode to Pan' from *Endymion* (1818). Further, Hardy's 'dark loud nightingales' remind us more directly of 'Ode to a Nightingale' (1819). Having established this fanciful mood, Hardy then draws upon other influences to take the poem in a different direction. In the second stanza these 'brand-new birds of twelve-months growing' are shown to have emerged into the world from nothingness. They begin from 'particles of grain', possibly indicating spontaneous generation and the thought of Lucretius but also, as products of biological evolution, the influence of Darwin's *Origin* (1859). The words 'earth, and air, and rain' can seem partly reductive, but such imagery also reminds us of natural growth and a general sense of things continually flowering into life. This strongly conveys Hardy's awareness of the cycle of material substances within the living world, in which corporeal matter and nutrients are continually replenished.

Hardy's 'Proud Songsters', like many of his poems, creatively reminds us that just as beauty always disappears, so nothingness repetitively transforms into beauty. This brighter,

more optimistic representation of the world is also expressed in Hardy's dialogue with his readings, such as these 1881 notes on:

> Style – Consider the Wordsworthian dictum (the more perfectly the natural object is reproduced, the more truly poetic the picture). This reproduction is achieved by seeing into the *heart of a thing* (as rain, wind, for instance), and is realism, in fact, though through being pursued by means of the imagination it is confounded with invention, which is pursued by the same means. It is, in short, reached by what M. Arnold calls 'the imaginative reason'. (*LIFE*, p.151)

Through Hardy's creative perspective, natural phenomena such as 'Earth, and air, and rain' are repositioned to express ideas, such as the corporeal wonder of evolution. Hardy therefore draws upon varied sources such as classical imagery, romantic fancy and evolutionary theory to juxtapose and emphasize the miraculous aspects of death and life. Despite realistically observing the natural shortness of existence, Hardy celebrates life's vital aspects while also signposting a sense of continuation.

As we have seen in this study, Hardy's wide-ranging influences frequently combine in different ways to inform the joyful flowering of life and sense of hope demonstrated in his poetry. Despite his lack of religious conviction, his poems show the ways in which a realistic, secular understanding of the world can be balanced with self-aware fancy to create varied forms of joy and hope. By providing a new way of reading Hardy's collected poetry, my thesis aims to enrich our sense of what it offers us. While unflinchingly addressing the stark

reality of the human condition, Hardy's poetry affords us a way of appreciating and enjoying its most vital aspects. Many of his poems are brimming with the sense that life, though transient and short, is continually flowering into being, and that it must be seized and enjoyed. After being lived, it can be recalled and savoured through the powers of human memory and amplified through art. Additionally, when times are bleak, the powers of the human imagination can provide a fanciful, self-aware mental prism through which to view life more hopefully. Many of his poems thus offer us succour, but more than this, they function as an imaginative, hopeful, nourishing force. In showing us how to access and cherish life's brighter aspects, his poetry does not just cheer us when times are good but brings us pleasure and empowers us when times are bad. As this study has shown, Hardy's collected poetry does no less than to offer us a way, or indeed multiple ways, of approaching and enjoying life.

(79, 892 words)

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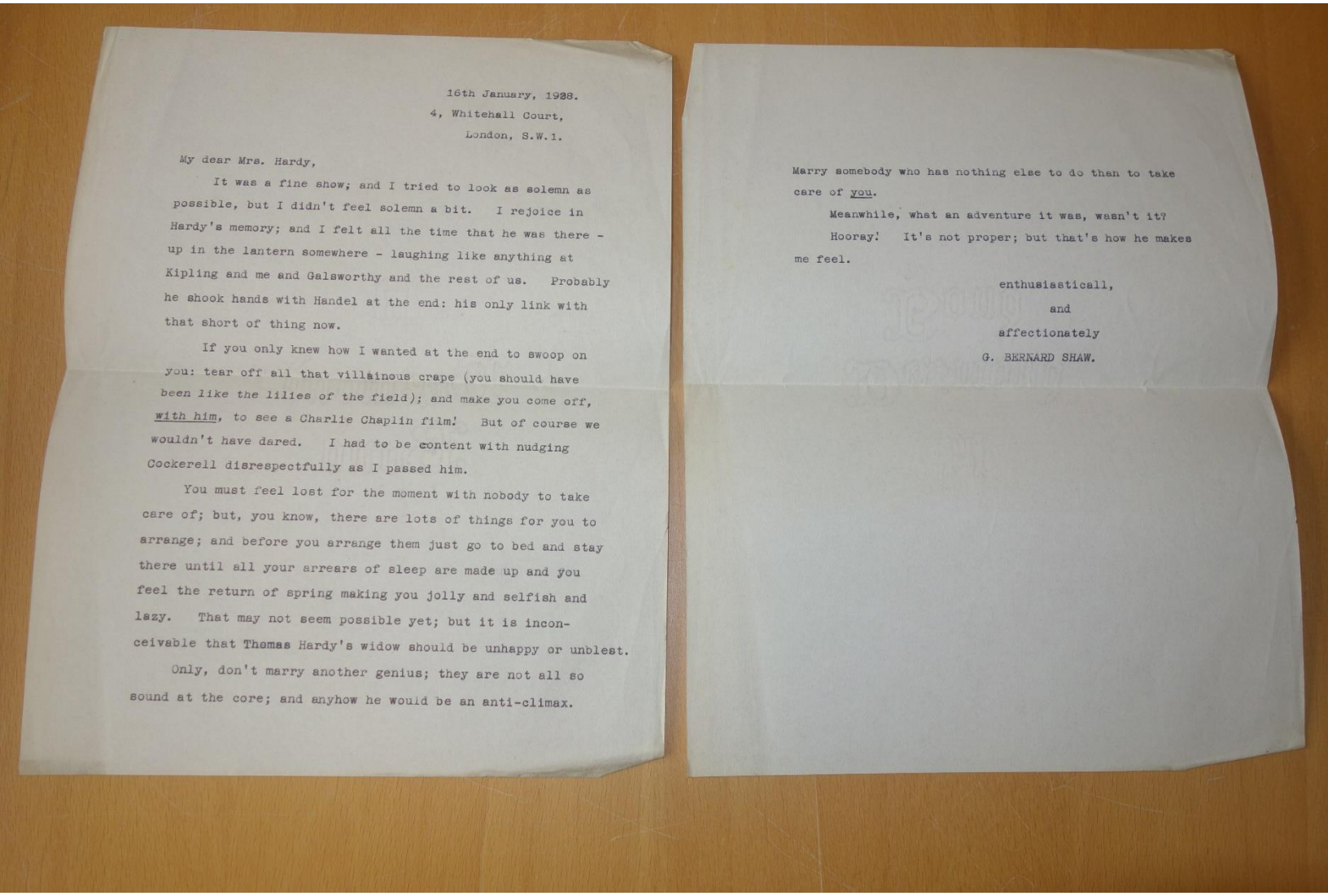
APPENDIX

Shaw, George Bernard, ‘Letter to Florence Hardy’, 16 January 1928. The Thomas Hardy Collection, owned by the Dorset County Museum and deposited with the Dorset History Centre, no reference number.



16th January, 1928.
4, Whitehall Court,
London, S.W.1.

My dear Mrs. Hardy,

It was a fine show; and I tried to look as solemn as possible, but I didn't feel solemn a bit. I rejoice in Hardy's memory; and I felt all the time that he was there - up in the lantern somewhere - laughing like anything at Kipling and me and Galsworthy and the rest of us. Probably he shook hands with Handel at the end: his only link with that short of thing now.

If you only knew how I wanted at the end to swoop on you: tear off all that villainous crape (you should have been like the lilies of the field); and make you come off, with him, to see a Charlie Chaplin film! But of course we wouldn't have dared. I had to be content with nudging Cockerell disrespectfully as I passed him.

You must feel lost for the moment with nobody to take care of; but, you know, there are lots of things for you to arrange; and before you arrange them just go to bed and stay there until all your arrears of sleep are made up and you feel the return of spring making you jolly and selfish and lazy. That may not seem possible yet; but it is inconceivable that Thomas Hardy's widow should be unhappy or unblest.

Only, don't marry another genius; they are not all so sound at the core; and anyhow he would be an anti-climax.

Marry somebody who has nothing else to do than to take care of you.

Meanwhile, what an adventure it was, wasn't it?

Hooray! It's not proper; but that's how he makes me feel.

enthusiasticall,
and
affectionately
G. BERNARD SHAW.