

# An Introduction to Hardy's Poetry

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## Turning to poetry

Hardy's career as a poet is unique. After writing poetry in the 1860s, in the way that any young man with literary ambitions might, he established himself as a major Victorian novelist. When his novel-writing came to an end in 1895, he began a second career as a poet. The bulk of his poetry was thus produced between his fifty-fifth birthday and his death at the age of 87 (the exceptions are a number of poems first drafted in the 1860s: around sixty poems can be dated before 1890, including seven in this selection, though a number of other undated poems undoubtedly use early material). Though the late careers of poets like Victor Hugo and Wallace Stevens provide a comparison, few poets have written so well in late life. One set of questions presented by Hardy's poetic career is thus: To what extent is he a 'Victorian' poet? What was the impact of a career that was undertaken after an established career as a novelist? How did he sustain his writing? What were Hardy's own explanations of his continued productivity?

The reasons for Hardy's abandonment of the novel are complex. The motive he often gave was the hostile receptions of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. Public controversy was matched by private hostility as he became estranged from his increasingly evangelical wife, Emma, who felt betrayed by the latter novel's bitter reflections on marriage and religion. He may also, Michael Mason suggests, have found public praise of these radical novels as hard to accept as blame, since he did not wish to become an apostle of free-thought (Mason 1988). As well as these external forces, the internal dynamics of the late novels involve a collapse of those structures which inform the Victorian novel: in *Jude the Obscure* family, succession, stable rural environment, and the possibilities of a future vanish (Said 1975: 137-9). Given that the novels had become the testaments of a failure of hope, he could not easily have written on.

Whatever the reasons for Hardy's abandonment of the novel, the mid-1890s were a period for crisis for him, as the 'In Tenebris' sequence and other poems of the period suggest. In the disguised third-person autobiography which he later wrote, he commented that 'His personal ambition in a worldly sense, which had always been weak, dwindled to nothing, and for some years after 1895 or 1896 he requested that no record of his life should be made. His verses he kept on writing from pleasure in them' (LY 84). Poetry, here, is seen as a private voice, dissociated from the 'worldly' ambitions of the novelist; the poems form a ghostly supplement to his public life, free from its problems of self-presentation – as Hardy implies in 'Wessex Heights' (47), contrasting the prose struggles of the 'lowlands' with the aloofness of the 'heights'. Yet

once he was established as a poet Hardy refused to accept the idea that his poetic career was in any sense secondary. Poetry was, he later claimed, his *original* impulse, to which he was returning (*LY* 185). His attitude to his late career is thus complex, and relates to the status of poetry as both a kind of ‘after-writing’ (suggested by the poems which borrow from the novels), and a temporarily suppressed original impulse, even the core of his work.

Clearly the idea that Hardy was always a poet was, as Paul Zeitlow puts it, ‘a myth of retrospective self-justification’ (Zeitlow 1974: 42). In publishing poetry he was attempting to enter a new field, and inevitably encountered suggestions that he should have stuck to his old trade. There is ample evidence of how seriously he took his second career: his bitter disappointment at reviews of his poetry; his use of poems on public events to raise his profile (the Boer War, the turn of the century, the death of the Queen, even the *Titanic* disaster); his research into prosody in the British Museum, with the aim of extending his technical range. We can trace a gradual increase in his self-confidence as he published volume after volume: in 1898, 1901, 1909, 1914, 1917, 1922, 1925, and (posthumously) 1928. The ‘General Preface’ to his works, which he wrote in 1911, is a good marker here: it imagines poetry as part of ‘a fairly comprehensive cycle’: ‘I had wished that those in dramatic, ballad, and narrative form should include most of the cardinal situations which occur in social and public life, and those in lyric form a round of emotional experiences of some completeness’ (PW 49-50). By this stage he is clearly thinking of a whole poetic corpus, not something done purely ‘for pleasure’.

Hardy’s increasing self-confidence as a poet had a number of sources apart from the actual publication and increasingly respectful reviews of his individual volumes. One was the publication of his Napoleonic epic *The Dynasts* in three volumes in 1904, 1906, and 1908. *The Dynasts*, for all its lukewarm reception, established Hardy as a kind of national laureate (selections were dramatized as a morale-boosting play during the war); a status confirmed by the Order of Merit conferred on him by the king in 1910. It was also in this period that Hardy became fully established as the resident genius (and copyright-holder) of ‘Wessex’, the name of the ancient kingdom which became the designated space of his novels. His awareness of his own status is peculiarly reflected in the two-volume autobiography which he began around 1917 and which – in one of the oddest acts of literary ventriloquism ever seen – was to be published posthumously as his second wife Florence’s work. Though the imposture was doomed to failure, the *Life* (to use the convenient title of the one-volume edition) seems to have been important to Hardy in its ‘fixing’ of his public image, its establishment of a version of himself for posterity.

In a related way, Hardy also needed a psychological justification for his new career, an explanation for why a poet would continue to write. His notebook entries in the period after the turn of the century show a fascination with the late careers of other artists: Sophocles, Rembrandt, Wagner, Turner, Ibsen, and ‘that amazing old man – Verdi’, with his ‘phoenix-like’ second career (Bjork entries 2309-10). He was seeking models. In 1906 he wrote after a concert:

I prefer late Wagner, as I prefer late Turner, to early ... the idiosyncrasies of each master being more strongly shown in these strains. When a man not contented with the grounds of his success goes on and on, and tries to achieve the impossible, then he gets profoundly interesting to me. To-day it was early Wagner for the most part: fine music, but not so particularly his – no spectacle of the inside of a brain at work like the inside of a hive. (*LY* 117)

Here the implication is that the interest of old age lies in a pursuit of the individual, of 'idiosyncrasy', in continued ambition, and in the 'spectacle' of the working brain. The latter metaphor is particularly important because Hardy uses it in *The Dynasts* to describe the Will, figured as a giant brain gradually coming to consciousness. The process of awareness itself is the focus of attention – as in a number of other passages which Hardy excerpted into his notebooks in this period, including references to Henry James on the brain as a refracting medium (Bjork entry 2462), on how Victor Hugo's 'supreme enjoyment was the exercise of his own brain' (Bjork entry 2252). Such passages reflect Hardy's developing sense of a liberated subjectivity in his own writings, involving a 'lyric' self which was not subject to the same scrutiny as the supposedly 'realistic' novelist (see Wilson 1976; Armstrong 1988a). Another important aspect of this acceptance of himself as the proper subject of his poems is suggested by a notebook entry copied from *The Nation* in late 1908:

An artist's *self* – The most difficult thing in the world for any artist to achieve ... is to express himself, to strike out a style of writing which shall be as natural to him as the character *of* handwriting is to ordinary men. It is a truism to say that individuality is the last quality to be developed in a man. (Bjork entry 2348)

For Hardy, his own 'individuality' was similarly latent, emerging fully in his late flowering as a poet, and particularly in the lyrics in which he meditates on the course of his own life. As we shall see, 'latency' is an idea which permeates Hardy's late career, from his interest in the theories of writers like Henri Bergson (whose *Creative Evolution* postulated a universe only slowly becoming aware of itself) to the plots of many of his most important poems. It also explains why he could continue to write: 'Among those who accomplished late, the poet spark must always have been latent; but its outspringing may have been frozen and delayed for half a lifetime' (*LY* 184). In the same way, the materials of his poetry are buried beneath the surface of consciousness and revealed by time: 'I have a faculty ... for burying an emotion in my heart or brain for forty years, and exhuming it at the end of that time as fresh as when interred' (*LY* 178). Poetry belatedly becomes the plot of his life, at the same time as the plot of his life becomes a story of belated recognition.

### Poetry as posthumous vision

Hardy's late sense of poetic freedom seems to have been intensified by the fact that from the point of view of the outside world Hardy the grand old man was already a part of posterity, invisible behind the trees surrounding his house, Max Gate, his autobiography written, his portraits painted, and his manuscripts donated to national collections. He might have been already dead, and indeed being 'already' dead had existed as a possibility in Hardy's poetry from its inception, as part of a posture of protective self-effacement. In a conversation recorded in 1901 Hardy called this the stance of a 'ghost-seer' (Archer 1904: 37). In a diary entry in 1888 he describes the source of his 'detachment':

For my part, *if* there is any way *of* getting a melancholy satisfaction out of life it lies in dying, so to speak, before one is out *of* the flesh; by which I mean putting on the manners *of* ghosts, wandering in their haunts, and taking their views *of* surrounding things. To think *of* life as passing away is a sadness; to think *of* it as past is at least tolerable. (*EL* 275)

This sense of ghostliness is partly a product of that self-protective invisibility which sustains Hardy's career after the public controversy of the last novels, and the move to verse. In 'He Revisits His First School' (104) he cries:

I should not have shown in the flesh,  
I ought to have gone as a ghost;  
It was awkward, unseemly almost,  
Standing solidly there as when fresh ...

Being disembodied, an observing eye, involves a self-protective minimalism which insists on 'neutral tones', a muted vision which guards the self. 'He Never Expected Much' he says in one title (168), and so could not be disappointed. Margaret Mahar (1978: 316) comments that:

If *Jude the Obscure* was written from the perspective of the end, much of this poetry is written from a further perspective, beyond the end. That is not eternity but a time rather like Emily Dickinson's midnight, that moment when a fly buzzes, and both life and death are held at bay.

Hardy – who copied Emily Dickinson's "'I died for beauty'" into his notebook – often writes from this 'suspended' perspective, particularly in his great series of night and dawn meditations. In "'I looked up from my writing'" (111) he literally sees death (in the form of the moon) going about his business; in 'The New Dawn's Business' (154) he is passed over by death since he is, implicitly, already in that state; and in the final poem of *Moments of Vision* he writes about his own death from beyond the grave.

Hardy's sense of ghostliness is related to the actual structure of his career, as well as his natural self-protectiveness. After the death of his wife, Emma, in 1912 (and of a number of family members in the same period), he habitually saw himself as a ghost in a more literal sense: a remnant of a dying family and of dead passions, a 'dead man held on end', as he puts it in 'The Going' (51), buffeted by Fate, his emotional life behind him. Importantly, the earlier self-protective attitude and the later outcome are related. What had earlier been a protective distance from life helps create a tragic plot of failed communication with Emma, and, in 'The Going', Hardy's minimalism becomes the subject of self-accusation:

Why, then, latterly did we not speak,  
Did we not think of those days long dead,  
And ere your vanishing strive to seek  
That time's renewal?

Any number of other poems testify to this sense of not having spoken when speaking was possible, not having read or understood what was plainly visible, or not having remembered what was there for remembering. Hardy's entire career as a poet thus arranges itself around Emma's death, the point at which the prophecy of his own ghostliness is fulfilled, and he becomes the victim of his own writing.

But paradoxically, Hardy's minimalism often enables him to gain strength for a muted return of Romantic vision. In poems like "'For Life I had never cared greatly'" (107) diffidence is replaced by illumination as life itself courts Hardy. It is as if it were safer to be desired than to desire, safer not to hope for vision but to find it anyway. The final outcome of this 'disembodied' vision is particularly apparent in

Hardy's very late work – often in poems in which the observer barely seems to intrude, before we suddenly realize (as in the paired poems 'Snow in the Suburbs' and 'A Light Snow-Fall after Frost' (140-1)) that 'a watcher' is present, organizing the scene. Harold Orel remarks that 'Hardy's final poems are sadder and more measured in pace'; Dennis Taylor suggests that this sense of neutrality and ease is particularly present in what he calls an 'Indian Summer' in the 1920s, following the intensities of the period after Emma's death (Orel 1976: 117; Taylor 1981: 139). This seems to me partly an acceptance of the myth of a tranquil old age (a number of Hardy's very late poems are tragic or grimly ironic; while some earlier ones are gently pastoral), but it is true that in Hardy's poetry of the 1920s there is an increasing sense of detachment and distance, so that even intimate memories must be searched out from nooks and crannies of the house of memory, and the author can describe death and life with a cool indifference. There is more sense of continuous meditation – suggested by one title, 'The Same Thought Resumed', and by Hardy's 'recycling' of his own work in poems like 'Christmas in the Elgin Room' (176) – an effect reinforced by the increasingly long and irregular stanzas he uses, formal control subordinated to the movement of thought. The postscript becomes even more Hardy's mode – as in the actual postscript of 'A Sheep Fair' (139), or in the detached final couplet of 'The Love-Letters' (158):

He laughed in the sun – an ache in his laughter –  
And went. I heard of his death soon after.

Here, a brief comment becomes an entire mode of vision, for the poet awaiting his own death.

### **Necessity and free will**

Hardy's sense of the fragility of his self is closely related to his vision of the universe as alien, driven by Necessity, with human life dwarfed by its forces. In part this is a view which Hardy absorbed from nineteenth-century science, with its positivism, emphasis on a mechanical nature, and an implicit dualism which saw the self opposed to the forces of 'outer nature'. Here, for example, is a passage from John Morley which Hardy excerpted approvingly into his notebooks in the 1870s:

*All phenomena are necessary. No creature in the universe, in its circumstances and according to its given prophecy, can act otherwise than as it does act. Fire burns whatever combustible matter comes within the sphere of its action. Man necessarily desires what either is, or seems to be, conducive to his comfort and well-being. There is no independent energy, no isolated cause, no detached activity in a universe where all things are incessantly acting on one another, and which is itself only one eternal round of movement, imparted and undergone, according to necessary laws. (Fortnightly Review 22: 268-9; Bjork entries 1065-6)*

In such a universe, free will is only an illusion, the product of humankind's restricted knowledge. Indeed, Hardy often saw human consciousness as an epiphenomenon – an accidental development in evolutionary terms, which leaves the self stranded and exposed in a world which has not developed to a point where it is suitable for thought. The 'coming universal wish not to live' in *Jude the Obscure* is a product of this painful over-extension, as is the wish for unconsciousness or death

expressed in poems like 'To an Unborn Pauper Child' (17), the 'In Tenebris' series (24-6) and 'Thoughts from Sophocles' (179).

Hardy's relation to the 'problem' of free will is a complex one. His own 'solution' when pressed on the issue was placed within the context of his invention, in 'The Dynasts', of the idea of a Will of the Universe which represents necessity. It is within consciousness that what we call 'freedom' lies:

The will of man is ... neither wholly free nor wholly unfree. When swayed by the Universal Will (which he mostly must be as a subservient part of it) he is not individually free; but whenever it happens that all the rest of the Great Will is in equilibrium the minute portion called one person's will is free, just as a performer's fingers are free to go on playing the pianoforte of themselves when he talks or thinks of something else and the head does not rule them. (*LY* 125)

There are thus moments of freedom, or perhaps understanding, within the context of what Hardy often calls the 'web' of fate, which rules human life and history; but such moments only exist where the forces of fate are in equilibrium. As we shall see, they are also usually moments of retrospection.

The outcome of a view of the world like that sketched above is apparent throughout Hardy's poetry. In many poems, like 'The Wind's Prophecy' (101), nature is a vast, hostile machine; in others the corpse-like wasteland portrayed in 'The Darkling Thrush' (21), bereft of meaning except that which human beings project onto it. Again and again Hardy's poems deal with the isolated figures in a landscape – the subject of romantic lyrics like Wordsworth's 'The Solitary Reaper' – often in outline against the sky. In a hostile universe, the nature of individual perceptions which are 'projected' by the individual are what determine its subjective qualities. An 1865 diary entry states that 'the poetry of a scene varies with the minds of the perceivers. Indeed, it does not lie in the scene at all' (*EL* 66). The outcome of such an epistemology is a series of poems in which the mind's ability to project emotions onto a landscape is foregrounded, whether in direct and self-conscious inscription, as in Hardy's most ecstatic elegies, like 'At Castle Boterel' (66), or in something like the 'tide of visions' which overwhelms the poet in 'In Front of the Landscape' (43) – denizens of that 'dream-world of phantoms and spectres, the inexplicable swarm and equivocal generation of motions in our own brains' which Coleridge describes in the *Biographia Literaria* (ch. 8) as the inevitable outcome of any Idealist system.

Hardy's most intense poems, and those most centrally in the tradition of what M.H. Abrams calls the 'Greater Romantic Lyric', typically involve either a visionary pilgrimage across a barren landscape – 'The Wind's Prophecy' (101), "'For Life I had never cared greatly'" (107), or a retrospective which takes in a whole life, tracing its determined patterns – 'Quid Hic Agis?' (85), 'During Wind and Rain' (102). A number of poems involve both these features: 'The Five Students' (100) combines the metaphor of life's journey and a visionary retrospective. In a pair of poems, which seem to me at the very core of Hardy's achievement, 'The Pedigree' (91) and 'Family Portraits' (175), the poet watches a 'masque' in which all the central elements of his vision and vocabulary combine in an overwhelming scene which seems to offer the key to his life, and to the processes which have determined it. Heredity is a particular focus of Hardy's sense of entrapment in a Darwinian universe in which the individual is produced by a 'line' of progenitors, whose habits and characteristics he or she repeats. He saw himself as the product of a dying family whose history culminates in his own experience, as poems like 'Heredity' (81) suggest.

In 'The Pedigree' Hardy scans by moonlight the 'sire-sown tree' of his ancestry, with its twisted branches, until he sees a face form, and then a mirroring of that face as a series of faces, regressing before him to the point of origin, 'past surmise and reason's reach'. The outcome is a crisis of self-perception which is repeated at a number of points in Hardy's poetry: the poet faces the question of whether he is a 'mimicker' ('continuator' in the first edition) or is able to assert his own identity. Typically, Hardy here *says* that he is a 'counterfeit' (perhaps remembering the obsolete meaning of that word, 'made to a pattern'), but he *thinks* 'I am I, / And what I do I do myself alone'. Resistance is held within the mind of the poet, just as in Hardy's explanation of free will and necessity the individual is enmeshed in fate, but has in consciousness a measure of freedom. A similar question is posed in 'Family Portraits', published in Hardy's last volume, with what seems a more pessimistic answer. Again there is something akin to what Freud calls the primal scene: the poem presents a masque in which ancestral figures show 'some drama, obscure . . . Whose course begot me', so that again the poet becomes a 'continuator'. The scene will, he says, teach him the secret of his own being, and help him prevent the 'hurt' which is the human lot. But the poet cannot enter this situation: his cry of 'Why wake up all this?' pulls him out of the frame, leaving him to puzzle on the meaning of the drama he has seen, still a slave to the Necessity which governs the universe.

In a difficult but useful comment on 'The Pedigree', Mary Jacobus elucidates the self-divison which she sees as producing Hardy's peculiar angle of vision – and helps explain why being 'a dead man held on end' might be productive for Hardy:

Ultimately, the critical moment in Hardy's writing, that of imagined self-dissolution, permits the threatened or enfeebled consciousness to transfer its own displaced omniscience to the disembodied vision which he calls 'magian', rather than surrendering the fantasy altogether. Or, to put it another way, instead of limiting the grotesque and reconstituting it as irony, Hardy is able in his poetry to move beyond it to something nearer the supernatural. (Jacobus 1982: 275)

Jacobus sees Hardy as replacing the 'I' of authorial authority, which he cannot sustain, with the 'eye' of the disembodied and posthumous viewer who has the vision which the 'person' Hardy has abandoned, seeing all too well his own limitations, weakness, and enslavement to Necessity. In both the poems examined above, Hardy achieves a remarkable self-analysis, akin to that of Wordsworth's confrontation of time, repetition, and loss in 'Tintern Abbey', or Keats's version of his primal scene as a poet in 'Hyperion'; but what is involved is less the Romantic recovery of self than an achieved posthumousness which converts weakness into knowledge, the unfreedom of life into the freedom of suspended consciousness. Life is lived in a state of blindness, but an 'after-life' may be more productive of vision.

### **Typology and the pattern of a life**

One aspect of Hardy's 'ghostliness' is his peculiarly modern sense of the nature of writing. Hardy, perhaps more than any other British writer, is aware of writing as an activity which is intimately bound up with death and the creation of a kind of double of the world – something we associate more closely with European modernism (Rilke, Proust, Kafka, Blanchot, Derrida) than with an English regionalist seemingly anchored in reality. He constantly reminds us that writing is not life, that language is predicated on loss, that words fail to fulfil the intentions of those that speak them, or

become traps and snares as they ‘freeze’ lived experience into inappropriate patterns, so that the act of writing itself seems deathly – an ‘inditing’, to use one of his favourite double-edged words, both a setting-down and an accusation. As J. Hillis Miller puts it, ‘For Hardy, it is not minds that generate signs, but minds that are generated, shaped, and coerced, done and undone, by signs’ (Miller 1985: 306).

This experience of the interaction of writing and time is often expressed as a form of the system of meanings known as typology – a word seldom used to express Hardy’s sense of repetition, but particularly useful because of its relevance to the aesthetics of those Victorians who participated in the Gothic revival (see Landow 1980). Strictly speaking, typology is the technique of biblical interpretation which sees passages in the Old Testament as ‘foreshadowing’ the life of Christ in the New Testament, as for example Abraham’s intended sacrifice of Isaac acting as the ‘type’ of God’s sacrifice of his son (the ‘antitype’). This has often been broadened into a more general mode of mapping an earlier text onto a later one, whether the usage was Christian (as in Protestant spiritual autobiography) or more secular, as in Ruskin’s vision of the nineteenth-century Gothic as a repetition of the fourteenth century.

Typology is not for Hardy, of course, what it is for someone who believes the Christian scriptures, since the empowering principle behind history – God’s providential plan – has been lost. Despite Hardy’s deployment of the idea of the ‘Immanent Will’, he could not help registering the fact that without God typology becomes a cruel irony, or just ‘hap’, chance. But it does survive as a textual relationship, as a trace of that gap left by the disappearance of god but the persistence of the shape of religion and its texts within human understanding. It becomes a method of interpretation (whether of self-understanding or historical awareness), a structure for the investigation of continuities in experience, and the way in which memory (or the historian) works by mapping earlier experience onto later. It thus registers the human desire for pattern, which both abstracts itself from events and intersects with them across time.

Like most Victorians, Hardy would have been automatically familiar with the typological tradition in hymns, sermons, and art. Holman Hunt’s painting ‘The Shadow of Death’ (completed 1870-73) is one of the most famous examples: the yawning figure of the young carpenter Christ throws a shadow on the wall, prefiguring his Crucifixion. Hardy uses the same image in ‘Near Lanivet, 1872’ (82), where a woman leans against a handpost:

She leant back, being so weary, against its stem,  
And laid her arms on its own,  
Each open palm stretched out to each end of them,  
Her sad face sideways thrown.

Her white-clothed form at this dim-lit cease of day  
Made her look as one crucified ...

Both the woman and the narrator understand this ominous sign. And since Hardy tells us that the poem was based on an actual incident involving him and Emma, it is also the plot of his own selfunderstanding, mapped across his life.

Central to the typological tradition is the doctrine of reserve: the idea that the truth is, for a time, hidden (latent) before being revealed. In a pervasive pattern in Hardy’s poetry, he hears a text repeatedly, but only slowly comes to awareness of its importance, so that his inattention becomes part of its meaning at some late point. The result is that he realizes that the story of his life has, in a sense, been written for him.



This applies to poems like ‘The Mocking Bird’ (in which the meaning of a song only becomes apparent when it is too late), and even to ‘Standing by the Mantelpiece’ (169), in which the gesture at the beginning of the poem is repeated at the end:

And let the candle-wax thus mould a shape  
Whose meaning now, if hid before, you know ...

Phillip Davis extends this awareness to Hardy’s sense of the relationship between his prose and his poetry: the plot of the novels, with their self-delusive characters, becomes the plot of his life; the tragic outcome of his courtship-novel *A Pair of Blue Eyes* or the delusion of Pierston, the hero of *The Well-Beloved*, anticipating his own fate (as it anticipates the plot of his poem ‘The Revisitation’ (30)). Hardy’s sense of belated recognition focuses, in particular, on Emma Hardy’s death and his sudden perception of the utter centrality of his love for her to his life. Dennis Taylor calls this awareness ‘Hardy’s Apocalypse’ – Emma’s death combined with the shock of the First World War producing a sense that things lying dormant for decades had come to fruition in a terrible climax (Taylor 1981: 88-138). In poem after poem, in *Moments of Vision* (1917) in particular, Hardy traces his life’s course and examines its meanings, as in “‘Why did I sketch?’” (not included in this selection), with its return to a ‘thoughtless day’ over forty years earlier:

Why did I sketch an upland green.  
And put the figure in  
Of one on the spot with me? –  
For now that one has ceased to be seen  
The picture waxes akin  
To a wordless irony.

Hardy’s ironies are, despite the latter phrase, deeply implicated in his words, or the words of others – even if words unspoken, since words (like pictures) attempt to ‘hold’ experience in place. In a late poem he wishes to have ‘in a word, no cross to bear’ (157), as if suggesting a release from that crucifixion implicit in ‘Near Lanivet, 1872’ (82).

Hardy’s self-defining typology and its use to describe his life’s patterns finds a particularly compelling focus in a passage from 1 Kings 19, which describes the prophet Elijah taking refuge in the wilderness near Mount Horeb. The text had deep personal associations: he annotated it frequently in his Bible, and attended church regularly on the 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity (‘Still Small Voice Sunday’, as he called it) to hear it read as the lesson for that day. It describes how Elijah spent 30 days in the wilderness (a foreshadowing of Christ’s time there):

And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake:

And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice ... [which] said, What does thou here, Elijah? (1 Kings 19: 11-13)

Hardy seems to have associated this passage with the aftermath of passion (perhaps specifically with a love-affair of the 1860s). The ‘still small’ voice which comes after the ‘earthquake and fire’ speaks for the self in a hostile world – like the voice in the fire in ‘Survivor’ (130), which weaves the story of his life through a series of

biblical texts. The text quoted above is taken up in 'Quid Hic Agis?' ('What does thou here?'), Hardy's central typological meditation (85). The 'passage from Kings / Harvest-time brings' is heard in church on three occasions across the years. At first the speaker barely notices it, as Elfride listened distractedly to Knight reading the same passage in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*:

I did not apprehend  
As I sat to the end  
And watched for her smile  
Across the sunned aisle,  
That this tale of a seer  
Which came once a year  
Might, when sands were heaping,  
Be like a sweat creeping,  
Or in any degree  
Bear on her and on me!

On the second occasion, the narrator reads the lesson himself, but again does not see 'What drought might be / With her, with me'. It is only much later when his beloved is dead and war has come that he registers the fact that the lesson is the truth of his own life, and like Elijah feels 'the shake / Of wind and earthquake, / And consuming fire'.

Built into that structure is a time-equation, a sense that only in re-reading are true meanings released – just as Hardy, in the 'Poems of 1912-13', returns to the text of his courtship novel *A Pair of Blue Eyes* in order to measure his loss. It is this which helps answer those critics who see only sameness in Hardy's poetry – a repetition of fixed themes and topics. That repetition is certainly there; but crucially, it is repetition -within -a-series, or repetition-with-a-difference – a difference whose meaning is always measured in the poems. Just as Hardy sees the regressing 'file' of his progenitors in 'The Pedigree' (91), his poems form sequences which are time-bound, each text mapping onto the next (as 1 Kings 19 maps onto his life) in ever-tangling relationships. One cannot move backward through a series; the origins – or 'fuglemen', as he calls them in 'The Pedigree' – are lost in time. In an analogous way, a reader moves through Hardy's poetic corpus with a deepening sense of prediction, loss, and tragic coherence which is intimately related to a sense of existence in time.

### Sequences and patterns

To say that there is a strong sense of chronology in Hardy's tracing of his life's pattern is not to deny the consistency that has led many critics to suggest that Hardy 'lacks development'. Early reviewers of his poetry noticed the recurrence of those topics which help characterize his 'idiosyncratic mode of regard' – Vita Sackville-West greeted *Winter Words* with the comment that 'carpenters are still making coffins; bastards are still born and furtively disposed of; lovers still fail to coincide; the old romance is still evoked and regretted' (*The Nation and Athenaeum*, 13 October 1928). It is possible to characterize his work in terms of recurrent patterns of imagery: the web, the gothic tracery, images relating to drawing, the use of music, the moon, and so on. Similarly his poems can be described in terms of common plots and structures: the plot of 'crossed fidelities' (as R. P. Blackmur called it) which is the subject of so many ballads, or the seasonal lament in which the passing seasons

organize the poem, or the journey-poem, or the reverie. Hardy's characteristic topics can often be traced across sequences which span his entire career.

Some of these sequences are formal in origin: the beginning and end-pieces in the later volumes are connected, for example – not least because after the farewell at the end of each volume, possibly to be his last, Hardy had to 'stage' his reappearance in the next. Mary Jacobus writes of the end-pieces: 'These funereal anticipations share a common structure – a self-duplication or doubling that involves an encounter, or, more usually, a dialogue, between Hardy and his ghostly other' (1982: 259). A number of the late opening groups involve a poem on the poet's 'rebirth' followed by a poem in which he is presented as a detached eye watching a bird-scene which signals a seasonal renewal. In his final opening poem, 'The New Dawn's Business' (154), he places himself in his typical posthumous position, writing of Death 'when men willing are found here / He takes those loth instead'.

As well as beginning and end-pieces, Hardy's ordering of his volumes includes sequences on related subjects, in some of which the poems are placed together – the series of bird-poems culminating in 'The Darkling Thrush' (21) in *Poems of the Past and the Present*; in *Moments of Vision* the three consecutive poems on his Sturminster Newton 'idyll' (see 97), and the three great time-and-journey poems 'The Five Students', 'The Wind's Prophecy', and 'During Wind and Rain' (100-2); the series of six winter-poems beginning with 'Snow in the Suburbs' (140) in *Human Shows*. There are other thematic sequences which are dispersed across his whole career – including poems on trees and leaves, end-of-year meditations, graveyard poems, architectural poems, as well as more general categories which have been isolated for study, such as war-poems and poems on biblical topics or religion.

Hardy's bird-poems provide a good example of such a sequence. As well as providing variations on a topos which runs through the whole of English literature (as exemplified in Peggy Kaufman's *Penguin Book of Bird Poetry*), they involve a profound meditation on the nature of poetry as 'song'. Song is a powerful folk-medium passed on from generation to generation ('The Selfsame Song' (117)); but also carries a negative potential, deceiving as the sound of the mocking-bird is, and like all art engaging the feelings which it seeks to express (as numerous poems on caged birds suggest). As a natural or 'wild' utterance – the 'ecstatic outpourings' of 'The Darkling Thrush' (21) – it implies unself-conscious or unburdened feelings; yet the status of that phrase as an echo of Keats's nightingale tells us that birdsong also represents loss, an echo of some original utterance forever passed away. This meditation spans Hardy's career as a poet, from 'Postponement', the sixth poem of *Wessex Poems*, and 'Shelley's Skylark', the invocation of a tradition near the beginning of *Poems of the Past and the Present*, through to 'The Bird-Catcher's Boy' (151) in *Human Shows*, and "'We are getting to the end'" (177), his penultimate poem.

In particular, bird-poems are closely related to the seasonal cycle in Hardy, the cycle of mourning, in which the same sacramental time (the 'Kalendar') is recovered, remembered, redescribed; the same questions asked (in what could be called repetition). Thus, in a series of linked seasonal poems, Hardy begins by echoing Keats in the 'Ode to a Nightingale', who writes of 'the selfsame song that found a path / Though the sad heart of Ruth'. At the beginning of the series in 'A Backward Spring' (103), with the faintest of echoes, Hardy simply describes spring budding on 'the selfsame bough', the bud wondering whether to bloom and remembering winter. In 'The Selfsame Song' (117) the echo is made explicit: this may be the same song,

- But it's not the selfsame bird –  
 No: perished to dust is he. . . .  
 As also are those who heard  
     That song with me.

Keats too is dead, who listens 'darkling' and writes of 'the self-same song', remembering in turn the Wordsworth who had written of the Cuckoo, 'the same whom in my schoolboy days / I listened to'. Hardy, at the end of the Romantic tradition, uses it to measure his own loss and the passing of time within a cycle which cruelly revives memories. At times he may be serene about what he calls 'such enactments' ('A Bird-Scene at a Rural Dwelling' (132)), but the perpetuation of song always involves a recognition of the passing of time, as in 'Proud Songsters' (155), where he remembers that just as the bird of the earlier poem is 'perished to dust', the 'brand-new birds' a year ago were 'only particles of grain, / And earth, and air, and rain'. If monuments represent poetry in its commemorative aspect, 'fixing' intention in a rigid frame, then bird-song represents poetry as a figure of voice, of the utterance in its moment. In 'To the Cuckoo' Wordsworth exclaims 'shall I call thee Bird / Or but a wandering Voice?', and the same status is accorded to Hardy's birds, their song rising up unannounced to remind, console, echo, or mourn.

Hardy was quite conscious of the associations of his echoes. He wrote, for example, a series of poems on falling leaves and mutability. The reference to 'sick leaves' in the first chorus of 'During Wind and Rain' (102) reflects Hardy's own note in his edition of Milton (in the DCM): beside the description of Satan's legions as 'Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks / In Vallombrosa' (I, 302-3), Hardy refers us to the Virgilian source in Aeneas's journey to the underworld: 'cf. Virg. Aen, VI, 309 – Multa in Sylvis autumni etc.'; in Dryden's translation the ghosts 'Thick as the leaves in autumn strew the woods: / ... so thick, the shivering army stands'. In his use of such echoes – to a range of writers from Virgil and Shakespeare to Tennyson and Elizabeth Barrett Browning – Hardy registers what Harold Bloom would call his own sense of 'belatedness', of writing within a poetic sequence, in the shadow of other texts which can uncannily seem to anticipate his own.

### God and history

Hardy's relation to Christianity and its texts is a particularly intense one, typical of those late Victorians for whom the 'death of God' left a palpable absence – a God-shaped hole – which could not simply be a matter of indifference. Poems like 'The Respectable Burgher on the Higher Criticism' (22), 'God's Funeral', and the late 'Drinking Song' (171) chronicle the depredations of rationalist criticism and Darwinian science on accepted belief, and reprise Hardy's own loss of faith around 1865 (on Hardy's religious background, see Timothy Hands's *Thomas Hardy: Distracted Preacher?* (1989)). Yet Hardy was, he always insisted, 'Churchy' – he attended services all his life, retained a 'strong interest in church music, read the Bible regularly, and used religious ideas widely in his novels. In his poetry, poems on religious themes range from tales taken from the Bible and apocrypha to direct speculations about (or even interrogations of) God. As late as the 'Apology' to

*Late Lyrics and Earlier* (1922) he expressed hopes for a reformed and rational Christianity.

It was the period in which he was writing his epic *The Dynasts*, and searching for a sense of causation behind human events, that Hardy was particularly concerned with the question of an alternative to the 'tribal god, man-shaped, fiery-faced and tyrannous' of orthodox religion (LY 176). Hardy's relation to History is a large subject (see Wright 1967; Miller 1990: 107-34). But clearly, it is bound up with the question of necessity and free-will discussed above, and his reading in the philosophy of history (Mill, Leslie Stephen, Comte, Darwin) reflects his search for an ordering principle. He used a variety of names for the abstracted and usually unconscious principle which he sometimes posited as lying behind creation, including the 'Immanent Will', the 'Willer', the 'All-One', the 'Spinner of the Years', the 'Mover', etc. (see poems 8, 11, 45). His notebooks include many passages struggling for a definition of this Agnostic godhead, including the following summary of c. 1887 from Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious*:

*The principle of the Uncons' . . . wh. has formed the core of all great philosophies, the Substance of Spinoza, the Absolute Ego of Fichte, Schelling's Absolute Subject-Object, the Absolute Idea of Plato & Hegel, Schopenhauer's Will, &c.* (Bjork entry 1444: cf. entries 1869, 2253)

In *The Dynasts* Hardy postulates an Unconscious Will of the Universe which 'is growing aware of Itself' LY 125), connecting this to a theory of 'a limited God of goodness' (LY73), who is in the main only dimly aware of creation. Hardy explores such ideas in poems like 'Nature's Questioning' (8), and uses the figure of the Willer or Mover in poems like 'The Convergence of the Twain' and "'And There Was a Great Calm'" (116) to explain why the universe is governed by an iron Necessity.

But the First World War was a blow to the limited optimism attached to the God of gradual coming-to-consciousness or evolutionary meliorism. Hardy must have been reminded of the irony of postulating a cosmic observer who was all too like himself: watching, but only aware of the meaning of things when it was too late. After 1915, he was more defensive: writing in 1920 'I have called this Power all sorts of names – never supposing they would be taken for more than fancies' (LY 217). His use of a multiplicity of names for 'God' is thus ultimately a way of re-emphasizing the heuristic, speculative nature of all such naming, and the irresolvable unknowability of what lies beyond appearances. Indeed, Hardy's attitude is ultimately closer to that pole which Comte (whom he studied in detail in the 1880s) calls the 'Fetishistic', as opposed to the 'Theistic' (see Bjork entry 754n). The 'Theist' postulates an abstract force behind events; the 'Fetishist' sees nature and events as alive with individual meanings, not governed by a Will but by their inbuilt impulsions. In poems like 'The Convergence of the Twain' (45) the debate between these two explanations can be seen working itself out.

Hardy was also careful to register the way in which historical meanings and theories were dependent on human attempts to impose patterns on the flux of events. He often depicted his poems as a flight from the 'sociological' paradigm of the novel – effectively a flight from immediacy into the space of 'lyric' utterance, or into memory; perhaps even, as Margaret Mahar argues, a flight from the 'closed' structures of the novels to the 'open' structures of poetry. Yet his poems do often intersect with their times, and attempt to subsume them within a larger vision of

history, just as *The Dynasts* incorporates the Napoleonic Wars. His topical poems, for example, mark particular historical moments as important – the *Titanic* disaster, the Armistice, and so on. The play of what Hardy calls the ‘topical’ (or immediate) and the ‘accidental’ (or patterned) can be seen in his comments on “‘According to the Mighty Working’” (114), a poem written in 1917, but published in 1919 in response to John Middleton Murray’s request for something appropriate to the moment for publication in the *Athenaeum*. In a letter to Arthur McDowall he wrote:

It must have been more of an accident than design I imagine that the lines suited the present date, for I told the editor I had nothing ‘topical’. That is always the difficulty when one is asked for verses for a periodical: it is easy enough to send *something* that one has lying about, possibly on the moon, stars, trees, grass, or shadowy kine; but the reader of the paper says on seeing it – ‘Why, what I want is the author’s last word upon the world’s events; not this stuff.’ (CL, V, 306-7).

What the poet has at hand is poems on nature (moon, stars, trees, grass). Yet even a poem which uses these universals, or draws its terms from the Bible, as “‘According to the Mighty Working’” does, can come to seem like a comment on events when it enters the public domain. For all his comments to McDowall, the poem *was* topical, as Hardy later suggested in the *Life*, since in being written for the end of the Great War and suggesting that ‘Peace’ was an illusion it anticipated the beginnings of other troubles, and in particular the Zionist agitation over the Palestinian protectorate of the post-war period:

In February he signed a declaration of sympathy with the Jews in support of a movement for the ‘reconstitution of Palestine as a National Home for the Jewish People’, and during the spring he received letters from Quiller-Couch, Crichton-Browne, and other friends on near and dear relatives they had lost in the war; about the same time there appeared a relevant poem by Hardy in the *Athenaeum* which was much liked, entitled in words from the Burial Service, ‘According to the Mighty Working’. (LY 190)

In another poem in this period, ‘Jezreel’, Hardy is even more explicit in his commentary on the Palestinian question, mapping Allenby’s 1918 attack on the town onto that described in 2 Kings 9.

What is offered here is (once again) a kind of typology, but Hardy acknowledges that the context of the poem’s entry into the world itself creates meaning; the supposedly ‘timeless’ world of the Book interacts with historical time. Such moments occur throughout his verse, from his description of the *Titanic* disaster to his late poem ‘The Aged Newspaper Soliloquizes’ (172), in which he imagines himself as a public chronicle. The magnificent ‘In Time of “The Breaking of Nations”’ (109) is typical: it contrasts a seemingly timeless ‘story’ of love with the contingency of ‘annals’, but does so within an evolving historical vision which encompasses specific events – reawakening a memory of Waterloo in order to suggest a connection between the Napoleonic Wars, the Franco-Prussian War, and the context of the Great War. In such poems, the parallel between the Immanent Will and the brain of the poet comes alive, as consciousness interacts with the march of events to enable a sense that a pattern has emerged, and Hardy becomes a visionary historian.

## Hardy and the dead

The dead comprise Hardy's single most important topic, particularly if we include related topics like poems set in graveyards (69 in all, according to Elizabeth Hickson), and poems about memories of the dead which are not explicitly elegiac. He wrote elegies for family, for friends, for Queen Victoria, for the dead of two wars, for the *Titanic*, for pets, but above all for his wife Emma, whose death in 1912 inspired his elegiac sequence the 'Poems of 1912-13' and many later poems. As J. Hillis Miller has remarked, 'his writing ... is a resurrection and safeguarding of the dead', a sustained encounter not only with the past, but with what it is like to be someone who remembers, who carries the burden of the dead (Miller 1970: 29).

Hardy recognized his own tendency to melancholy – as he remarked of his work after Emma's death, he 'was "in flower" in these days, and, like Gray's, his flower was sad-coloured' (LY 156). This is not to say, as is sometimes too simply suggested, that he could love best those (women) who were dead. Rather we see in Hardy an extraordinarily strong attachment to the dead and to the past, and an eroticized relation to the dead subjects of his own romance which sees him returning to them again and again. Sigmund Freud, in his essay on 'Mourning and Melancholia', argues that the melancholic is the extremist of mourning who refuses to surrender those portions of the dead which are taken up into the psyche, producing a kind of narcissism. Hardy's melancholy is less narcissism (though it is self-absorbed enough) than a mixture of two contradictory impulses. On the one hand, there is a sense of the emotional energy bound up with the dead, producing the problematic co-incidence of *eros* and *thanatos* (or 'distance and desire', as J. Hillis Miller puts it). On the other hand, there is a sense of moral responsibility brought about by the fact that the self carries traces of the dead within it, like fossils in the geological record. 'In a Former Resort after Many Years' (133) provides a picture of the 'man of memories':

Do they know me, whose former mind  
Was like an open plain where no foot falls,  
But now is as a gallery, portrait-lined,  
And scored with necrologic scrawls,  
Where feeble voices rise, once full-defined,  
From underground in curious calls?

The voices here are 'curious' perhaps in a sense close to the root meaning of the Latin *curare*: Hardy must 'care' for the dead, who are helpless. Their presence is scored inside his mind (a 'necrology' is a list of the dead), like the transcriptions of sound on a gramophone record.

But this poem also raises the question of what such writing is, or does. What is the relationship between the 'official' portrait and the wall-writing (graffiti)? Do the dead write Hardy – as 'Family Portraits' (175) implies – or does he write them? Who is in control? Certainly they are so much a part of himself that to destroy any remnant of them is painful. In 'The Photograph' (94) he burns a relic, probably of his cousin Tryphena Sparks, with whom he may have been in love at one point, and is distressed at the return of repressed feelings:

the deed that had nigh drawn tears  
Was done in a casual clearance of life's arrears;  
But I felt as if I had put her to death that night! ...

A number of Hardy's poems are not so much elegies as meditations on the process of elegy itself, and the mind of the memorialist, as titles like 'Memory and I', "'Ah, are you digging on my grave?'"', 'The Obliterate "Tomb" (72), 'The Marble Tablet', and 'The Monument-Maker' (135) suggest.

The internalization of the dead explains some of the dynamics of Hardy's late verse – the libidinous pleasure attached to the memory of dead women, for example, and what Philip Larkin calls 'an undercurrent of sensual cruelty in his writing' (1966: 177). This is reflected in his undeniable fondness for stories of executions of women, visible in poems like 'The Mock Wife' (144) and 'On the Portrait of a Woman about to be Hanged' (which Robert Gittings links to memories of a hanging in 1856). There is an erotic sense of free-play in some of Hardy's late poems on the dead, as well as a relish at his own survival – in 'Days to Recollect' (147) he seems to tease Emma for her unconsciousness: 'Say you remember/That sad November!' Because Hardy is the guardian of the dead, he can use them as he wishes (within limits which are sketched below): in 'The Chosen' the narrator combines all the dead women he knew in one, while in 'Louie', on his childhood sweetheart Louisa Harding, he declares 'I am forgetting Louie the buoyant; / Why not raise her phantom, too?' There is an almost fetishistic manipulation of their identities on the part of the male poet whose lyric subjectivity the dead have entered, which reflects the often scopic treatment of the heroines of his novels, particularly Tess – though it could be argued that in poems like "'Tess's Lament' (27), 'We Field-women' (167), and some of the elegies for Emma he moves towards the imagining of a feminine subjectivity which is less clearly present in the novels, while in other poems including 'One We Knew' (39) he acknowledges his debts to his mother and grandmothers for the folk-memory which informs his poetry. (On gender in the novels, see Boumelha 1982, Wright 1989, Higonnet 1993). Hardy's shifting and frequently contradictory complex of responses, whether custodial or manipulative, reflective or passionate, and the play of interactions with the dead, is evoked most powerfully in the central sequence of elegies which he wrote for his wife.

### **The 'Poems of 1912-13'**

The 'Poems of 1912-13', included in their entirety in this selection, is a sequence of 21 poems written in the period after the death of Emma Hardy in November 1912. Emma's death was a shock to her husband, partly because of the diaries which he discovered in her room, detailing her resentments and bitterness at his behaviour; but more fundamentally because her death re-awakened him to the intense feelings he had experienced early in their courtship and marriage, a time already lost in the years of estrangement. The tragedy of her death became a double tragedy, involving not only loss but a mutual betrayal for which the poet could only blame himself. In March 1913 he travelled to Cornwall, revisiting the scenes of his courtship, and re-reading, it seems, his own courtship novel *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. The sequence he wrote was thus a retracing of lost ground, in both the temporal and topographical sense.

As Peter Sacks has shown, elegies and elegiac sequences have a trajectory which matches what Freud calls 'the work of mourning', beginning with a denial of and reaction against the shock, a repetition of it which aims at mastering the loss,



detachment, and an eventual assertion of continuity as death is subsumed within a natural cycle, while the dead person is taken up into memory. (Other elements are also involved, including a measure of aggression against the dead.) Hardy's sequence is unusual in generic terms, not least because it is one of the few major sets of elegies for a wife, taking as its initial model Coventry Patmore's *The Unknown Eros* (1877). Nevertheless, many of the elements which Sacks identifies are present, as his own analysis shows – a constant return to the scene of death in the opening poems, a resort to images of pastoral continuity, and an eventual distancing of the poet from his losses, partly achieved through the creation of a satisfactory image of the dead, a symbolic replacement.

What is different in Hardy's sequence is the poet's sense of the over-plotted nature of the story he tells – something which begins for the reader with the epigraph, pulling us back to Virgil's tales of betrayal and death. Sacks is useful again here, writing about the way elegy deals with the interruption to 'natural' life which death brings, through a displacement which abstracts and 'blames' Time for the poet's predicament:

In the elegy, the poet's preceding relationship with the deceased (often associated with the mother, or Nature, or a naively regarded Muse) is conventionally disrupted and forced into a triadic structure including the third term, death (frequently associated with the father, or Time of the more harshly perceived necessity of linguistic mediation itself). The dead, like the forbidden object of a primary desire, must be separated from the poet, partly by a veil of words. (Sacks 1985: 8-9)

Within this scheme (which simplifies in the interests of clarity) the problem for Hardy was that he stood dangerously close to the processes involved. Had he not already plotted the story of his love and its lost opportunities in the tragic ending of *A Pair of Blue Eyes*? Had he not already replaced the real Emma with an ideal image of herself, held in memory (while he sought the company of Florence Henniker and others)? Hardy's word for this replacement of the beloved with an image is 'sublimation' – a term which suggests alchemy and a transmutation into something more ethereal, ghostly. He uses it in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, ch. 20, where he comments 'Not till they parted, and she had become sublimated in his memory, could he be seen to have even attentively regarded her' (p. 200); and again in *The Hand of Ethelberta*, ch. 40:

What he [Christopher] had learnt was that a woman who has once made : c permanent impression on a man cannot altogether deny him her image *by* denying him her company, and that by sedulously cultivating the acquaintance of this Creature of Contemplation she becomes to him almost a living soul. Hence a sublimated Ethelberta accompanied him everywhere. . . .

Implicit here is the idea that the kind of internalized image produced by 'sublimation' depends on removal, absence – as if Hardy had, by making Emma into the heroine of *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, anticipated (and in part formed) the shape of his tragedy. Hardy's elegies thus position the poet closer to the figure of Death or Necessity than most elegies; they are guilt-ridden, refuse consolation, and their author sees himself as 'a dead man held on end', victim of a plot which he cannot unwrite because it is his own. It is also, as Elizabeth Bronfen argues, a plot inscribed more generally within a culture which forms its ideas of masculine creativity on the

symbolic (and therefore negated, dead) bodies of idealized women; a fact constantly registered in Hardy's novels (Bronfen 1993).

Throughout the 'Poems of 1912-13' there is a complex interplay of two sets of topics: those relating to voice, and those relating to vision and writing. In the first poem, he chastises her for not speaking before she dies: 'Never to bid good-bye / Or lip me the softest call' (51). In the second, he says that he failed to 'read the writing upon your face' (52). The same alternation between a desired but absent voice and a need to 'trace' or read the presence of Emma's ghost in the landscape governs much of the sequence, and typically Hardy does not discover the presence signalled by 'voice', but rather, at best, a vision of his dead wife as she once was which he can sustain only momentarily. An alteration in the opening line of 'After a Journey' (63) is symptomatic: 'Hereto I come to interview a ghost' became 'Hereto I come to view a voiceless ghost', removing the possibility of speech.

Of course, Emma *does* speak in the sequence; Hardy brings her to life and speaks in her voice in 'The Haunter' (58) and 'Ilis Visitor' (60). But these poems are curiously ex-centric in relation to the sequence as a whole: they occur in the first half, set in Dorset, and the ghost which is imagined is a recent one, fussing about domestic changes. Emma's imagined ghost does not address Hardy, her soliloquy is directed at the *reader*. Moreover, these two poems in Emma's voice bracket 'The Voice' (59), which seems in its allusions, style, and content to problematize the idea that Hardy hears the voice of 'the woman' at all: 'Can it be you that I hear?' Voice fades into the poem's whispering wind-effects, 'listlessness ... wistlessness', and the breakdown of metre which signals the quester's uncertainty. A question which the sequence raises is thus: what is the status of our imagining of the dead (the trope known as 'prosopopoeia')? Much of the debate on the 'Poems of 1912-13' has centred on this question, on the metaphysical status of Hardy's re-imagining of Emma.

The core of the sequence is the series of poems in which Hardy moves away from Dorset to Cornwall, returning to the scenes of his courtship. 'After a Journey' (63), 'Beeny Cliff' 65), and 'At Castle Boterel' (66) all deal with the immanence of memory, and the production of an image of Emma very different from the worried ghost in the first half of the sequence; an image drawn from the romance-world of courtship. Sacks sees this as part of the 'work of mourning', with the dispossessed poet achieving recovery through his assertion of Emma's continued presence in memory and in the poet's representations (though as we have seen, in some ways her existence as an ideal representation is precisely the *problem* for Hardy). Donald Davie, in his provocative analysis of the sequence, is much more absolute about that recovery: he sees Hardy as achieving an affirmation in which 'love triumphs over time', asserting Emma's absolute presence in the landscape of memory (1972: 149). That, for Davie, is the most important truth about the sequence: Hardy's realization that in the 'purple light' of romance, what 'At Castle Boterel' calls 'a time of such quality' has a permanent existence. Indeed, he sees Hardy as betraying that insight in transferring three poems from earlier in the volume to the end of the sequence in the *Collected Poems* of 1919: he argues that 'by adding on "The Spell of the Rose" and "St Launce's Revisited" and "Where the Picnic Was", [Hardy] psychologises his own metaphysical insights', returning to his normal scepticism in poems which cruelly assert that Emma has 'vanished / Under earth'.

Davie's is perhaps too Platonic a view of Hardy's moments of vision, which are always tentative. Hardy's tracing of Emma is qualified by an awareness of the irrecoverability of the love which is lost, and of its double lostness: dead, and before that swallowed in the bitterness of time and alienation, so that Emma's death and the earlier death of love become equivalent. 'After a Journey', in many ways the central

poem of the sequence, states that unequivocally (again, notice the tension between voice – saying – and reading, tracking, or scanning):

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

'After a Journey' is a bitter poem, showing Hardy following a 'thin ghost' from the past rather than any fuller presence. Rather than what Davie calls an 'unprecedented serenity' at the end of the poem, there is a harsh rhyme ('lours/flowers') and a declaration which, it seems to me, can only be read ironically and hopelessly against the background of loss:

I am just the same as when  
 Our days were a joy, and our paths through flowers.

*I am the same, but you are not.* The 'Trust me ... though Life lours' introducing this declaration might imply a recognition that trust may be betrayed.

In the volumes which follow *Satires of Circumstance*, Hardy's mourning for Emma changes character, becoming more distant from its object. At times he is surprised by the resurgence of feeling, at other times he actively seeks to sustain it (as in 'The Shadow on the Stone' (106)). In later poems he often has to actively seek her, reading her papers ('Read by Moonlight') or reinscribing her presence in the landscape. Inevitably, the elegiac impulse fails at times, either becoming mechanical or not producing anything. In 'They Would Not Come' he records 'no vision' in Cornwall, and in 'Her Haunting Ground' (146) he asks:

Can it be so? It must be so,  
 That visions have not ceased to be  
 In this the chiefest sanctuary  
 Of her whose form we used to know.

Hardy's late poems on dead family and friends seem similarly uninvolved: either marking anniversaries or commenting impassively ("Nothing matters much" (149)), or turning a brief moral ('The Love-Letters' (158)). At other times, as I have already suggested, he adopts an almost playful air with the dead, as if having been taken up into memory outside the tragic pattern of his relationship with Emma they can become part of a happier internalized romance.

### **Restoration and the past**

If architecture provides a frame for Hardy's aesthetic theories, it also informs his thinking about his subject-matter, memory, and the dead. As an architectural assistant he was deeply involved in the Victorian debate about the preservation of Gothic churches – supervising the restoration of churches in the late 1860s and early 1870s, as well as a late effort at West Knighton church in the 1890s, and commenting publicly on the issue in his 1906 essay 'Memories of Church

Restoration'. What was at stake in this debate was the issue of the preservation of the original fabric of churches versus their restoration and structural improvement, often according to some abstract idea of the ideal Gothic style. The result could be barbarous, as Hardy admitted (and as the title of the modern guidebook *Churches the Victorians Forgot* testifies). Yet a real conflict was involved: on the one hand, a church could crumble into ruins if not restored; on the other hand, the past was bound up in the decaying fabric which brutal restoration could destroy for ever.

One answer, which Hardy addresses in his essay, is a fidelity to the original which reproduces its forms and shapes, what he called the 'aesthetic phantom without solidity' which is the Gothic design. Yet, as D. Drew Cox argues in his discussion of Hardy as architect, he cannot accept this position, recognizing that even in a sensitive restoration something is lost: the quirkiness of the artist, and above all the associations of the stones themselves:

I think the damage done to this sentiment of association by replacement, by the rupture of continuity, is mainly what makes the enormous loss this country has sustained from its seventy years of church restoration so tragic and deplorable. The protection of an ancient building against renewal in fresh materials is, in fact, even more of a social – I may say a humane – duty than an aesthetic one. It is the preservation of memories, fellowships, fraternities. Life, after all, is more than art. . . . (PW 215)

In his speech a few years later at the ceremony in which he was given the freedom of Dorchester, Hardy takes up the same subject, meditating on the contrast between the Dorchester of his boyhood and the present town – a technique which might be borrowed from A. N. Pugin's famous 'Contrasts' series of drawings (1840), which showed the city of 1440 and the same scene 400 years later, the church spires overlaid with warehouses and boiler chimneys (the superimposition of two scenes is a favourite device in Hardy's poetry). Here, it is the associations alone which the poet celebrates:

Our power to preserve is largely an illusion. Where is the Dorchester of my early recollection – I mean the human Dorchester – the kernel – of which the houses were but the shell? ... I see the streets and turnings not far different from those of my school-boy time; but the faces that used to be seen at the doors, the inhabitants, where are they? I turn up the Weymouth Road, cross the railway-bridge, enter an iron gate to 'a slope of green access', and there they are! There is the Dorchester that I knew best; there are the names on white stones one after the other, names that recall the voices, cheerful and sad, anxious and indifferent, that are missing from the dwellings and pavements. (LY 146)

A similar set of problems are involved in a poetry which, like Hardy's, attempts to preserve the past, to register its presence, and to superimpose past and present in order to measure the passing of time. Cox sees the architectural debate as fully resolved in Hardy's poetry: poetry is the place where Hardy could be 'both creator and preserver' (1972: 63). But the situation was not so simple. Constantly Hardy recognizes that individual lives carry their own radiation, like the stones of a church – something often designated by the word 'sheen' and its cognates: Emma in Cornwall 'shed her life's sheen here' in 'A Dream or No' (62); 'I see the hand of the generations / That owned each shiny familiar thing' in 'Old Furniture' (99); the 'sudden shine' which is Barnes's last signal ('The Last Signal' (95)), the 'luminous line' of the family in 'The Obliterate Tomb' (72). In forging his memories into prose and poetry Hardy was altering, replacing the lived experience with an 'aesthetic

phantom', and in so doing he was liable to compromise the fabric of the lives he remembers. This could involve deliberate distortion (as in the account of family history in his autobiography), but it could also simply include a recognition that the past is lost, and can only be reconstructed as a phantom of itself. The materials *Of* the poet are deeply imbued with the presence of death, with the voices which are in fact 'missing from the dwellings and pavements'. I lardy was in many cases 'The Single Witness' (to borrow the title of" a late poem about suppressing evidence) to what he had seen, and the rearrangement and concomitant destruction of materials was an integral part of his late career – in the disguised autobiography and the Max Gate bonfires into which he threw diaries and other papers.

Perhaps that is why in a number of poems the dead seem to speak back from within memory, criticizing the poet's portrait of them or somehow interfering with him. 'In Front of the Landscape' (43) presents the dead who are 'Rigid in hate, / Smitten by yearslong wryness born of misprison'; they must (in a loaded word) be 'translated' into the forms of art. In 'The Monument-Maker' (135) the title-figure and his work are mocked by the ghost of his dead lover. In 'The Obliterate Tomb' (72) the architectural paradigm is fully-developed: a 'man of memories' promises himself that he will restore a set of graves in order to make amends for an old family feud, but is disturbed by a mysterious stranger who claims to be a relative of the dead, and to have the right to restore their graves himself. Even when the stranger vanishes, the narrator cannot bring himself to fulfill his vow: he dies, and the tombstones are used to repave the churchyard path. Since we know that this poem partly reflects the fate of the graves of Emma's family, the Giffords, the plot is also Hardy's in his role as commemorator, exploring what it means to use the dead, and to be the repository of their histories. His elegiac art is guilt-ridden and self-divided, balancing the privacy of memory against the public forms which it takes; use against faithfulness. In 1920 he wrote to the Rev. G. H. Moule on the architectural issue, "'Reparation" is far better than "Restoration"' (CL VI, 3) – the ambiguous 'reparation' suggesting both repairs and repayment, penance and healing.

## Wessex

Hardy's larger dilemma as the mediator and purveyor of local memory under the guise of 'Wessex' is also a part of the problem of commemoration. 'Wessex' is one name for the locus of the intersection of past and present – a space which represented a realization of Hardy's memory, experiences, and sense of history – which is also, as 'Wessex Heights' (47) suggests, the space of Hardy's poetry. Wessex had of course been created and mapped by the novels, but it was the guides to the 'llardy country' produced in the period after 1900 which fully delineated its boundaries – with Hardy attempting to 'police' the process (see Millgate 1982: 421-3). In the 'General Preface' of 1911 he justified the use of Wessex as the 'stage' for his actions – that is, in terms of art rather than the social reality of a region. Indeed, as 'Wessex Heights' suggests, 'Wessex' would be the achievement of a writer supposedly liberated from the contingent nature of his background by his already long career as a novelist, a fully imagined area over which Hardy might brood as its presiding genius.

This idealization of Hardy's region has been attacked strongly. George Wotton argues that the Wessex of the *Life* (and implicitly the poems) is the space of

consciousness, while the Wessex of the novels is, more productively, the space of contested social values (Wotton 1985: 38-40). Peter Widdowson has criticized a tradition of criticism which sees Hardy's work as the essence of a nostalgic rural 'Englishness', abstracted from its historical context (Widdowson 1989). In fact Hardy's poems register a more complex reality; there is a resistance within his work to the idealization of Wessex. The 'General Preface' acknowledges the need for a fidelity to his region, and recognizes that there is a conflict between reality and the needs of the writer: 'I have instituted inquiries to correct tricks of memory, and striven against temptation to exaggerate, in order to preserve for my own satisfaction a fairly true record of a vanishing life'. Hardy was placed in a difficult position. As a member of a metropolitan elite, dining with cabinet ministers and nobility, he represented the values of disinterested 'intelligence', with all that implied in terms of assumptions about provincial and rural life. But as the memorialist of a region, born the son of a rural tradesman, he had allegiances to a fast-vanishing way of life, threatened by the very forces that issued from the urban world (mechanized agriculture, newspapers, increased material expectations). The tensions between these two viewpoints is often apparent in his novels. He has been accused of tailoring his descriptions of rural Dorset to the tastes of the educated Victorian reading public (Snell 1985); yet he was also concerned to represent the views of that other, unspoken rural constituency. In his essay 'The Dorsetshire Labourer' he laments the way in which the people whom he calls the 'workfolk' are being converted into paid labourers, moving about at random, with an accompanying loss of village traditions and continuity. Here and in poems like 'Drummer Hodge' (12) he attacks the rural stereotype of the 'yokel'. The aim of his memorialization of village life is thus partly to represent (even as it commodifies) those local values at the point of their vanishing – hence Hardy's recording of family traditions, folk-tales, popular songs and dances, and the vanishing vocabulary of the Wessex dialect; and his registering the impact of railways and other changes of rural life. The meticulous dating of traditions from the nineteenth century and earlier, the footnotes concerning forgotten usages and places, all attest to the tension between fidelity and the needs of an audience, and suggest Hardy's location in a history which he constantly registers.

The 'time' of Wessex is, it is often noticed, the time of one of Hardy's favourite modes, the ballad. As Thom Gunn points out, ballads seek a generality of feeling which resists precise periodization, and which link them to the oral tradition. They suggest the ever-present 'story' of romance, of the 'maid and her wight' in 'In Time of "The Breaking of Nations"' (109), in contrast to 'war's annals' which provide that poem's immediate context in 1916. For Gunn, the ballad's omission of details, its tendency to present isolated scenes, its iterative rhetoric, all link it to the past; ballads are 'the perfect repositories for his laments about passing time' (Gunn 1972: 35). Yet Hardy's ballads (or ballad-like poems) also register the specifics of time: 'The Convergence of the Twain' (45) attaches itself to an occasion; 'The Trampwoman's Tragedy' (31) is meticulous in its documenting of vanished inns; 'The Mock Wife' (144) indicates its source in a historical event; 'To an Unborn Pauper Child' (17) has in manuscript a note which suggests its origins in a sitting of the local courts. Even those poems which borrow the ballad's stripped-down interest in narrative repetition, like 'The Five Students' (100), in which characters drop out one by one, has a source in Hardy's own experience, and relates to much more precisely located poems: Hardy was always conscious of the way his poems embody a philosophy of history which balances past against present

## Hardy's style

Among the first things which readers of Hardy's poems noticed was their idiosyncrasy of style – a strangeness in terms of diction, syntax, and movement which caused his work to be compared to Browning's. One need go no further than the (much-revised) opening stanzas of the first poem of *Wessex Poems* to encounter it:

‘Cherish him can I while the true one forthcome –  
Come the rich fulfiller of my prevision;  
Life is roomy yet, and the odds unbounded.’  
So self-communed I.

Most readers have had the experience of picking their way back through a poem by Hardy in search of the grammatical thread. This strangeness, or ‘harshness’, as Isobel Grundy calls it (Grundy 1980), when combined with the highly wrought nature of the poems, their elaborate rhyme-schemes, sound patterning, and other symmetrical effects, is part of an unmistakable style, parodied by Beerbohm, Betjeman and others. Given that he was a highly conscious craftsman who remained committed to the problems of craft and pattern, we need to ask why Hardy's poems read the way they do. Why are they so strange?

## The Gothic art-principle

One answer is that they are strange in the way in which other Victorian poetry is: Browning, Clough, Christina Rossetti, Swinburne, and Dowson all write poems in which stylistic pressures suggest a rethinking of the genres that were inherited from the past, as well as implying a restless ‘modernism’ which reflects Victorian uncertainties about religion, history, gender and the self. But Hardy's own defense of his style rested on a more specific point: the relationship between his work and the Gothic revival movement in architecture, which he elaborates in his autobiography:

He knew that in architecture cunning irregularity is of enormous worth, and it is obvious that he carried on into his verse, perhaps in part 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, that of stress rather than syllable, poetic texture rather than poetic veneer; the latter kind of thing, under the name of ‘constructed ornament’, being what he, in common with every Gothic student, had been taught to avoid as the plague. (LY 78-9)

The principles contained here are drawn from A. N. Pugin's famous architectural polemic *Contrasts*, and from Ruskin's essay on ‘The Nature of Gothic’ in *The Stones of Venice* (1853), particularly Ruskin's description of Gothic ‘variety’ and restlessness in sections 26-40 of the essay. Indeed, many of Ruskin's six defining features of the Gothic (Savageness, Changefulness, Naturalism, Grotesque ness, Rigidity, Redundancy) might be applied to Hardy's poetry, to its combination of a rigidity of structure with subtle variations and ‘grotesque’ detail. To take just one of these characteristics which has seldom been remarked on, ‘Redundancy’ for Ruskin signified a richness which is, paradoxically, part of the ‘humility’ of the work, in contrast to the ‘haughty’ simplicity of the classical style. Hardy's approach is similar: his copiousness of output, his ability

to 'turn' a poem for any occasion, his desire to produce a multi-faceted oeuvre, all suggest parallels with the Gothic craftsman.

The Gothic aesthetic thus implies that the poet is a craftsman, exploiting materials with skill, economy, and an eclectic energy – as 1). Drew Cox points out, Hardy's word for this in both writing and architecture is 'technicist' (1972: 57-8). The Gothic, moreover, provides a vocabulary perfectly adjusted to Hardy's preoccupation with shapes and structures. Words like 'tracery', 'moulding', 'mark', 'measure', 'chiselled', 'upfingering' link perfectly with Hardy's concern with shapes which outline themselves in memory and in the landscape (many of these are 'out' compounds: outshape, outleant, outskeleton; see Elliott 1984: 198). Dennis Taylor interestingly extends the architectural comparison, relating the curves of Gothic tracery to the family trees of Darwin's evolutionary diagrams, so that the 'Gothic' becomes an aesthetic which expresses twisting and branching patterns of experience, carried across time (Taylor 1981: 39-81).

Not all critics have accepted this parallel. James Richardson is suspicious of the 'Gothic' aesthetic, which he sees as exhausted by the time Hardy used it (1977: 76-7), while Donald Davie sees in it a licence for the poetic equivalent of some of the monstrosities of Victorian gothic, 'decoration' on factories and so on. But we should at least register its importance for Hardy's self-understanding, and mark its call for an attention to the details of his poetry, and to its deliberate distortions. If Hardy's work is 'rough' and difficult, the passage above suggests that is a deliberate effect rather than ignorance of propriety. Just as he wrote in an early note that 'Art is a disproportioning – i.e. distorting, throwing out of proportion – of realities, to show more clearly the features that matter in those realities' (*EL* 299), Hardy's harshness aims at revealing the edges of experience, in all its freshness. In another passage in the *Life* he quotes Herrick's 'A sweet disorder in the dress' to justify irregularity before shifting to the metaphor of a coin: a smooth style is 'like a worn half-pence – all the fresh images wound off by rubbing, and no crispness or movement at all' (*EL* 138). Hardy's coinages are similarly rough, their new-minted state representing a determination to reappraise and revalue words and expressions. In 1926 Hardy was still defending his work in these terms, writing to an American professor 'you may discover as you get older that the harshness you say you note in some of his poems is deliberate, as a reaction from the smooth alterations of the Victorian poets' (*CL* VII, 18).

## Words

One aspect of Ruskin's definition of the Gothic which is reflected closely in Hardy's poetry is the restless eclecticism of his diction and syntax. The oddness of his word-choice and syntax and its violation of the rules of decorum were remarked upon by most of the early reviewers of his work. F.R. Leavis's comments are typical in their mixture of irritation and admiration:

If one says that he seems to have no sensitiveness for words, one recognizes at the same time that he has made a style out of stylelessness. There is something extremely personal about the gauche, unshrinking mismarriages – group-mismarriages – of his diction, in which, with naïf aplomb, he takes as they come the romantic-poetical, the prosaic banal, the stilted literary, the colloquial, the archaistic, the erudite, the technical, the dialect word, the brand-new Hardy coinage. (Leavis 1940: 88)



All these features are, indeed, present in Hardy's verse; but their cause is not insensitivity or ignorance. In part, they are justified by the 'Gothic art principle', with its emphasis on the grotesque juxtaposition. But they also reflect the word-choice of a poet whose origins are ex-centric in relation to the central position from which Eliot, Leavis, Brooks, and other critics of Hardy's diction speak: a poet largely self-educated, entering the world of letters obliquely by writing architectural essays, gradually gaining recognition as a regional writer, and only then becoming a major 'tragic' novelist. Hardy's word-choice preserves intact the fractures in his relation to his origins and his career: the dialect words coexist with obscure Latinate terms, just as the ballads coexist with the sapphics and fashionable rondeaux. The Dorset dialect, he insisted when writing of Barnes, is 'a tongue, and not a corruption'; yet he was also keen to stress Barnes's classicism (Barnes 1908: viii). What is absent – and this is despite Hardy's sensitivity about his origins, and his insistence that he had never actually *spoken* the dialect – is any central standard of decorum, of the 'right words in the right order' defined in terms of the poetic norms of an elite, educated oligarchy, rather than in terms of the poem's intention. Instead, there are competing voices and allegiances, like those registered in his novels.

In this sense, at least, Hardy is a modernist, breaking the standards of diction – not in the way in which Eliot includes dialect in *The Waste Land*, where 'aberrant' voices are still coordinated with respect to an ironic central consciousness, but by abandoning the standards of neutrality, and subordinating language to the aims of the poem. But Hardy's attitude to language must also be considered within the context of his historical awareness. If he regarded the whole range of English usage as available to him, it is in a Darwinian context within which all words struggle for survival, and within which linguistic 'fossils' preserve valuable facts about origins, processes, and types, and perhaps even, as Patricia Ingham says, suggest the way in which the human subject is trapped in time (Ingham 1980). The fading of Dorset usage under the pressures of education and standardization is described in the introduction to his selection from Barnes's poems: 'the process is always the same: the word is ridiculed by the newly taught; it gets into disgrace; it is found in holes and corners only; it dies; and, worst of all, it leaves no synonym' (Barnes 1908: iii). The legacy of Barnes's *Philological Grammar* was Hardy's own contribution to dialect dictionaries, and his sense of himself as the last continuator of the Dorset tradition, 'translating' it to the larger world.

Thus, rather than being insensitive to the historical associations of words as Leavis implies, Hardy was acutely aware of etymologies, and where he uses an archaic or ambiguous word or even a pun it is often to suggest that a buried meaning lies hidden in its history. When he says 'as whilom' in 'Old Furniture' (99), meaning 'as formerly', the archaism itself conveys the vanishing of things (as well as perhaps recalling Dryden's 'MacFlecknoe'). 'The Convergence of the Twain' (45) is in part an exploration of the hidden meanings of words: of 'smart', which is brisk and fashionable, but also signifies a hurt ('smart-money' is paid to seamen's widows); of things being 'co-incident', both accidental and parts of a hidden unity; of objects being 'bent', which can mean either 'directed by an external force' or 'determined, self-willed'. Such ambiguities are consciously placed – in this case to raise the question of whether the *Titanic* disaster was attributable to a malignant external fate or to a wilful human blindness.

Hardy's coinages and compound-words similarly involve ideas of competing and emergent meanings. The 'years-heired' face in 'Heredity' (81) suggests both time and succession, as does the 'siresown tree' of 'The Pedigree' (91). In 'Tess's Lament' (27)

the cry 'I'd have my life unbe' suggests both undoing life, ending it, and never having lived at all. 'Unvision', a negative compound in 'The Shadow on the Stone' (106), means not seeing the person there when one turns to look, but also 'unvisioning' in the sense of consciously ceasing to 'vision' something which one has been imagining into existence. The double negative in 'Nay, I'll not unvision' carries a tremendous freight of idealism, against an equal weight of doubt. Coinages (whether of actual words or usage) like 'deeplier' ('The Obliterate Tomb' (72)) and 'deedily' ('The New Dawn's Business' (154)) testify to Hardy's willingness to squeeze new meanings from both familiar and obsolete words. And as Richardson (1977: 97) remarks, he 'calls attention to language as a material on which shape is being imposed' in the process.

Hardy's use of syntactic oddity and periphrasis is also often, like Browning's, the product of a desire to register the nuances of situation. The central character of 'The Respectable Burgher' (22) has a stilted speech which reflects his prudishness (the numbingly repetitive rhyme-scheme reinforces that effect). The syntactic awkwardness of 'Neutral Tones' (3), ll. 7-8, which at first seems merely clumsy, suggests a debate on meaning and time. Moreover, Hardy's distinctive words – whether those he uses repeatedly or rare words – provide important clues to what Walter de la Mare called 'the bias of the recorder' in his work (see p. 244). One can characterize Hardy's poetry in terms of what Margaret Faurot calls a 'lexicon', a set of linked terms or groups of terms which are repeated constantly and which carry a particular conceptual freight (Faurot 1990). Such groupings in Hardy's work include those relating to writing and reading (trace, script, scan, mark, hieroglyphic), those relating to shapes (shape, form, frame, lineament), words suggesting a sense of belatedness and repetition (continue, continuator, abide, fade, masquings, repetitions; even the deleted rarity 'concatenations' in 'Family Portraits' (175)), words describing the 'pilgrimage' of existence (stalk, pace, perambulate, orbit, track, earth-track). Some of these words are Hardy's own, others carry a freight of poetic association – for example, 'blank', which echoes from Milton (the 'universal blank' of *Paradise Lost* III, 48) to "Tennyson ('on the bald street breaks the blank day', *In Memoriam* 7), and for Hardy usually signifies a state of negativity; an 'unvision' or a bereftness which reflects his sense of thin-skinned exposure to the world.

### Prosody

It may seem a large claim to argue that Hardy's poetry comes as the climax of the accentual-syllabic tradition in English poetry – that tradition which begins with the introduction of classical and renaissance models in the sixteenth century, and effectively ends with Ezra Pound's modernist declaration that 'To overthrow the pentameter . . . is the first heave'. But it is a view that was put by Pound himself, in *A Guide to Kulchur* (1938), and subsequent critics have (with varying degrees of approval) pointed out Hardy's ceaseless metrical experimentation, to the extent that his versification is more varied than that of any other English poet. Throughout his career he explored a wide variety of metres and stanza-forms, from the classical to the traditional, and varying from the relative simplicity of ballad stanza and common metre (the verse-form of many hymns) to the sonnet and complex forms like the villanelle and rondeau, as well as numerous irregular stanzas of several different line lengths.

These verse-forms were inspired by the study of a range of sources, in two different periods. In the 1860s he read widely in English poetry, copying passages

into a notebook labelled 'Studies, Specimens &c' from the Old Testament, Spenser, Shakespeare, Burns, Byron, Wordsworth, Shelley, Tennyson, Ingelow, Barnes, Mid Swinburne (Millgate 1982: 87-8). He studied Milton in detail, Lodge, Vaughan, Thomson, Gray, James Montgomery, and numerous others in Palgrave's anthology *The Golden Treasury* which his friend Horace Moule gave him in 1862. He was also exposed, from an early age, to Keble's *The Christian Year*, with its variety of verse-forms, and to a huge ballad tradition which ranges from orally transmitted local ballads to the Scottish balladeers (Burns, Mickle) and the Romantic ballads of Wordsworth, Coleridge and others (see Gunn 1972; Taylor 1986). In the late 1890s, when he returned to poetry after a quarter-century devoted mainly to writing novels, he again studied verse-forms, spending time at the British Museum reading Latin hymns, and producing a diagram illustrating the kinds of verse and the way in which 'Poetic Diction' is related to the 'Language of Common Speech' (LY 85-6). This interest in the theory of prosody is reflected in continued note-taking from articles on metre, on ballads, and on individual poets like Swinburne. He read classical poetry and attempted translations from Sophocles, Catullus, Sappho, Heine, and others. Throughout his life Hardy continued to experiment: with French forms in the 1890s, with a number of long and complex stanza patterns from about 1910. In late life he even responded to the 'free-verse' revolution, writing lines from the young T.S. Eliot into his notebooks, and justifying his own more traditional practice to correspondents.

As Dennis Taylor has pointed out in his recent book on *Hardy's Metres and Victorian Prosody* (1988), Hardy's experimentation with metre and stanza shape came as the climax of an increasingly refined and philosophically sophisticated Victorian debate on metrics. In particular, there was a new flexibility in the way in which the relationship between metre and the poetic line was understood. English prosody, the study of poetic metres, is derived from the study of the classical rules of metre, which were based in turn on the relatively orderly patternings of syllables in Greek and Latin poetry. But English verse, with its much less orderly rhythms, had never fitted well with classical prosody. In the work of Victorian theorists like Coventry Patmore and George Saintsbury there emerged for the first time an awareness of the dialectical interplay between the rhythms of speech and what Hardy (following Saintsbury and Robert Bridges) called the 'verse skeleton', the pattern of stressed syllables theoretically demanded by a particular metre. The result was that Hardy, as Taylor puts it, was 'perhaps the first major poet in the tradition of Sidney to know a theory of accentual-syllabic metre adequate to the richness of the verse' (1988: 59). Patmore and others enabled metre to be seen not as a 'grid' which the poem would fit, but as a more abstracted presence: a pattern which is recognized even where the poem deviates markedly from it. So long as we 'hear' the tune, it is present in the subtle interplay of speech patterns and the 'expected' stress patterns.

Indeed, Hardy's subtle employment of a variety of metrical and Sound effects is rooted in a close observation of speech rhythms and verbal resources, as well as an understanding of metrics. In his diary for July 1884 we find him visiting the court in Dorchester and noticing that 'Witnesses always begin their evidence in sentences containing ornamental words, evidently prepared beforehand, but when they get into the thick of it this breaks down to a struggling grammar and lamentably jumbled narrative' (EL 218). This is presented as an observation on rural ways, but a parallel effect is used in Hardy's own poetry – for example, when under the pressure of grief the careful triple rhythm of 'The Voice' (59) breaks down into the 'faltering' metre of the final stanza.

Hardy's technical proficiency has produced a tradition of hostile reaction. A number of critics have complained that Hardy's 'verse skeletons' are simply imposed arbitrarily on poems, like 'boxes' into which the meaning is dropped. James Southworth complained in 1947 that 'the greatest obstacle to the poet's successful communication ... lies in his frequent attempts at enclosing the thought in a predetermined pattern, ill-fitted for the purpose' (Southworth 1947: 166), and a number of subsequent critics have made similar claims (see Hynes 1961: 75; Hollander 1975: 137). Donald Davie, one of Hardy's best critics, presents a more sophisticated version of the argument when he argues that Hardy's metrical skill represents a poetic version of the Victorian preoccupation with technology, so that he becomes 'the laureate of engineering' (Davie 1973: 17), marring his work through an over-emphasis on symmetry and metrical variation. In 'The Convergence of the Twain' (45), for example, Davie suggests that 'the poem itself is an engine, a sleek and powerful machine; its rhythms slide home like pistons inside cylinders, ground exactly to fractions of a millimetre'.

Davie's comment on the latter poems suggests, however, that Hardy's metres *can* usually be related closely to his poems. The occasional rigidity of his forms is part of the story which his poems tell. Form is Fate in Hardy's work, the 'arbitrary' yet also 'necessary' accident of a rhyme or a stanza-form encapsulating a larger irony (see Mahar 1978). Even a colon or a dash can reproduce the accidents of existence, as in the 'elsewhere' of 'Beeny Cliff' 65):

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

The 'elsewhere' here is itself a signal of time's depredations, and the final line's modulation of a few basic sounds into an inevitable Conclusion is almost diagrammatic. The idea of 'verse skeletons' of ideal form has repercussions for the poet as 'memorialist', who shapes the material of the past. Often metres are 'ghostly' presences for Hardy: remembered tunes, ironic reminders of Fate's action, or a mark of human intentionality in general, so that when metre breaks down or shifts under the pressure of feeling, it signals the fragility of all human constructs. Moreover, the abstract and highly experimental nature of metrical form, the fact that metre is itself ghostly, means that it is difficult to separate a reading of the metres of many of Hardy's poems from an interpretation of the poem: we necessarily read one through the other, as the dialogue of expectation and (belated) recognition. Jean Brooks's comment is useful here: 'the reader's uncertainties on the placing of stress may be art rather than incompetence – a required contribution to the sense of the difficulties of emergent human consciousness struggling with the intractable denseness of matter' (1971: 46). Encountering Hardy's poems involves us in a struggle like that of his protagonists, fraught with conjecture and an often retroactive understanding that a pattern has emerged.

Consider 'Exeunt Omnes' (74), the penultimate poem of the main sequence of Satires of Circumstance (followed only by the 'Satires' which were originally earlier in the volume). Encountering the first line, the poem seems to be in a falling metre, initially three-beat. But the second line immediately makes that interpretation difficult: a rising (iambic) metre ends with a possible double-beat (easily realized in reading the poem), making the line seem four-beat rising with an implied off-beat:

And Í still léft where the fáir wás? ...

The third line begins with a Tennysonian cadence, and again seems iambic tetrameter, with a feminine ending:

Much háve I séen of néighbour loungers

By the end of the stanza, however, the poem seems to have reverted to a falling rhythm:

Máking a lústy shówing,  
Eách now pást all knówing.

The metrical possibilities here are expanded and reinterpreted by the second stanza, where the second line is anapestic, pushed in that direction by the interpolated (and grammatically unnecessary) ‘the’:

In the stráet and the líttered spaces.

This line makes us re-read the second line of the previous stanza, where the comparison between the feminine ending above (‘spáces’) and ‘fáir was’ tends to suggest that the latter is not in fact a double stress, but a feminine ending with the stress on ‘was’ demoted: ‘fáir was’ – a reading put into place when we encounter the return to ‘fair was’ in the second line of stanza three: now clearly a falling cadence, perhaps a falling-away.

The poem as a whole thus offers two possibilities: a falling metre which is reinforced by the feminine endings throughout, which in turn involve the suppression of the ‘was’ of line 2 of the first and last stanza – a suppression which suggests the vacating of the past. This is counterpointed by the flickering of the Tennysonian iambs, a rising metre which in its context (the ‘Much have I seen and known’ of ‘Ulysses’) signals hopeful aspiration. But the iambs are constantly diluted and distorted by the ‘wisening’ forces of the poem’s form, its tendency to ‘dribble’ into the falling metre which dominates each stanza’s opening and ending. The metrical uncertainties reflect the dialogue between the present location (‘As I wait alone’) and its sliding away into the past (wás/was’) as the fair collapses into the ‘spaces’ opened up by reverie. The rhymes reinforce the point: ‘going’ becomes ‘past knowing’, ‘hither’ becomes ‘thither’. The poet and his poem inhabit a space between the passing of things and his own extinction, and this is something which we can read into, as well as from, the poem’s metre.

Numerous other poems have such a metrical ‘plot’. ‘A Singer Asleep’ (48) experiments with various stanzas before resolving into Swinburne’s own ottava rima in the final stanza. Poems like ‘The Walk’ (53) are ‘shaped’ so as to suggest an excursion and a ‘return’; the stanza of ‘The Convergence of the Twain’ (45) even seems to imitate the shape of a ship. Dennis Taylor notices how a number of poems ‘enact the emergence of a more regular hymnal form out of a rougher ballad or original form’ while others do the opposite, disrupting a regular form and the comfortable pattern of expectation which it has generated (1988: 215). Such ‘plots’ also operate in detail: ‘Snow in the Suburbs’ (140) begins with a declarative and end-stopped falling rhythm which is ‘released’ into iambs (and enjambment) only when the action moves on after four lines. In ‘The Whitewashed Wall’ (128) the speed of the metre and internal rhyme of the first half of the last stanza mimics the ‘rush’ of the brush which covers the wall, like time itself, before the stanza breaks down into a turbulent irregular metre which reflects the ‘labouring’ sleep of the mother. Here, the

caesurae, enjambment, and repetitions of 'him' combine to suggest what is almost a 'draught' (draft) second set of line-endings, buried in the line as the picture of the woman's son is buried under the whitewash:

'Yes', he said: 'My brush goes on with a rush,  
 And the draught is buried under;  
 When you have to whiten old cots and brighten,  
 What else can you do, I wonder?'  
 But she knows he's there. And when she yeans  
 For him, deep in the labouring night,  
 She sees him as close at hand, and turns  
 To him under his sheet of white.

Such 'ghostly' effects suggest the way in which the forms of human experience shape our world, asserting their presence in a language which is both a 'snare' (the web of words) and a means of resistance.

### **Hardy and literary tradition**

I have already suggested the extent of Hardy's debt to other writers in terms of metrical variety and inherited images. Like all poets, he was involved in a dialogue with his predecessors – visible in some of the allusions documented in the annotations (the poem numbers given as illustration below are by no means definitive, and the allusions suggested are necessarily often tentative or just illustrative of a common topos). His closeness to Browning has often been noted – most thoroughly by James Richardson (1977) – in terms of interest in history, in the grotesque, in dramatic monologue, and in his writing of overtly philosophical poetry (to this I would add his borrowings from Browning's love-poetry: see for example poems 6, 40, 50, 80, 94, 112, 163). His relations with Tennyson have been less well documented, but there is in his elegiac poetry in particular a sustained debate with Tennyson (e.g. poems 5, 16, 21, 51, 63, 68, 106, 134, 174); while in poems like 'A Sign-Seeker' (5) Tennyson is blended with Shelley as a seeker after the secrets of the universe. Tennyson's melancholy meditations on time and fame also seem to have been important to Hardy (74, 75, 102, 153, 179). Beyond that, there are any number of influences in and allusions to classical, seventeenth-century, eighteenth-century and Romantic literature: Virgil (13, 65), Ilorace (59, 102), Dante, Shakespeare (extensive allusions to the plays), Jonson (17), Vaughan (82, 102, 146, 161), Milton (21, 87, 106), Dryden (99, 114, 165), Gray (57, 112), Goldsmith (128), Cowper (21), Byron (25), Wordsworth (21, 23, 54, 68, 112), Shelley (5, 16, 24, 71, 77, 91, 102, 151, 178), Keats (21, 117) – though Hardy was also capable of borrowing from Victorian poets and near-contemporaries like Elizabeth Barrett Browning (3, 102, 161), Keble, Arnold (45, 84, 133, 161), Swinburne (1, 3, 17, 48, 107), Fitzgerald (69), Meredith (41, 63), Patmore (particularly his elegies: see 51), Barnes (95, 97, 98, 159), even perhaps from Yeats (69) and Dickinson (121). His work is remarkably dense in its echoes and allusions – many of them in that nwide which Harold Bloom and John Hollander call 'transumptive', with Hardy seeming to echo with voices which he has made peculiarly his own. Who can read Shelley's 'Ode to Autumn' without remembering Hardy's chorus in 'During Wind and Rain' (102)?

In his own lifetime, Hardy saw a gradual acceptance from critics of his poetic achievements. While there continued to be a good deal of negative criticism of his grimness and awkwardness, a large number of writers acknowledged the power of his

verse, and its skill – recognized, often, that its apparent defects were part of its fascination. But Hardy never lacked followers. He received, in particular, praise from a number of fellow writers: Swinburne, Ezra Pound, T.E. Lawrence, Sigfried Sassoon, Walter de la Mare, Robert Graves, to be followed by accolades from later poets like D. H. Lawrence, Dylan Thomas, W. H. Auden. Many of them visited him and seemed to draw strength from his presence, perhaps because in old age he represented (as he recognized) a link with the past: ‘It bridges over the years to think that Gray might have seen Wordsworth in his cradle, and Wordsworth might have seen me in mine’ (*EL* 187).

For all the praise, in poems like ‘So Various’ (165), ‘A Poet’s Thought’ (162), and ‘Not Known’ Hardy meditates on his relationship with his readers, and suggests that the ‘real’ Hardy remains hidden – not least because of his own attempts at editing the image he bequeathed to posterity in the *Life*. The subsequent story of that bequest, from the battle over his body between Wessex and the Abbey, to Somerset Maugham’s satirical portrayal of Hardy and his wife in *Cakes and Ale*, to Robert Gittings’s aggressively iconoclastic biography in the 1970s, to the appearance of a ‘restored’ version of the *Life* in the 1980s, is a story replete with ironies worthy of the poet (see Millgate 1992). Of course, the legacy of all writers, their place in that fractured entity we call ‘literary tradition’, is always contested. Hardy’s afterlife as a poet is a reflection of twentieth-century literary history. Despite the fact that Pound claimed him briefly for Imagism, in the middle part of this century his work seemed closer to the Victorians than to the poetry of Modernism, and received relatively little attention from critics (with the exception of lukewarm praise from F. R. Leavis, John Crowe Ransome, and R. P. Blackmur). It was with the arrival of the ‘Movement’ in England in the 1950s that Hardy became a focus in the construction of a distinctly English tradition. Philip Larkin was the most influential of the poets who claimed Hardy as ancestor. For Larkin, Hardy is the poet of his maturity, the one towards whom he turned after abandoning his early enthusiasm for Yeats, a touchstone of candour and honesty. Other poets and critics connected to the Movement have developed the idea of a Hardyean tradition in English poetry, separate from the European and American modernist mainstream, and perhaps even from the dominant Victorian modes. David Wright argues that ‘the true and indigenous line of English poetry, through most of the nineteenth century, went underground’, and he suggests that before Hardy it surfaces mainly in the works of Clare, Barnes, and Tennyson (Wright 1972: 68).

Tom Paulin identifies a similar native and anti-Parnassian tradition in Hopkins and other poets whom he sees as rooted in the vernacular (Paulin 1987). ‘I’hom Gunn praises Hardy’s adherence to the ballad-tradition, ‘the chief native source of our literature’ (Gunn 1972). The most influential (and ambivalent) such argument has been that of Donald Davie in *Thomas Hardy and British Poetry* (1973). Davie places Hardy at the head of a line of English poets from Edward Thomas to Larkin and beyond, all of whom tend to emphasize honesty, diminished claims about the power of poetry, and a refusal of the grand gesture. Davie is both attracted to this honesty, and repelled by what he sees as its selling short of the Romantic and modernist tradition of the poet as the seer and reformer.

Such claims are ‘political’, in the sense that all battles over the ancestry which artists and thinkers claim are political. Depending on one’s perspective, it is possible to see Hardy, as Harold Bloom does, as a diminished late Romantic; or, like David Peck, to perceive a ‘modernity’ in ‘the studied asymmetry of phrase and metre, the sudden shifts in diction and tone, or the quietly lunar phrase’ (1972: 124). In the case of a poet whose work confronts the worlds of Darwin and Einstein, Tennyson and T. S. Eliot, both are possible, for Hardy is, surely, a genuinely transitional figure, a poet

who stands self-consciously between one world and another, declaring his allegiances to the past but fascinated by the speed of its replacement. Part of the power of his work, moreover, is an awareness of the painful historicity of the human subject which is one of the continuities between Victorian and Modern literature. On that, his poems speak for themselves.

### Selecting Hardy

The scope, size, and variety of Hardy's corpus means that selection is inevitably difficult, indeed in some ways impossible. As Terri Witek suggests, 'Hardy's most anthologized poems are often his least typical', since the 'typical' Hardy poem is often quirkier and less polished than anthology-pieces like 'The Oxen' (Witek 1990). For that reason, it is important to read a range of Hardy's verse, including what could be called 'bad' poems: those full of macabre humour or bitterness; those seemingly inappropriate in style like 'Last Words to a Dumb Friend' (124), which deploys an elegiac solemnity for a pet. All these must be placed alongside the seemingly central poems like the great wind-and-time series climaxing in 'During Wind and Rain' (102), or the visionary intensities of 'The Pedigree' (91), or the 'Poems of 1912-13'. Between F.R. Leavis's detection of genius in a very few poems and Philip Larkin's declaration that he would not lose one of them is the world of Hardy's everyday achievement: observation, memory, reflection, and the effort of creation.

Necessarily, any anthology from almost a thousand poems will differ from its predecessors. As Trevor Johnson suggests in his analysis of ten anthologies, there has been remarkably little unanimity among compilers of selections, outside a narrow core of regularly-anthologized pieces: there are only 37 poems which are included in more than half the anthologies (Johnson 1979). The choice here is biased towards the later poetry, and necessarily towards the shorter lyrics. It is designed to reflect the consensus on 'core' poems, including Hardy's own preferences. But it also aims to represent the different areas of his achievement: elegiac and narrative verse; ballads, classical experiments, dialogues, epitaphs, translations.

I have also attempted to retain some sense of the structure of Hardy's volumes, with their subtitled groupings. The poems are printed in the order in which they appear in the *Collected Poems* of 1928. Many selections rearrange Hardy's poems in thematic groups. That seems a mistake, partly because in some cases there are links between adjacent poems, but also because thematic groupings implicitly confirm the view that Hardy has 'no chronology', no development. The case is put by Samuel Hynes: Hardy 'did not develop through new styles as he grew older (as Yeats did) ... he simply learned to use better what he already had' (1961: 139). The reference to Yeats seems unfair (few other poets would stand the comparison), and while Hardy's poetics did not change radically, there are changes in his style, for example in his metrics and use of irregular stanzas. More importantly, time is crucial for Hardy, in terms of the patterns traced across a life.

### A note on the annotations

The annotations to the poems include headnotes giving details of composition, sources, and publication, where available, relevant biographical material, and in some cases references to critical commentary and related poems in Hardy's corpus (those in this selection are identified by poem number). General



annotations are introduced by a line number followed by full point, or a phrase and colon, thus:

15. *breath while*: short time (see Elliott 1984: 175).

Annotations cover points relating to individual lines, including glosses, allusions, interpretive comments, and interrelations with other poems. Textual annotations are introduced by a line number and half-bracket, followed by details of variants and relevant editions, thus:

24. *showance*] showings WE 1912, CP 1919.

Variants and (more sparingly) manuscript readings are given wherever they seem relevant: in general I have given fuller lists of variants for the lyric poems than the narrative poems, particularly where Hardy's revisions have a bearing on interpretation. Accidentals of punctuation, spelling, capitalization, etc., have largely been ignored.

Each poem has in addition a metrical note giving the stanza form and, in superscript, the number of beats in each line. This is followed by an indication of the rhythm using the following conventions: d = duple metre (two beats to the metrical foot), t = triple metre (three beats to the foot), r = rising metre, and f = falling metre. The convention aabb<sup>4</sup> tr thus indicates couplets in anapestic tetrameter, a6 b<sup>5</sup> a<sup>6</sup> b<sup>5</sup> df a rhymed quatrain in a combination of trochaic pentameter and hexameter, aa<sup>4</sup> dtr tetrameter couplets in a combination of iambic and anapestic metres. Capital letters refer to a repeated line or refrain. I have occasionally offered or reproduced other comments on form. Readers would be wise to remember that metres are always debatable, and that (as I occasionally suggest) various metrical possibilities are present in most poems.

### A note on the text

There are two main 'lines of descent' (as Samuel Hynes calls them) of Hardy's texts, which were not properly collated in his lifetime. One is based on revisions which he began to make in 1909, when a complete collection of his poetry was suggested by his publisher. That project was delayed by the war, and only completed by the appearance of the *Collected Poems* in 1919. More revisions were incorporated into successive editions of the *Collected Poems* from 1919 through to 1928. The other line of descent is based on a separate set of revisions which Hardy made in 1911 for the Wessex Edition of 1912, and continued to make in Wessex Edition texts, as well as in related editions like the Mellstock Edition of 1920 (see Hynes, CPW I, xi-xxiii; Schweik 1984). The first series of revisions began with the *Wessex Poems* and *Poems of the Past and the Present*, which were set in 1909 and then left, Hynes suggests, almost a decade. It is in the two early volumes that the differences between the two lines of transmission are most apparent, and where there is sometimes an uncertainty about the exact point at which revisions were made in the *Collected Poems* line. In the later volumes, the differences are smaller, partly because Hardy made sporadic attempts at collation, though in

general his texts remained in relative disarray, with separate corrections made in reprints of individual volumes as well as those in the collected editions.

Of the two modern editors of Hardy's poems, James Gibson used the *Collected Poems* of 1928 and 1930 as copy-text for his *Variorum Edition*; while Samuel Hynes, in preparing the three-volume *Complete Poetical Works*, used the first editions as copy-text, and then followed the more rigorous procedure of referring to the latest revision in either line of transmission. He also made use of corrections Hardy made to reprints of individual volumes, to master copies he kept of both editions (now in the Dorset County Museum), to his *Selected Poems* and its expanded version the *Chosen Poems*, and to the Mellstock Edition. Hynes procedures are in some cases speculative, however, since it is at times impossible to date revisions, or to tell whether a discrepancy between readings is a result of Hardy's second thoughts or his failure to collate revisions.

This selection takes the *Collected Poems* of 1930 as copy-text. It has been corrected to take account of major revisions in other editions which are of later provenance than those in the *Collected Poems* (including the revised prefaces of the *Wessex Edition*). Obvious errors in the text have been corrected, titles regularized, and stanzas in manuscript omitted from a number of poems are given in footnotes. The manuscript used as printer's copy is located in the headnotes to each volume; other manuscripts or corrections made in Hardy's copies of his works are occasionally referred to in notes (for a partial listing of such manuscripts, see Rosenbaum 1990).