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THOMAS HARDY--VICTORIAN AND MODERN IRONIST

by

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THOMAS HARDY--VICTORIAN AND MODERN IRONIST

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Irony is so inviting an instrument of literary warfare, that there are perhaps few eminent controversial writers who have wholly abstained from the use of it. But in general even those who employ it most freely, reserve it for particular occasions, to add weight and point to the gravest part of the argument.

- Bishop Connop Thirlwall

"On the Irony of Sophocles"

The Philological Museum, p. 484.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Anyone acquainted with Hardy's writings knows that his works are sprinkled with incidents in which irony is the vehicle used to objectify his ideas. And yet this one most conspicuous element in his works has been least explored by the critics. Since Hardy's name has been so commonly linked with irony it may be that the critics have taken it for granted, believing that it was so obvious that it merely had to be indicated to be understood. The reason may also lie in the possibility that since Hardy's irony is so well diffused throughout his writings, critics have purposely avoided the task of isolating and describing it. The critics have been generous in their references to his irony, but there have been only a few feeble efforts to elaborate it. Some critics like Brennecke, Rutland and Weber have acquainted us with his philosophy, particularly his determinism, including its metaphysic and its operation; these certainly are essential to the understanding of his irony, but these critics have not attempted an elaboration of the irony itself.

Critics have discussed Hardy's irony in a rather inconclusive way, referring to his dramatic irony under various names: "irony of Fate", "tragic irony", and "irony of circumstances". But dramatic irony for its own sake is not

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the central interest in Hardy; it is a traditional mode of expression used by a fairly large number of writers from Chaucer on. Critics like J. W. Beach and N. C. Duffin limit their perceptions to irony of circumstance and irony of Fate; while Arthur McDowall who has examined irony most closely, makes little attempt to elaborate the subject centrally, he does point out Hardy's preoccupation with "the contrasts between the appearance and the reality of things".[1] In a few Master's theses, Hardy's irony has been dealt with rather superficially; perhaps the best of these is by Geoffrey Coope of the University of California, with the subject Irony in Thomas Hardy, which however deals mostly with the possibilities of the subject. Any dissertations on Hardy's irony that have come to my notice, deal with his irony in only one literary genre, with individual novels, or with The Dynasts; none of these deal with the complete picture of irony in all Hardy's writings; nor do any of them attempt a central elaboration.

The aim, then, is to find some relationship between Hardy's irony and his viewing of experience. This viewing of experience resolves itself into incongruities, and their expression forms the bulk of his irony. These are the

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(1) McDowall, Arthur, Thomas Hardy, A Critical Study. Faber and Faber, London, 1931, p. 22.

elements in his drama and the material for his ironic commentary. Further aims include the examination of Hardy's irony in order to discover the common principles of its various aspects; and to examine how the verbal and dramatic ironies objectify the more important cosmic irony. Again, a brief examination must be made of his philosophic outlook in order to understand the full impact of his cosmic irony particularly in The Dynasts. Various instruments will help in these aims, particularly such elements as the techniques and factors found in the irony; since this report lies in the field of literature, it will be necessary to devote some time to the author's artistry, which should help our examination of the relationship between the irony and the viewing of experience.

Since so much of Hardy's irony deals with the moral order of things, it has been deemed wise to include a chapter on the morality of Hardy's Irony. This seems necessary in order to achieve a full appreciation of his irony, since the expression of incongruities constitutes a good deal of it, and some of these incongruities touch the moral order. Then, too, the setting up of his system of the Immanent Will controlling man's destiny is closely associated with morality through his metaphysics. In fact an elaboration of his cosmic irony demands an examination of the moral principles that stand behind it.

Irony is an interesting element in literature; and

an early interest in it has led me to wish to explore both the problem and the results of its presentation in the hands of a master.[2] In the search through literature for a master ironist, one is led inevitably to Hardy. Other possibilities were explored and rejected: Swift's range of irony was limited to satire; other novelists such as Austin, Dickens, and Meredith either confined their irony to the traditional dramatic type with very few fresh techniques or limited themselves to an occasional verbal satire. Not a single case could be found where irony pervades the work as it does in Hardy. Nor could there be found in any of the writers of irony any important examples of the extended use of cosmic irony such as could be found in Hardy. Therefore, the natural choice was Hardy. His irony had been expressed in novels, poems, stories, and the epic-drama. In no other author could one find such variety of ironic technique nor such a happy joining of irony with literary accomplishment. His pessimism, his pity, his attempted explainings, and his complainings, all find their place within his ironic vision; they cannot be understood except as forming part of it.

The task set then was to investigate the subject of irony itself, to examine Hardy's work in the light of what

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[2]Several important students of Canadian literature have bemoaned to me the fact that our literature will remain in a stage of immaturity until it has produced a forthright Canadian ironist.

had been learned about irony and, in this way, to throw some light on Hardy's use of it. And the first part of the task offered some difficulty; the term "irony" has been so loosely used that it was necessary to expand the term clearly enough to throw some light on the problem of Hardy's irony. I am indebted to J. A. K. Thomson's work Irony, An Historical Introduction for the account of the beginnings of irony in Greece, and to Earle Birney's dissertation Irony in Chaucer for further enlightenment of the term. Material on the other aspects of irony was found in a number of sources referred to in the bibliography.

After the sections devoted to "Irony" and "Hardy's Outlook", the investigation divides itself into two main parts: first, the section dealing with exemplification of the irony actually existing in Hardy's works; this concerns itself with an investigation of irony as content or subject matter. The purpose here is not to impress the reader with its bulk, but to provide examples mainly for examination. The second section deals with an analysis of the method of the irony under such headings as "Factors", "Technique", "Artistry", "Evolution", and "Morality". This will lead to a gathering of the issues respecting Hardy's intentions and his results in the elaboration of his irony.

The most important intention here is to elaborate and to put under one cover an exposition of Hardy's irony or

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"central trait" in one centrally treated theme. Hardy's first principle in his works, consciously or unconsciously, is irony and without an understanding of it, one fails to receive the impact of his message. It is my hope that with a better sense of the irony in Hardy, one may experience that understanding which should exist between the Ironist and his sympathetic reader.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF IRONY

POINTS DISCUSSED IN THIS CHAPTER

1. The conflict of the "Eiron" and the "Alazon" in Greek comedy.

2. Greek irony or that of Socrates involved:
   -dissimulation to achieve a purpose.
   -speech in which meaning varies with words used.

3. Irony of Socrates extended in literature.

4. Thirlwall's division of irony
   -verbal irony
   -dialectic irony
   -practical irony.

5. As the use of irony in literature expanded, its meaning became less definite.

6. Divisions of irony according to the effect produced.
   -tragic irony
   -irony of fate
   -comic irony.

7. The inclusiveness of dramatic irony.
   -includes other ironies involving dramatic consequences.
   -when it may be termed philosophic or cosmic irony.

8. The nature of irony of fact.

9. Meaning of satire, sarcasm, sardonicism.

10. The ironist's main preoccupation is observing irony and manufacturing it.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF IRONY

Perhaps the best method to arrive at a proper understanding of the word "irony", is to view the term historically. Saying one thing and meaning another has, no doubt, been in practice since speech was invented, but the Greeks probably first called it by the name "irony". It was derived from the Greek periphrastic construction 'eironica' which means dissimulation, and may be traced to Aristotle. In early Greek comedy a character--The Eiron or dissembler--was always in conflict with the Alazon, the impostor; in this the Eiron always won by his slyness, since his evident lack of knowledge eventually proved his wisdom. Socrates used the method of the "eiron" when he led his questioners into seeing their errors by the seeming ignorance of his questions.[1]

It is then to the Greeks that we owe the figurative speech in which there is discord between the way things appear and the way they really are. Irony then came to have two interpretations: dissimulation in order to achieve a purpose, and a manner of speech in which the meaning varies with the words used; in the latter some derision was involved.

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[1]A full explanation of the nature of this early irony may be found in G. G. Sedgwick's Of Irony, Especially in the Drama, University of Toronto Press, 1935.

And Socrates seems to have had both interpretations in mind when he used irony as he did.

As irony came to be used more frequently in literature, especially literature dealing with spiritual subjects, it came to include a recognition of the incongruities of this world viewed in a spiritual or infinite sense contrasted with a material or finite sense. This appears to be an extension of the irony of Socrates to wider horizons; it is the type we find in Hardy which leads him to complain of the state of things. It involves a detached view of life. The attitude of the viewer will vary with his temperament and with his interpretation of the incongruities which he sees. The contrast between the infinite and the finite sense which results from the viewing of incongruities, constitutes our closest definition of cosmic irony. It had the effect of making Hardy complain bitterly about the universe and its relation to its Creator and resent what he saw as injustice.

In 1833, Thirlwall's article[2] recognized the fact that irony was becoming more important in literature and it attempted to define the various types of irony. According to the preface of this article, irony falls into three main categories: verbal irony, dialectic irony, and practical irony. Since his article is so important in classifying

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[2]Thirlwall, Connop, On the Irony of Sophocles, Cambridge, 1833.

irony for the purpose of criticism, it will be useful to quote some excerpts from it:

> verbal irony may be described as a figure which enables the speaker to convey his meaning with greater force by means of a contrast between his thought and his expression, or to speak more accurately, between the thought which he evidently designs to express, and that which his words properly signify.
>
> It is a weapon properly belonging to the armoury of controversy, and not fitted to any entirely peaceable occasion.[3]

Thirlwall's explanation of dialectic irony seems to deal mostly with the attitude of the author:

> . . .and which may be properly called dialectic irony. This, instead of being concentrated in insulated passages, and rendered prominent by its contrast with the prevailing tone of the composition, pervades every part. . .
>
> The writer effects his purpose by placing the opinion of his adversary in the foreground, and saluting it with every demonstration of respect, while he is busied in withdrawing one by one all the supports on which it rests.[4]

This dialectic irony seems, then, to contain a good deal of mockery. It had a close association with the ironic attitude and must have been used with good effect in satire. Practical irony seems to refer to the irony of life or that practised on man for deceptive purposes; this includes the irony of fate which Thirlwall defines: "the contrast between man and his hopes, fears, wishes, and undertakings, and a

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[3]Thirlwall, Connop, On the Irony of Sophocles, p. 483.

[4]ibid. p. 486.

dark inflexible fate, affords abundant room for the exhibition of tragic irony."[5]

This simple division of irony provided a beginning in the classification of this elusive term for the purpose of literary criticism. As irony became more widely used in literature, its meaning expanded with use; as this happened, its precise meaning became less clear. Earle Birney, in his dissertation on Irony in Chaucer puts the idea this way:

> Within the last hundred and fifty years, the word "irony" has become so stretched and thinned by users of metaphor and metaphorical lingo, that the fate of the word lies now in the restless ocean of popular idiom, where many a better one has quietly drowned.[6]

Verbal irony is the effect of language whose true meaning is opposite to the actual words used. In this type the reader divines the intention of the author to use irony, or the reader is acquainted with certain facts which enable him to make the ironic interpretation himself. It is usually considered to be irony in its simplest form, although in literature, resulting complications may be involved.

In verbal irony then, the contradiction between the way things appear and the way they really are is denoted by the contradiction between language and meaning. In dramatic irony this incongruity is represented by the difference

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[5]ibid. p. 493.

[6]Birney, Earle, Irony in Chaucer, University of Toronto, 1936.

between event and the character's relationship to that event. In some way the character is hoodwinked into misunderstanding reality. In dramatic literature this admits of a great variety of techniques. If speech is involved in this misinterpretation, then the dramatic irony is aided by verbal irony and the two may be said to fuse to produce the ironic effect. Verbal irony will then help to sharpen the contradiction by increasing the sense of irony in the reader.

"Irony of fate" acts within the area of dramatic irony since it is one particular kind of dramatic irony. When the results of the contradiction can be traced to no perceptible cause, but to "destiny" or "fate", the irony causing these results is called the "irony of fate". This mysterious force "fate" seems to be blamed for disrupting human plans when there is nothing else to blame.

There are many lesser subdivisions of irony according to the effect produced; tragic irony operates when the effect is tragic and has a close relationship with the irony of fate since "fate" seems to involve tragic consequences. Comic irony operates to produce a comic effect.

Dramatic irony is a term that covers various types of irony in dramatic circumstances. Sophoclean irony is that in which a speech means more to the spectator than it does to the speaker or other characters because of the spectator's superior knowledge of what has happened or of what is going

to happen. Dramatic irony may and usually does include such other ironies as have been described above such as tragic irony, irony of fate, and even comic irony, which involve dramatic circumstances. Dramatic irony becomes philosophic irony or cosmic irony when it involves a theory of philosophy; its results touch the future life either by the moral consequences of actions or by a supernatural outlook. It is used to interpret the great questions of life, good and evil, suffering, reward and punishment, and man's relations with his Creator.

"Irony of fact", however, is not a division of dramatic irony; although the principle is the same, there is this important difference: the incongruity in irony of fact may be grasped immediately without any preparation in the mind of the reader, whereas in dramatic irony, the impact of the incongruity depends on the reader's knowledge of what has happened or of what is going to happen or of both.

Often, in the loose use of the word "irony" which is found to-day, certain extensions of irony may be confused with the word itself. I refer to satire and sardonicism. Satire is irony, usually bitter, which is produced for the purpose of ridicule. Sarcasm and sardonicism are the terms applied to irony where the effect is excessively bitter or cutting and the method used to achieve this result is usually gibing or taunting. Here again the terms are not

mutually exclusive and are used quite freely. All include irony of one kind or another and imply an attack or ridicule.

Practically every writer employs irony in some form or another as a rhetorical device to increase the dramatic effect, and the motive in using it varies with the author. The ironist makes it his main preoccupation; he must not only perceive it but he must manufacture it. Irony involves an attitude of mind; the obtrusion of the artist into his interpretation lessens his objectivity. The ironist, then, has a purpose in his interpretation of life.

CHAPTER III

HARDY'S OUTLOOK

1. Hardy's independent viewpoint.

2. Three important stages in the development of Hardy's views on life.

   (a) First Stage - Religious Aspect - The reading of scientific writers - The influence of Hume.

   (b) Second Stage- Co-ordination of impressions into a unified whole.

   (c) Third Stage - Application to life through writings.

CHAPTER III

HARDY'S OUTLOOK

It has been stated by some students of Hardy that he knowingly set out to copy the philosophy of some of the Continental philosophers and used this to weave stories to prove how their system works out in practice. It seems rather purposeless to attempt to prove or disprove this fact. No doubt he was influenced to some extent by the thought of his era and of The Thinkers who preceded him. Hardy has made his position clear in these words:

> Let every man make a philosophy for himself out of his own experience. He will not be able to escape using terms and phraseology from earlier philosophers but let him avoid adopting their theories if he values his own mental life.[1]

From his own statement then, we see that Hardy has deliberately set out to view life in his own way and according to his own ideas. No doubt there were influences from without; but to state that Hardy set about copying the pessimistic outlook of Schopenhauer is a misstatement. Rutland has shown that many of his ideas which were thought to have been derived from the German School, most likely had

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[1]Written by Hardy, Dec. 21, 1901. Quoted in Later Years of Thomas Hardy, by Hardy, Mr. F., p. 91.

their source nearer home, particularly in the Rationalists of his own day.[2]

Since Irony has been defined as a critical emphasis on the difference between what is and what might have been, Hardy must necessarily have formed standards in his mind when dealing with ironic situations. Perhaps it may be stated that the standards were formed first and then the ironical material in the novels and poems was used to communicate them.[3]

A glance at Hardy's religious experiences and early readings may help to throw some light on this. He was brought up in the Established Church (Anglican), his ancestors had taken a prominent part in church affairs, and he himself taught Sunday School in the parish church. But early in life, his sensitive and searching mind began to examine the problems of man's existence and of his role in the universe. Suffering and hardship caused by tricks of fate seem to have had their effect in embittering his Christian view of life.

In this change there seem to be three important stages. In the first of these there is a reaction against

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[2]See Rutland, W. R., Thomas Hardy, A Study of His Writings and Their Background, Oxford, 1938. This book has a great deal to say about influences. It makes out a good case for the influence of the Rationalists on Hardy.

[3]When we come to the part of this study on "Irony in the Poems" and "Irony in the Novels", an effort will be made to clarify and exemplify this point.

the tenets of the Established Church. From about the year 1860, Hardy came under the influence of the scientists and agnostics who were attempting to overthrow traditional English thought based on the Scriptures. Doubts against traditional faith began to disturb him. Certain writings of the time also seem to have played a part in undermining his faith; Darwin's Origin of Species was read and acclaimed by him. Herschell had just discovered fifteen hundred new universes in the heavens and this discovery showed him plainly the insignificance of our planet and the greater insignificance of man upon that planet.

Under these influences, yet with a certain independence, young Hardy, sometime between the years 1860-1870 was beginning to believe that Christianity was dissolving into myths; this free thinking was popular among young Victorians. And this happened during the formative years before the writing of his first novel. This change is well brought out in the following lines:

> Sentimentally he was strongly attached to the good old society that was falling to bits everywhere;-- but intellectually he found himself with the enthusiastic youthful pack. Thus his heart and his brain were at war with his soul.[4]

A century before Hardy's birth, Hume had indicated much of the fatalism, coincidence, and chance used by Hardy

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[4]Brennecke, Ernest, The Life of Thomas Hardy, Boston, 1924, p. 120.

in his novels and many of his later poems. Hume's conclusion is:

> That the original source of all things is entirely indifferent to all of those principles and has no more regard to good above evil than to heat above cold--There may be four hypotheses found concerning the first causes of the universe.
> (1) That they are endowed with perfect goodness.
> (2) That they are endowed with perfect malice.
> (3) That they are endowed with goodness and malice.
> (4) That they are endowed with neither goodness nor malice.
> The fourth of these is by far the most probable.[5]

Hardy himself admits the influence of Hume when he says:

> My pages show harmony of view with Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, Comte, Hume, Mill and others, all of whom I used to read more than Schopenhauer.[6]

These readings indeed influenced the young Hardy whose weakened faith and strong sensibility drove him into deciding that life was tragic rather than comical; for him the old religion of his fathers was dead and the new one was not to be based on dogma and faith but on altruism.

The second stage in the development of Hardy's outlook seems to be the co-ordination of his scattered impressions into a unified whole. During this process his thoughts, though still casting about for a solution, were crystallizing into a type of agnostic pessimism. The degeneration of faith

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[5]Hume, Selections, edited by Charles Handel Jr., Scribners, New York, 1927, pp. 380-381.

[6]Quoted in "Hardy in Defense of His Art", Mr. D. Zabel in The Southern Review, 1940, p. 138. (Hardy Centennial Issue)

was accompanied by pessimism; this fact plays such a large part in the irony throughout his works that it seems advisable to devote more time to an examination of this pessimism later in this study.

By the year 1880, Hardy had reached the third stage in the development of his philosophy. This third stage may be termed a "reading of life" in all its chances and changes in the light of his new conception of things. He attempted to interpret the chance impressions and experiences that arose out of his observation, his reading, and his imagination. He viewed himself as the "humble recorder" of events, feelings and fancies which, occurring in various moods and circumstances, go to make up the complicated pattern of life. As an artist, he selected from the complex pattern of life the threads that appealed to his temperament and fitted them into his conception of things. It was an application to life of his convictions, and an attempt to prove them to his readers. Hardy's melancholy soul, having lost its faith, spent its efforts in an attempt to prove his pessimism.

Hardy's pessimism, although tinged with emotion through a sympathy with suffering humanity, is more intellectual than temperamental. Here is his own explanation:

> Pessimism, or rather what is called such, is in brief, playing the sure game. You cannot lose at it; you may gain. It is the only view of life in which you can never be disappointed. Having reckoned what to do in the worst possible circum-

> stances, when better arise, as they may, life becomes child's play.[7]

In order to prove his pessimism both to himself and to his readers, Hardy looked at life through dark-coloured glasses. He was painting only what he wanted to see in the way he wanted to see it. This was his explanation of reality:

> And what is to-day, in allusion to the present author's pages, alleged to be pessimism is, in truth, only such "questionings" in the exploration of reality and is the first step towards the soul's betterment--and the body's also--by the explanation of reality, and its frank recognition, stage by stage along the survey, with an eye to the best consummation possible.[8]

Hardy's irony is coloured by his philosophy; his main writings were not undertaken until after his philosophy was formed and the writings were used to convince the reader of its truth. The technique used was irony; therefore his irony is inseparable from his philosophy.

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[7]Hardy, Mrs. F., Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1930, p. 181.

[8]The Apology to Late Lyrics and Earlier, Hardy, Thomas, p. 3.

CHAPTER IV

IRONY IN THE EARLY NOVELS

POINTS DISCUSSED IN THIS CHAPTER

1. The novel Desperate Remedies; first attempt at irony in the novel; complicated plot; dramatic irony lacking in bitterness.

2. Under the Greenwood Tree - rural idyll lacking in irony; the Wessex tradition.

3. A Pair of Blue Eyes - first typical ironic novel; tragic results of irony; first example of irony in the characters.

4. Far From the Madding Crowd - pity for victims of the ironic train of events; an example of Hardy's compassion for suffering humanity.

5. The Hand of Ethelberta - lighter irony; influence of the French society play; here irony touches the social position.

6. The Return of the Native - the importance of Egdon Heath; influence of nature on characters as a guiding power in their actions.

7. The Trumpet-Major - amusing irony; irony of soldiers and their changeableness in love; the background of the Napoleonic Wars; the realism of this lighter irony of life.

8. The Laodicean - background of religion in the irony here.

9. A brief examination of the types of irony in those earlier works; a look forward to the elements of irony to be examined in the later novels by contrast with what has been found in the earlier novels.

CHAPTER IV

IRONY IN THE EARLY NOVELS

It is the purpose of this chapter to examine fairly intensively Hardy's early attempt at irony occurring in the early novels written between the years 1871 and 1881. This decade covers about half of the period Hardy devoted to novel writing; the division is made here principally for convenience.

Hardy's first novel was Desperate Remedies published anonymously in 1871. Here we have a most complicated plot involving deception, murder, suicide and mystery, with very little interest in character. The tangle grows out of a question of identity, and at times descends to melodrama. There is not much irony in the novel but certain typical features of Hardy's work make their initial appearance here; the most important of these are a certain primitive romance between the sexes, a goodly portion of accident and romance, an occasional glimpse of rustic philosophy, a good measure of coincidence, and a certain tone of sadness. There are nevertheless one or two incidents in the novel that are ironical in nature; perhaps the most conclusive of these is the following: on the evening of the marriage of Manston to Cytherea Graye, Edward and Owen learn of the probable survival of the first wife and begin to suspect that Manston is a villain. The attempts of these two to reach the couple in

Southampton in time are met by several unfortunate happenings such as delayed trains, undelivered telegrams. Here, however, the results are not followed by those deliberately delineated effects which we find in the later novels. Only the beginning of dramatic irony is present in these few incidents; the bitterness of the later ironies is lacking.

In his second novel Under the Greenwood Tree which the author has termed a "rural painting of the Dutch school", there is practically no plot, hence no occasion for Hardy to enlarge on the ironies of life. It is a novel of setting and its main purpose seems to have been to establish the Wessex tradition.

We shall now pass on to what might be termed Hardy's first typical ironic novel, A Pair of Blue Eyes. An important student of Hardy, Joseph Warren Beach, has summed up this novel in the following words:

> The bond of union here, as so frequently in Hardy, is irony. And whether it be the mere irony of circumstance--the mere pattern of perverse event, with its thwart incidence of lines of destiny--or the deeper irony of character in its interplay with circumstance, there is here a philosophical appeal, an invitation to contemplative regard, not within the scope of mere intrigue and ingenuity of plot.[1]

In the plot, when Knight, Elfride's latest lover, looks under her direction through the telescope at the incoming boat, he spies a young man standing on the deck. It

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[1]Beach, Joseph Warren, The Technique of Thomas Hardy, University of Chicago Press, 1922, p. 36.

is Smith (a former lover of Elfride) and though Knight knows nothing about it, Elfride does know. Taken in itself this would seem to be a rather harmless example of irony of circumstance involving the conquests of a flirtatious girl; viewed in the light of the later ironies that seem to grow from it, this event greatly influences three lives. An ironic train of events follows upon this: Knight introduces Elfride to Smith; Knight breaks the engagement because Elfride's former affair with Smith was revealed to him in a letter; the climax is the scene in which the same train that carries Smith and Knight to Elfride for an understanding and an explanation, also carries Elfride's coffin. An ironic anti-climax is provided when we see both these men visiting the burial vault and watching Lord Luxellian, Elfride's widower, grieving over her casket.

The results here are tragic enough; Luxellian has been added to those affected by the flow of events which no one seems able to stem. The ironic train of events claims one more victim every time it strikes till the total has reached five. Elfride had desecrated the feelings of others by her flirtations and the irony of fate becomes irony of justice for her. The love of man and woman was the vehicle Hardy used to throw his characters into ironic conflict in his novels; this love seems to be the most common reef against which the individual dashes himself.

On first reading this novel, one cannot help but feel that the author has loaded his plot with simple examples of irony as a mechanical means of extending and complicating the plot. However, on closer examination the central irony is seen to lie in the characters of Elfride and Knight. The latter, who prized innocence in woman above all else, meets Elfride who has known many loves. In this way the contrast between these characters brings a new element into the irony. Besides an advance in character delineation, and hand in hand with this, there is an advance from the dramatic irony of the first novel to a more intensive philosophic irony. It points towards the exceedingly important effects of ironic events that we see later in the novels, Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure.

The novel Far From the Madding Crowd also reveals the serious effects of ironic events on sensitive characters. Sergeant Troy, a worthless "single man in barracks" has seduced a simple country girl, Fanny Robin; Troy promises to marry her, but by a trick of ironic fate, she mistakes All Souls Church for All Saints Church and Troy uses this as an excuse for refusing her. This mistake has serious consequences since, shortly afterwards, Troy meets and wins Bathsheba Everdene. This event in turn has a twofold ironic effect; neglected and jilted, Fanny Robin dies in childbirth, and Bathsheba passes over two excellent matrimonial chances

to marry worthless Troy who almost causes her ruin. Pity in the reader is aroused for luckless Fanny. This, in turn, is transferred to Bathsheba when, preparing to go to a party at which her engagement to Boldwood is to be announced, she finds that the rap on her door is not the expected call of her coachman, but that of her former worthless husband Troy who was supposed to have drowned. He has now returned to make her life as miserable as he had done before.[2]

Here again, pity has been aroused in the reader for the victims of ironic coincidence. In this novel, the irony of Fate does better for Bathsheba than it did for Fanny Robin, although both acted in much the same way. The latter meets an untimely death, while the former settles down into a comfortable marriage. Irony seems to have reversed justice in this case.

The fifth novel, The Hand of Ethelberta furnishes an example of irony which has, by contrast with that already examined, a lighter side to it. It is still irony but without the tragic or even serious results we have seen in the last two novels. The type experienced here may be termed 'light dramatic irony' which seems to resolve itself into a gentle satire on society. There seems to be some French in-

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[2]It is interesting to note the frequency with which the timing of incidents bears out or in some cases deepens the irony. For a more intensive examination of this aspect see the chapter "Hardy's Art in the Use of Irony."

fluence here; the "vaudeville" which was popular in France at this time depicted various machinations of certain members of French society striving to reach a higher stratum; there was much light satire in these plays.[3]

Since this lighter type of irony is not common with Hardy, two brief examples will suffice to bring out the contrast with the more serious type. Ethelberta, the 'social climber', is invited to dinner at Mrs. Duncastle's home where she expects to advance herself socially; she finds that her father is butler there, which fact can hardly be expected to increase her chances of social success. Another high point of lighter irony is the scene in which Ethelberta, on being asked at Lord Montclere's house to do some of her tale-telling, recounts the story of her own life in the third person. She intends by this means to inform Montclere indirectly of her life story; she ironically gains her end since Montclere afterwards tells her secretly that he knows it all.

Certainly this first attempt at comic irony has a very different purpose from that of its serious counterpart. The precarious social position of Ethelberta, maintained by scheming, results in harm to no one. It forms a contrast with the tragic effects of the ironic train of events on Elfride, or Fanny Robins.

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[3]Perhaps the best examples of this type of play are: La Poudre aux yeux, Le Voyage de M. Perrichon, Le Gendre de M. Poirier. This type of comedy was popular during the last half of the nineteenth century.

IRONY IN THE EARLY NOVELS

It was not long, however, before Hardy fell back into his old way of depicting tragic irony; indeed we may be surprised that he deviated from it at all. Up to this point he had been satisfied to paint his characters against the simple, ordinary background of Wessex.[4] Now a new element enters into the novels in the form of Egdon Heath. Being a wild and somewhat desolate region, it seems to cast a gloomy spell over its inhabitants and to direct their actions, at least in part, through its influence on their character. The atmosphere of Egdon is well described in these lines:

> It (Egdon Heath) embodies the scene and atmosphere and is, besides, the rendering of a mood of a congruous aspect in human life and in the mind of the author. The heath images such meanings and yet remains itself a microcosm of untamed nature. These few pages[5] are its portrait and have given it a personality; it will be a 'character' among the other characters, while it environs and transcends them. For while this 'dark sweep of country' evokes an immensity of space, it will shape with precision the destinies of every person in the story.[6]

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[4] Wessex - by analogy with Sussex and Essex, is a name applied to the central southern portion of England. the name was revived from Celtic times and Hardy seems to have started using the term again. More particularly, the part of Wessex used by Hardy as a setting for some of his novels is Egdon Heath. The first chapter of the novel The Return of the Native is devoted to a remarkable physical description of Egdon Heath.

[5] The reference here is to the picture of Egdon Heath in the opening chapter of the novel The Return of the Native.

[6] MacDowall, Arthur, Thomas Hardy, A Critical Study, London, 1931, pp. 18-69.

IRONY IN THE EARLY NOVELS

Eustacia Vye deplores the fact that her lot was cast on lonely Egdon Heath and she is determined to escape its effects by playing a larger and livelier part in the world. Its gloominess has influenced her enough to make her long for the luxury of Paris; in spite of this, she marries Clym Yeobright who has just returned from Paris, sickened by the tinsel show and artificiality of the great city and resolved to settle down on lonely Egdon and become a teacher. The irony of this simple contradiction is heightened when Clym's eyesight fails and he becomes a simple furze-cutter on the heath. Eustacia could have married Wildeve who was anxious to marry her but who was refused. The irony of fate enters, and Wildeve is now able to offer her the kind of life she craves because he has come into a sizeable legacy. The hopelessness of the situation results in tragedy; all three, Eustacia, Wildeve, and Clym finally throw themselves into the millrace. When the three are taken out, the only survivor is Clym who spends the rest of his life teaching and preaching the advantages of the simple life of Egdon Heath.

Truly, Egdon Heath not only seems to be directing the tragic irony of this novel, but seems to be the very symbol of it. Egdon Heath made Eustacia hate it and all it represented, while it made Clym return to it and love it; it was Egdon that threw these souls into proximity with tragic consequences. The heath seems to shrink the

characters and direct all things to its dark will, casting over them a shadow of fatalism. It should be noted here that, with this novel, a new element has been added to Hardy's irony; it is the introduction of Egdon acting as an ally of the dark fatalistic powers that dictate tragic events. It is not another character but the essence of the guiding power directing characters to their doom. Up to this time, Hardy had nothing tangible on which to lay the blame for the evil outcome of ironic events; this at least provided some explanation of these events. The forbidding aspect of the heath could be blamed when there was nothing else to blame.[7]

Once again in Hardy's next novel, The Trumpet-Major, we find a comedy with only slightly ironic effects and with some humour. There is some amusing irony in the situation that shows John Loveday, the sergeant-major, falling in love with Matilda Johnson, the actress; Matilda was the former fiancee of Loveday's brother, Bob, and John had already dismissed her as an undesirable girl for Bob to marry. There is a Falstaffian effect in the comic irony of Fess Derriman boldly leading the attack against Napoleon's invaders after he had found out that the report of the invasion was false.

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[7]This question of blame will be looked into later when the epic-drama, The Dynasts is discussed. By the time The Dynasts was written Hardy had further developed his "system" of explanation of blame.

Hardy seems to have paralleled his mild satire on society and on the fickleness of woman's love as seen in The Hand of Ethelberta, with the comically ironic depictions of soldiers and their changeableness in love in The Trumpet-Major. He was not always engaged in pointing out the serious consequences of man's frustration in tragic irony. It is interesting to notice that Hardy wrote this light comedy against the serious background of the Napoleonic Wars; there is irony in the fact that this subject was later to form the background of his most serious and most tragically ironic work, The Dynasts.

This reversion to a lighter vein of irony is interesting. Perhaps Hardy realized at times that irony does not always have tragic results. Life has many examples of irony with a humorous effect. He did see at least some of these lighter effects in life. It is worth noting too that even in this type of novel, the results are brought out through the use of ironic events.

The last novel to be dealt with in this chapter is The Laodicean,[8] in which irony is relatively unimportant. It may be that, since Hardy was suffering from a rather severe illness at the time of writing, his thoughts turned

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[8]Laodicean - a native of Laodicea; they were noted for their lack of religious spirit. The term has come to be applied to anyone who is lukewarm in religion.

to religion. It is the story of Paula Power who is unable to make up her mind whether to follow her father's Baptist faith or to repudiate all religion; her lack of interest in the subject of religion classifies her as a Laodicean. The irony of one situation has a touch of melodrama in it; the two archvillains cross pistols across the vestry table of a church after attending a funeral. In the main, this is merely circumstantial irony with no tragic effects. There is nothing here of Egdon Heath; in fact one is reminded of the high manner of The Three Musketeers.

This brings us to the midway mark in Hardy's novel-writing (1881); all his novels were written between the years 1871-1893. He had set two widely-separated patterns: the first pattern was that of the novel such as The Hand of Ethelberta, The Trumpet-Major, and A Laodicean, in which the irony was light and somewhat humorous; the second pattern was that of the novel in which irony had tragic consequences, as for example, A Pair of Blue Eyes, Far From the Madding Crowd. At this point, the Wessex tradition had been established and, in introducing Egdon Heath, the pattern was set for the later novels.

It is the purpose of the study of the later novels to see if the train of tragic irony is more closely woven than in the earlier novels. Was there any progress in this direction, particularly in respect to heredity and

environment? These elements have not appeared to any great extent in the early novels, although it is true that a start has been made in dealing with environment by the introduction of Egdon Heath. It is important to look for new elements in respect to Hardy's treatment of irony in the later novels. The following excerpt summarizes quite well the experimenting that Hardy did in the early novels:

> Hardy's search for a method is unusually clear in the early books, and of much more than a technical interest. It is himself he is finding, even more than his 'method'. He tries one quality, one direction after another, in a way that might seem to us now as deliberate as if he were moving the pieces in a game or assembling the 'parts' of a mechanism; but, still more clearly, each step is a pressure of the unknown, an impulse and discovery.[9]

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[9]MacDowall, Arthur, Thomas Hardy, A Critical Study, University of Chicago, 1928, p. 115.

CHAPTER V

IRONY IN THE LATER NOVELS

POINTS DISCUSSED IN THIS CHAPTER

1. Are there new elements of irony in these later novels?

2. Two on a Tower
   - (a) Completely ironical setting.
   - (b) Anti-climax of the irony here.

3. The Romantic Adventures of a Milkmaid
   - Irony of character in this novel.

4. The Mayor of Casterbridge
   - (a) The theme - 'character is fate'.
   - (b) The piling up of small ironic events.
   - (c) Increasing intensity of tragic irony.

5. The Woodlanders
   - (a) Introduction of the novel of social conventions.
   - (b) Tragic result of observing conventions.

6. Tess of the D'Urbervilles
   - (a) Introduction of heredity and environment in the irony.
   - (b) Importance of small ironic events.
   - (c) Irony of the double standard of morals.
   - (d) Satiric treatment of view taken by society of the conventions rather than the convention itself.
   - (e) Satire against Victorian prudery.

7. The Well-Beloved
   - Irony of the fickleness of the Artist.

8. Jude the Obscure
   - (a) Irony of the bondage of marriage.
   - (b) Jude as the victim of the irony of Character.

9.
   - (a) In Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure irony is directed against the misuses of conventions.
   - (b) Hardy's view of the proper place of convention.
   - (c) Hardy's pity for characters brought out by irony.
   - (d) Uselessness of this view of pity when Christian outlook is lacking.
   - (e) The 'gleam of hope'.

CHAPTER V

IRONY IN THE LATER NOVELS

An examination of the novels written in the last decade of Hardy's novel-writing years should prove interesting. The pattern of irony had been set in the earlier novels; some of these novels contained irony in the rather light ironic vein, while in others the irony had tragic consequences. A number of questions immediately come to mind at this midway mark; did the serious novels containing tragic irony grow more tragic and more bitter; are there new elements of irony introduced into the novels? In order to answer these and other questions which may occur during our examination of the later novels, it will be necessary to examine closely the ironic events contained in them.

Hardy's first novel in this series was Two on a Tower. It is the story of a young astronomer and Lady Constantine who has erected a memorial tower to be used by the astronomer for his observations of the heavens. Lady Constantine falls in love with the astronomer and the lovers hold nocturnal converse in the tower. The whole setting of this novel is ironical, as the observation tower, rising in the middle of plowed fields, was considered to be a symbol of seclusion and safety from the vicissitudes of life. It is ironical that this "ivory tower" was the setting for a

love affair filled with surprises and disappointments, the very opposite of that safety from the dangers of life. While the irony of setting connected with this tower is maintained throughout the novel, the high point of the irony is the ending; after many adversities and disappointments, when the young astronomer returns to marry Lady Constantine, the excitement is too much for her and she dies in a fit of happiness.

This is a new turn for Hardy's irony. Usually his characters are the ironic victims of defeat and frustration. It looks as if he was trying to prove that tragic irony is a two-edged sword which, by the very scarcity of the occasions in which it fulfils man's hopes, claims its victims just as surely as when it smashes his hopes and demoralizes him. The tragic irony here is not the climax of a series of untoward events, but an unexpected anti-climax which ruins man's plans just as surely.

The irony found in the novel The Romantic Adventures of a Milkmaid may be called the sobering kind. Margery Tucker, the milkmaid, rescues the foreign baron from suicide, and then accompanies him to the polka dance. The reader is tempted to interpret this as the end of her engagement to Jim Hayward, the lime-burner. However, Margery's character seems strong enough to keep the baron at arm's length until she has married Hayward, whereupon the baron succeeds in his

suicide attempt. There is a powerful contrast in character here; Margery's strong character successfully overcomes the baron's weakness. An important point in the irony of character in this novel lies in the fact that the high-born baron had the weak character while the simple milkmaid had one of great strength. It is interesting to note that this same irony of character was used later by Hardy in his famous novel, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, one of the most controversial novels of the Victorian era, and one in which tragic irony works its bitterest results.

In his next novel, The Mayor of Casterbridge, we have a dramatic account of the strange character of Michael Henchard pitted against ironic circumstances that are strong enough and frequent enough to overwhelm him. It would be a tiresome task to trace the legion of ironic events to be found in the three hundred and eighty pages of this novel; they take all forms in a most surprising succession of circumstances. There seems to be a change from the short-sighted determinism of some of the tragic novels of the previous decade; here we have the theme that Character is Fate. The ironic events were helped by the mistakes in Henchard's character and the two together caused his ruin.

After selling his wife and daughter to a sailor named Newson, Henchard blames drink for his mistake; however, he made a vow not to touch drink for twenty-one years

and because of his strong character, he was able to keep his word. There is irony in the fact that it is the return of his wife that causes him to turn again to the downward path. Opening a letter which his wife had lately given him, and which he is not supposed to open until his daughter Elizabeth's wedding day, he finds that Elizabeth is not his daughter but Newson's; his own daughter had died years before. Before this discovery there are a great number of lesser ironies connected with his treatment of Newson's daughter as if she were his own. Since the time of his vow has now lapsed, Henchard takes to drink; this change turns everyone against him including a young Scotchman, Farfrae, whom he had befriended and who is now his partner.

There is irony also in the circumstance in which the old lady who had witnessed the selling of his wife is now hailed before him; he had maintained his position as magistrate in Casterbridge, and the scandal resulting from the publicized story of the selling of his wife seals his doom. The death of his wife, the marriage of his daughter to Farfrae, and the return of Newson complete the train of ironic events and Henchard wanders off to die on Egdon Heath.

> The fates were so much more practised in the ways of life than this poor passionate man, that we give him pity he would not give himself.[1]

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[1]Johnson, Lionel, The Art of Thomas Hardy, Revised Edition, New York, 1923, p. 189.

This novel represents increasing intensity in the concentrated power of tragic irony. Even the strong character of Henchard could not withstand the number and intensity of its blows. It was not the irony of character against character, but rather that of circumstance against character.

Hardy introduces the irony of social conventions in his next novel, The Woodlanders. Weber, a serious student of Hardy, has explained this introduction in these words:

> Hardy also attempted a third innovation in The Woodlanders. His earlier novels had expressed with ever-increasing frankness his revolt against the fundamental conditions of existence in a badly constituted world. From his youthful shaking of his fist at his Creator, he had progressed in The Mayor of Casterbridge to a consideration of the close relationships between defects, not in nature but in human nature, and man's unhappiness on earth. And now, in The Woodlanders, he turned for the first time to question seriously how far the organization of society itself is responsible for man's unhappiness. When Grace Melbury's marriage proves a failure, Hardy makes her wonder 'whether God did really join them together'. What man alone had joined, man could put asunder. Hardy's increasingly bitter quarrel with society for its attitude towards sex relationships here marks its first appearance, and for the next twenty-five years the subject is never long absent from his writings, whether prose or verse. The Woodlanders sounds the initial challenge, and its characters are the first of Hardy's creations to blame neither God nor themselves, but human conventions.[2]

The Woodlanders seems to be the beginning of a series of several novels concentrating on the irony of

[2]Weber, Carl J., Hardy of Wessex, 1930, Colby College Publication, pp. 109-110.

social conventions and marriage in particular. In this novel, Grace Melbury returns from a fashionable school with a distaste for the simple life and spurns her love, Giles Winterborne, in order to marry the local physician, Fitzspiers, a gentleman and a sensualist. After a disagreement, he goes abroad to live with a society matron, Mrs. Chermond. When she is murdered by a jealous lover, Fitzspiers comes back to his wife, Grace, who, in order to escape from him, takes refuge in the cottage of Giles Winterborne. This situation brings about the high-point of the irony of social convention; to save the honour of Grace, Giles sleeps outside his hut, and being in a feverish state because of illness, dies as a result. Social convention has claimed an innocent victim; in trying to save Grace's reputation, Giles has caused his own death. But this untoward event is the means of sending Grace back to her husband and the two agree to modify their views and start over. There is some irony of character in this novel, but the important purpose here is to show the tragic events caused by the irony of social convention.

The train of ironic events in the next novel, Tess of the D'Urbervilles is more closely woven than in any of Hardy's previous novels. There is a strange mixture of heredity and environment running through these events. He blames events to some extent; but he insists that the

D'Urberville qualities and defects were strong in Tess and the combination of these with the sequence of events led to her downfall. But social convention made a tragedy out of this downfall.

Perhaps the high-point or climax of all the ironic events that surround the downfall of Tess is the following situation: Tess had been seduced by Alec D'Urberville and, having lost her child, she decides to start life anew. She obtains employment as a milkmaid and falls in love with Angel Clare, a young farmer. Tess cannot bring herself to tell him of her serious youthful mistake but writes her confession and slips it under his door; the important letter slides under the carpet and is not received by Angel who naturally says nothing to Tess about its contents. Tess thinks he has received the letter and that her confession makes no difference to him. The two are married, and the false security of Tess is ended by a stroke of Hardy's hidden satire. Clare relates to Tess an incident involving his own youthful dissipation, and this gives Tess courage to tell him of her misconduct with Alex D'Urberville. Mutual confidence is lost between them. The implication of this satire is that the double standard of morals is the cause of the tragedy which forces Clare to leave Tess, drives her back to Alec as his mistress, and finally results in Tess paying with her life for the murder of her seducer, Alec

D'Urberville. It is a subtle and bitter attack on convention.

This attack is supported by numerous ingenious ironic events woven closely around the life of Tess. One of them is the ironic reading, by Clare's father of the grace at mealtime; it consists of the verses in praise of a virtuous wife from the old Testament Book of Proverbs. Tess stops to hear a fervent, zealous preacher at a gospel meeting in a barn; this preacher is no other than Alec D'Urberville whom the reader finds out to be on the point of returning to his sin and completing the ruin of Tess.

In this novel the irony of social conventions might be said to reach the heights of satire. It was satire against the double standard in morals executed through the use of a series of ironic events, dramatic by nature, but tragic in content. Tess fails to fit her individuality into society and she is led by the irony of events into social abandonment.

> He brings definite charges against the collective judgment of society which, in the belief that it can so protect itself, destroys some of its finest and most sensitive material. The rough and ready judgment of society acting upon Tess through other people wasted her youth, beauty, motherhood, love, drove her to misery, crime, and violent death.[3]

The social convention attacked by Hardy's satire was, strictly speaking, not the convention itself, but the false

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[3]Child, Harold, Thomas Hardy, New York, 1916, p. 70.

view taken by society of Tess's fall. It should not have resulted in its crushing and unendurable outcome. Hardy accused society of reading outward actions only and of failing to see through them into the spiritual principle behind them. It fails to see that while Tess had lost physical chastity under extenuating circumstances, she still retained her spiritual inviolacy which society no longer recognizes as distinct from the physical.[4] His satire is directed at the readiness of society to judge by purely external standards when it cannot include motives or circumstances in its judgment.

In this novel there is also some satire directed at Victorian prudery. After Angel Clare spends some months in Brazil away from English insular ideas, he returns with a much broader outlook on the question of morality and the double standard.

Hardy's second last novel, The Well-Beloved, has a most fanciful theme. Jocelyn Pierston, a young artist, returns to England in search of a "well-beloved", that is, someone who will satisfy his artistic ideal of beauty. Pierston passes over a lady named Avice in favour of her daughter; but on finding that she is married he imagines he finds his well-beloved in the granddaughter of Avice. Al-

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[4]Note the full title of the novel: Tess of the D'Urbervilles, A Pure Woman, Faithfully Presented.

though there is, in the treatment of Pierston's obsession, a note of levity and light irony, the reader can detect a note of satire on the fancifulness and fickleness of the artist.

In his last novel, Jude the Obscure, Hardy returns to the tragic irony of Tess, with the social convention of marriage as its target. Young Jude who has high aspirations to become a scholar ruins his life and career by marrying Arabella, a vulgar woman, in deference to the social convention of legalizing their union and of making an "honest woman" of her. After they have quarreled and Arabella has left the country, Jude falls in love with Sue Bridehead who refuses to marry him; she gives two reasons for this refusal: first, she does not believe in the sanctity of marriage; secondly, since Jude is a member of the High Church, he frowns on divorce. Sue eventually divorces Phillotson, an instructor whom she had married, and returns to live with Jude. After abandoning his High Church sentiments, Jude divorces Arabella. But later they are re-married and Sue, stricken by her own lack of religion, has now come to regard matrimony as a holy and sacramental bond. Under these circumstances she still regards herself as married to Phillotson. Thus do the main characters wear themselves out. The book is filled with irony in the treatment of the marriage bond; it was the characters' changing view of it that brought about the final sordid ending.

IRONY IN THE LATER NOVELS

In addition to the irony of social convention, there is also a good deal of irony of character. That Jude was the ironic victim of his own temperament is clear from this excerpt from Hardy's letter to a friend:

> It is curious that some of the papers should look upon the novel as a manifesto on 'the marriage question' (although, of course, it involves it) seeing that it is concerned with the labours of a poor student to get a University degree, and secondarily with the tragic issues of two bad marriages, owing in the main to a doom or curse of hereditary temperament peculiar to the families of the parties.[5]

It is important to note that in both these novels Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure Hardy is attacking the misuse of the convention, rather than the convention itself. Society must not overlook the individual in its dealings and some allowance must be made in Hardy's scheme of things, for individual differences of character, temperament, and environment. This method of attack is irony of circumstances which, when played against the larger background of man's destiny, includes his philosophy. Hardy's view of the proper place of convention is summed up by Professor Duffin in this paragraph:

> Hardy saw convention mounting to a place in society to which it had no right; he saw it becoming master where it should have been a servant. Clare Angel perceives, when his eyes are opened, that his mistake

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[5]Hardy, Mrs. F. E., Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1930, Extract from a letter quoted on p. 40.

> has been in 'allowing himself to be influenced by general principles to the disregard of the particular instances'. The motto of Jude the Obscure, which applies as well to Tess of the D'Urbervilles, is 'The Letter Killeth'. Rules there must be, but proportion must be kept among them. The Woodlanders is, as to Giles's death, a tragedy of propriety--Grace allowed the secondary laws of propriety to stand before the one of humanity. The misery of the two greater novels arises in both cases from narrow conventional views usurping the place of the one great law by which all others must be tested, the golden rule of love and happiness.[6]

Hardy showed great love for humanity throughout his novels. The reader feels that he had pity for his characters as he sees them battered about by circumstance. Very rarely does he point the finger of accusation at any of them even after depicting serious mistakes in their actions or grave defects in their temperaments. It is a pity that this love of humanity could not have been turned to a better use; it could have been if Hardy had been a man of faith who saw in man's sufferings a reward in the next world. But unfortunately, he could see only a Supreme Being torturing mankind, often times oblivious of and callous to man's fortune. Irony was the weapon he chose to portray this state of affairs; mankind was the victim and Irony had many allies to help it; some of these were defects of character, coincidence, over-attention to social conventions; all of

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[6]Duffin, Professor H. C., Thomas Hardy, 3rd edition, New York, 1921, p. 249.

these added up in most of the novels to stark tragedy. What a force for good Hardy would have been had his irony been accompanied by some vestige of faith. Later in our study we may have some occasion to see a gleam of hope particularly in our study of The Dynasts. There is no such gleam in the novels.

CHAPTER VI

IRONY IN THE POEMS

POINTS DISCUSSED IN THIS CHAPTER

1. Ironic situations in poems cover wider sampling of life.

2. Cosmic Irony in very earliest of the poems.
   Poems - Hap
   - New Year's Eve

3. Intensification of Irony through religious purpose in the poem The Church Builder.

4. Ironic treatment of Fate - Cosmic Irony.
   Poems - Nature's Questioning - Superimposed irony
   - God's Funeral.

5. Irony showing pessimism in some poems
   Poems - To Life
   - The Brother
   - The Vampirine Fair
   - In Tenebris
   - De Profundis

6. Irony showing bitterness of illusion.
   Poems - A Beauty's Soliloquy During her Honeymoon

7. Irony with half-humorous effect.
   Poems - The Homecoming
   - The Three Tall Men
   - A Curate's Kindness
   - Four Footprints
   - The End of the Episode

8. Various examples of Modern Irony in Satires of Circumstance.

9. Irony revealed in Old Articles - "Roman Ruins".

10. The Importance of life to each individual as the guiding force in Hardy's irony.

11. Irony in War - Poems on the Boer War and World War I.

12. The aim of Irony in the poems the same as that in the novels.

CHAPTER VI

IRONY IN THE POEMS

Hardy had written poems before he attempted novel writing. During the years in which he was busy with the novels, his output of poetry diminished, but did not completely disappear. When he saw what a storm of controversy the novels Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure had aroused, Hardy calmly decided to turn to poetry again and to write no more novels because:

> to cry out in a passionate poem that the Supreme Power must be either limited in power, or unknowing, or cruel, would cause merely a shake of the head; whereas he knew from his own experience that to put the same idea into argumentative prose would make his foes sneer or foam at the mouth and would set them all 'jumping upon me, a harmless agnostic'.[1]

And so it came about that a few years after the publication of his last novel, Hardy's first volume of poetry appeared. A good many of the poems in this volume had been written during the novel-writing years and before that; to these he added later poems. He issued several volumes of poetry and these likewise contained their share of earlier poems which Hardy had had printed in newspapers, magazines, and periodicals. For this reason we cannot trace these

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[1]Weber, Carl J., Hardy of Wessex, Colby College Publication, 1931, p. 186.

poems chronologically with any great degree of accuracy, especially since most of them are not dated. It is the purpose of this chapter to examine the irony contained in these poems.

In the poems we have the advantage of observing Hardy's views over a wider range of life than we had in the novels. It is true that in the novels ironic situations can be dealt with more intensively than in a relatively short poem; in the poems they can be dealt with more extensively through multiplication of his vignettes of life. We can therefore expect a wider range of incident and impression of life in the poems. By dealing with a wider sampling of life, the poet can multiply his ironic situations. It will be interesting to see whether there is any noteworthy change in the irony in this new genre.

When Hardy was still in his middle twenties, he wrote some of the bitterest lines of poetry. He reveals, in one of his early poems, that "Crass Casualty" rules all and that man's suffering goes for nought. It took a dozen books to reach this stage in the novels, and even then it was not stated in as bold a manner as it is in this example, found in the poem "Hap" - (1866).

How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
--Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,

IRONY IN THE POEMS

And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.[2]

Not quite as bitter, but still in the same tone of cosmic irony is the poem "New Year's Eve". Here he pictures God talking about finishing another year with a certain satisfaction. Man asks God "What's the good of it?" when ninety-nine out of a hundred can make no beginning or end of it. God is asked to explain why we are here where so much sorrow and so little joy are found, and the few joys are such that if man never knew them he would never want them. God answers:

My labours--logicless--
You may explain; not I:
Sense-sealed I have wrought---[3]

The tragic irony of the whole situation according to Hardy is that God sets about fashioning another year on the same lines and for the same unknown reasons.

The irony found in the poem "The Church Builder" is both bitter and tragic; in this poem a man impoverishes himself to build a church, and finding that it is not wanted goes by night and hangs himself in it. The irony in the finding of the builder's body in the church is shown in the soliloquy:

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[2]Quoted from the poem, "Hap", in the volume Wessex Poems.

[3]Quoted from the poem, "New Year's Eve", in the volume Time's Laughingstocks.

IRONY IN THE POEMS

Well: here at noon they'll light on me
Dangling in mockery
Of what he spent his substances on
Blindly and uselessly!
'He might', they'll say
Have built, some way
A cheaper gallows-tree.[4]

The tragedy that overcame the builder seems especially significant because of his good intention and the extraordinary sacrifice he made in accomplishing his deed. Not only is the irony tragic but it is exceptionally well outlined. His religious purpose helps to intensify the difference between what the tragic outcome is and what one would expect it to be under normal circumstances. It is one of Hardy's deepest ironic poems.

The poem "Nature's Questioning" deals with the question of Fate expressed through Hardy's ignorance of man's origin and the difficulty that one of no faith has in accounting for man's place in God's scheme:

Or come we of an Automaton
Unconscious of our pains?
Or are we live remains
Of Godhead dying downwards, brain and eye now gone?[5]

This is indeed the bitter satiric utterance of an agnostic trying to find some human explanation of the universe. In

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[4]Quoted from the poem, "The Church Builder" in the volume Poems of the Past and Present.

[5]Quoted from the poem "Nature's Questioning" from the volume The Wessex Poems.

his feeble way, Hardy is trying to explain the irony of man's position in the universe by the superimposed irony of the Godhead not knowing how to guide his destiny or being thoroughly incapable of doing so. Life that is so serious, important and all-absorbing to man is perhaps merely an ironic jest of the Godhead. In this bit of blasphemy, Hardy goes beyond the irony that is supposed to be working out man's destiny here on earth and shows it to be working out the destiny of the universe. Later in the study of the epic drama The Dynasts, we shall have the opportunity of examining more fully this attempt to explain the universe. There is in many of the poems a vague feeling underlining much of the irony and sadness that they reveal. This irony which has as subject man's relations with the Creator has been termed Cosmic irony. Now and then a slight gleam of hope tinges the blackness of this irony as we see, for example, in the poem "God's Funeral":

> Still, how to bear such loss I deemed
> The insistent question for each animate mind,
> And gazing, to my growing sight there seemed
> A pale yet positive gleam low down behind.[6]

This is the 'gleam' of hope that we shall look into further in our study of The Dynasts.

It is interesting to note in many of Hardy's poems to what extent his pessimism is expressed. To most people,

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[6]Quoted from the poem, "God's Funeral" in the collection Satires of Circumstance.

while life is a struggle, it seems worth while; the irony that Hardy expresses is that life is mostly sadness and disappointment and the pleasant parts are the exception rather than the rule. This is brought out pointedly in his poem "To Life":

O Life with the sad seared face
I weary of seeing Thee,
And Thy draggled cloak, and Thy hobbling pace
And Thy too-forced pleasantry.
I know what Thou would'st tell
Of Death, Time, Destiny---
I have known it long, and know, too well
What it all means for me.[7]

Other poems in this same pessimistic strain are "The Brother", a tale of rape, murder, and suicide; "The Vampirine Fair", one of gloom and depravity. In the three poems, "In Tenebris" I, II and III, the blackness of life affects him so much that he sighs for the end; this fit of depression is reduced to personal unconsciousness in the poem "De Profundis".

The bitterness of illusion in which Fate ironically influences human affairs is powerfully shown in the poem "A Beauty's Soliloquy during Her Honeymoon". When, too late, the bride realizes her marriage mistake, it is ironically attributed to her dwelling too much on duty before her marriage and not enough on her beauty. The pride and vanity of life have rarely deserved such scornful words as those of

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[7]Quoted from the poem "To Life" in the collection Poems from the Past and Present.

Lady Vi in this poem. Other Hardy poems have as their central theme Fate which seems to be working out man's destiny in an ironic way that brings unhappiness.

Hardy can write irony in a half-humorous way even though the subject be grave; in these cases it does not reach the serious philosophy of life but, stopping short, it expends itself on the humour of the situation. In the poem "The Homecoming", the poor befooled wife is not convinced by the ironic outcome of her expectations that she should run back to her "dear daddie" and she resolves to stay with her husband. But the irony, which is purely dramatic in this case, is handled playfully as it shows the severe life to come in ironic contrast with the apparently high expectations of the bride. The irony in the poem "The Three Tall Men" is presented with a dramatic chuckle, though it deals with death. The tall man's coffin, which he made for himself, was used for his brother, and a second one for his son, while a third lay unused because the tall man died at sea. It is rare to see such a serious subject used in so light a manner; yet there is irony in the fact that Hardy could deal with the fates so playfully. Again we find him in a merry ironical mood in the poem "A Curate's Kindness" which bears the sub-title "A Workhouse Irony". The poor old man being taken to the workhouse wants to jump out of the waggon on hearing that his wife is coming too. As he consoles him-

self by the fact that she will be separated from him and confined to the women's section, the curate informs her that the "harsh" order has been rescinded by the Board; the curate's kindness has become an irony. But the good humour of the reader is not marred by any tragical outcome, because we feel sure that the threat of the old man:

> Let me jump out of the waggon and go back and
> drown me
> At Pummery or Ten-Hatches Weir[8]

was not carried out. Likewise, the two poems "Four Footprints" and "The End of the Episode" contain a view of light irony; in these, the victims of the ironic playfulness of the Fates turn what might be expected to become tragic irony into a type of stoicism rather than surrender:

> 'Ache deep' but make no moans
> Smile out; but still suffer;
> The paths of love are rougher,
> Than thoroughfares of stones.[9]

Fine examples of irony are brought out in the fifteen Satires of Circumstance--those fifteen vignettes of life at bitterly ironic moments. Many of them touch on Hardy's oft recurring object of irony -- love and marriage. In these, one finds the typical situation, often of the

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[8]From the poem "The Curate's Kindness - A Workhouse Irony" in the collection Time's Laughingstocks.

[9]From the poem "The End of the Episode" in the volume Collected Poems.

lighter dramatic type; but as one reads farther, one fears that some of the situations will turn into tragedy if they are allowed to reach their denouement later in the lives of the characters. Brevity and subtleness have intensified the irony. These poems may be considered as examples of modern irony, not only because of their date of publication but because of the imagination required to grasp the depth of their irony.

Let us examine briefly the irony in a selection of these poems. The happy young wife in the poem "At Tea" is blissfully ignorant of the position of her visitor sipping tea, since her visitor was the husband's "first choice"; the young wife would not be so happy, perhaps, if she were aware of this, nor of the fact that her husband throws the visitor "a stray glance yearningly". "By Her Aunt's Grave" is a slight bit of irony on the theme 'out of sight, out of mind'; the headstone money goes to pay admission to the dance. The irony of the poem "In the Cemetery" has a morbid touch; mothers, squabbling over the graves of their children, are told that it is the grave of neither but merely a drain:

> And as well cry over a new-laid drain
> As anything else, to ease the pain.

In the poem "In the Study", the gay conduct of the lady whose famous author father has just died, satirizes the shortness and superficiality of the mourning period; she is

eager to sell his books not for the sake of need but merely "to make my rooms a little smart". The poems "In the Nuptial Chamber", "At a Watering Place", "In the Room of the Bride-Elect" contain irony on the theme of the wrong people getting married. The irony of mourning and Death is the subject of the last four of this series; in the last two, "Over the Coffin" and "In the Moonlight", the irony contains a deep note of melancholy. There is an analogy between the theme of these Satires of Circumstance and that of the novels; this analogy is also carried out in the nature and depth of the irony of both.

In "Old Furniture" and in a few other poems of similar vein, Hardy seems to be tracing the history of an ironic sequence revealed to him by old articles; these are viewed as witnesses of man's destiny in the making. He wrote a series of poems on the subject of the Roman ruins that were constantly being unearthed in Wessex. This series reveals the same element of tracing the history of the ironic sequence of life. The Roman ruins with their "superior knowledge" of human events seem to be viewing ironically the errors of humanity. Of the Roman Road he says:

> And thoughtful man
> Contrast its days of Now and Then
> And delve, and measure, and compare.[10]

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[10]From the poem, "The Roman Road", in the collection Time's Laughingstocks.

IRONY IN THE POEMS

The unimportance of man and of his problems seems to have impressed Hardy in the poem "At A Lunar Eclipse". In some of the satiric poems and in a few of the epitaphs, he does tend to be morose, but he was always interested in declaring how important man's life is to him in spite of adverse ironic events. The man in the poem "Roman Graveyards", walking along to bury his pet is much more concerned about the thought that he had been deprived of his pet than about the greatness of the Roman legions that lie buried about him.

This importance of life to each individual and the sorrow caused by the blows of ironic Fate is more than a by-product of Hardy's irony; it is, at least in part, its guiding force. This is shown in a number of his poems. The more cruel the stroke of irony, the more pity he breathes into his poem. "The Dream of the City Shopwoman" reveals sympathy with those whom an ironic fate has placed in adverse conditions in the crowded city. In the poem "On the Portrait of a Woman About to be Hanged", he blames 'this riot of passion' on an ironic Fate which has implanted the evil germ in her. This is not merely blaming heredity, as is done in the novel Tess of the D'Urbervilles; since the woman herself had nothing to do with the implanting of the evil germ, she is victim of an ironic fate whose offence is more odious since the irony is heightened by the fact that

she is a 'fair creature'. Fate had

> with a purblind vision
> Sowed a tare
> In a field so fair,
> And a thing of symmetry, seemed to view
> Brought to derision.[11]

A similar feeling of sympathy and tenderness accompanies the irony found in the poem "To an Unborn Pauper Child". The inability to shield the child from an unhappy destiny dictated by Fate elicits sympathy for the victim of ironic circumstances. In expressing this type of emotion Hardy seems to overlook freedom of the will. Heredity and environment were not the only causes of the downfall of the 'woman about to be hanged'. By a judicious exercise of her free will she could have avoided the cause of her downfall; in overlooking the freedom of the will, Hardy has weighted the Scales heavily on the side of fate. It is the attempt of an agnostic to explain life by blaming fate or an unfeeling cause.

The Boer War furnished Hardy with material for poems in which he brings out the irony of war. A typical example of this type is "The Man He Killed".

> But, ranged as infantry,
> And staring face to face,
> I shot at him as he at me,
> And killed him in his place.

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[11]From the poem "On the Portrait of a Woman About to be Hanged" from the collection of poems Human Shows.

IRONY IN THE POEMS

Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat if met where any bar is,
Or help to half-a-crown.[12]

The public would appreciate and readily sympathize with this type of irony. In Hardy's viewing of life, war was just another set of tragic circumstances over which man as an individual had no control. It was no different from the tragic circumstances that overtook Tess or Eustacia Vye,[13] except that it included more people in the tragedy. The outbreak of World War I drew from Hardy his most scathing satire on religion and Christianity. The poem "Christmas 1924" is one of his most pessimistic poems:

'Peace upon earth' was said, We sing it
And pay a million priests to bring it.
After two thousand years of mass
We've got as far as poison gas.[14]

From the examples of the poems examined in this chapter it may be clearly seen that the nature of the poetry is the same as that of the novels; the nature of the irony is the same in both and it produces the same results. Hardy had the same motive in recording irony in the poems as he had in the novels. In his foreword to the volume Poems of the Past and Present he says the following:

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[12]From the poem "The Man He Killed" in the collection Time's Laughingstocks.

[13]See the section in Irony in the Novels - Tess of the D'Urbervilles and The Return of the Native.

[14]From the poem "Christmas - 1924".

IRONY IN THE POEMS

> Of the subject-matter of this volume -- even that which is in other than narrative form -- much is dramatic or impersonative even where not explicitly so. Moreover, that portion which may be regarded as individual comprises a series of feelings and fancies written down in widely differing moods and circumstances, and at various dates. It will probably be found, therefore, to possess little cohesion of thought or harmony of colouring. I do not greatly regret this. Unadjusted impressions have their value, and the road to a true philosophy of life seems to lie in humbly recording diverse readings of its phenomena as they are forced upon us by chance and change.[15]

Although the handling of irony is the same in the poems and the novels, the poems contain a wider range of incident and impression of life.

In both we have the same intermingling of much tragedy with little comedy shown through the medium of ironic happenings. The aim mentioned by Hardy in writing the novels:

> To show the grandeur underlying the sorriest things and the sorriness underlying the grandest of things.[16]

was also the aim in writing the poems. Man, blindfolded by Time and Chance, unable to control his destiny, supplied Hardy with enough ironic circumstances to conclude that man's lot is a tragic one. He resorted to satire more frequently in the poems, possibly because of their greater

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[15]Quoted from the last section of the Preface to the collected poems printed in one volume entitled Poems of the Past and Present.

[16]Hardy, Mrs. F. E., Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1930.

emotional appeal. In a sense it may be said that the novels lead up to the poems, which show a more intense, a more diversified, and a wider "reading of life". The irony in them is more deeply tinged with bitterness than it is in the novels.

CHAPTER VII

HARDY'S VISION OF IRONY IN 'THE DYNASTS'

POINTS DISCUSSED IN THIS CHAPTER

1. Introduction to the nature and theme of this epic-drama.
2. The interplay of the two themes--the War and the Will.
3. The role of the various Spirits and Choruses.
4. The Dynasts an attempt to systematize Hardy's metaphysics.
5. Verbal and Dramatic irony in the representation of historical facts.
6. The Dynasts--as a satire on War.
7. Napoleon himself a victim of ironic circumstances.
8. Hardy identifies himself with the Spirit of the Pities.
9. Humanitarian outlook resulting in 'evolutionary meliorism'.
10. Contrast to the Greek Drama.
11. Why The Dynasts is Hardy's greatest effort in irony.
12. The Spirit Ironic is the soul of the ironic vision.

CHAPTER VII

HARDY'S VISION OF IRONY IN "THE DYNASTS"

The Dynasts is a play of the Napoleonic era beginning with Napoleon's intended invasion of England in 1804 and ending with Waterloo, 1815. The subject is too vast for a play since it consists of three parts, nineteen acts, one hundred and forty scenes. Hardy liked to call it an epic-drama; it is generally conceded that if it is represented on the stage the play loses its sweep, its variety, its speed, and its majesty.

The Dynasts represents Hardy's most implicit and intensive statement of the antagonism between the human spirit and the exigencies of the life struggle. The explanation of existence is fuller here than in the poems; it is his attempt to make sense out of the world. It represents the impressions and ideas stored up over the course of a lifetime given under the symbolism and terminology of the Philosophy of the Will. The subject was especially suited to the ironic representation of this philosophy because in war, especially war on a great scale, man is more obviously the creature of fate. Even the title implies a touch of fatalism since this is a game of kings and rulers who are more or less at the mercy of fate; the multitudes whom they rule and whose destinies they guide are still more at the

mercy of fate.

This epic-drama is an intermingling or unification of two great themes: the War and the Will. This causes a dualism in form and in expression: the historical drama or War story acted upon the stage of Europe with its human agents and actions, and the philosophical action with its allegorical figures. These latter are in the nature of supernatural actions. These philosophic agents are: the Ancient Spirit of the Years, the Spirit and Chorus of the Pities, the Spirits Sinister and Ironic with their Choruses, spirit-messengers, rumours, and Recording Angels. Their scene of action is the Overworld. By way of explanation Hardy says in the preface:

> It was thought proper to introduce, as supernatural spectators of the terrestrial action, certain impersonated abstractions, or Intelligences, called Spirits. They are intended to be taken by the reader for what they may be worth as the contrivances of the fancy merely. Their doctrines are but tentative, and are advanced with little eye to a systematized philosophy warranted to lift 'the burthen of the mystery' of this unintelligible world.[1]

In the novels, the recordings of life helped to form his 'vision of life'; the machinery of The Dynasts is designed to express this vision more exactly and more elaborately. It is as if the reader of the novels and poems could merely hear the tick of the clock of the Universe and read the time

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[1]Quoted from the Preface to The Dynasts - Part I.

from the dial; whereas in The Dynasts, the back of the clock has been removed and although the reader does not understand what makes it function as it does, he can see all the works guided and controlled by the mainspring, the Immanent Will.

The ironic tone is set in the very first words of the Fore-Scene. The Shade of the Earth asks "What of the Immanent Will and Its design?" and the Spirit of the years makes answer:

> It works unconsciously, as heretofore,
> Eternal artistries[2] in Circumstance.

The Immanent Will appears as the impulsion and condition under which the destiny of man is worked out. The Ancient Spirit of the Years, together with the Chorus, explains what the Will is and how it works; it is unfeeling since the Spirit and Chorus of the Pities does the pleading and protesting. The replies of the Spirit of the Pities represent the reactions of Hardy's sensitive nature. The rebuffs that the pleadings receive prove the unconsciousness of the Immanent Will. This brings out the Cosmic Irony by indicating that man's destiny is controlled by an unfeeling and unconscious Immanent Will. Hardy has found a 'scheme of things' for his metaphysics.

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[2]The word "artistries" here has always been intriguing. It seems to sum up a whole series of words, from actions to complicated machinations. It also seems to have a "designing" force which brings out the full faculty of the Will.

HARDY'S VISION OF IRONY IN "THE DYNASTS"

The Spirits Sinister and Ironic are diametrically opposed to the Spirit of the Pities; the Ironic Spirit is always on hand to point out the irony of the situation. He utters only two words in the Fore-Scene and these are pregnant with ironic meaning. The Spirit of the Pities says "Let this terrestrial tragedy. . ." then the Spirit Ironic breaks in with "Nay, Comedy". It is the Spirit Sinister that enjoys the misery of man in a way that reminds one of Caliban.[3] The Spirit Ironic's task is that of an observer who points out the incongruities and chuckles over them. The Spirit of Earth represents man, the victim of their machinations.

The Spirit Ironic appears to get special satisfaction from calling attention to the incongruities that he observes; he laughs in private enjoyment at human dilemmas. His participation in the drama is revealing. He seems to combine the visions of the three other Main Spirits and to add something of his own by way of comment; he has attained that penetration of events which allows him to see the comedy in tragedy, the reality behind appearance. His genius is that he sees everything in relation to everything else; nothing

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[3]There are some who believe that the only utterance of Calibanism in Hardy is the famous "President of the Immortals" passage in the novel Tess of the D'Urbervilles. This was wrung from Hardy in the bitterness of his feeling for Tess. It could well have been said by the Spirit of the Pities.

is simple to him, because there is always another side to point out.

The comedy produced by the Ironic Spirit has the effect of reducing man's mistakes to their proper scale. He finds humour in the fact that enemy soldiers fraternize during a battle lull; he points out the irony resulting from man's ignorance of the future, enjoying his humour at the expense of human dignity.

The purpose of the introduction of these Phantom Intelligences is well illustrated by Harold Child:

> These Phantom Intelligences, affected by the action, commenting on it, and sometimes interfering in it, are Hardy's answer to the great 'why?' Without these, The Dynasts would be an epic of nations and men; with them it is an epic of the universe and of human life.[4]

It might be added to this that The Dynasts is an attempt to establish a system of metaphysics through the instrument of Irony. When man's will is in agreement with the Immanent Will, no suffering results; but when man's will is not in agreement, trouble arises. Some fatalism is indicated when Hardy makes the Immanent Will unconscious, and man, the ironic victim of an unconscious power. The Spirit of the Pities asks:

> Why doth It so and so, and ever so
> This viewless, voiceless Turner of the Wheel?

In these words Hardy answers those who criticized his use of

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[4]Child, Harold C., Thomas Hardy, 1916, New York.

celestial machinery to illustrate his philosophy:

> What the reviewers really assert is, not 'This is an untrue and inartistic view of life,' but 'This is not the view of life that people who thrive on conventions can permit to be painted'. If, instead of the machinery I adopted, I had constructed a theory of a world directed by fairies, nobody would have objected, and the critics would probably have said 'What a charming fancy of Mr. Hardy's!' But having chosen a scheme which may or may not be a valid one, but is presumably much nearer reality than the fancy of a world ordered by fairies would be, they straightway lift their brows.[5]

Hardy was attempting to evolve a system in which he could account for all the ironic sequence of events, plays of fate and coincidence that he had pictured objectively in the novels and poems. He was simply using formal terminology to elaborate ironic events and the ideas which he had adopted as long ago as his earliest poems and the more tragic novels.

There is a good deal of verbal and dramatic irony even in the actual portrayal of historical facts in the play which has nothing to do with the Overworld section of the play. Maria Louisa tells of many important prophecies in the Apocalypse which she applies to Napoleon; one of these is that he is to die that very year. Although she says she does not attach overmuch importance to these, she exclaims: "but oh, how glad I should be to see them come true". The simple irony lies in the fact that the knowing audience is

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[5]Hardy, Mrs. F. E., The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, p. 104.

aware that Maria Louisa herself is to be Napoleon's next wife, and the dramatic irony is heightened when, discussing Napoleon's forthcoming divorce, she says: "I am sure that the Empress, her mother, will never allow one of the house of Romanoff to marry with a bourgeois Corsican. I wouldn't if I were she". As the coach bearing Maria Louisa approaches, Napoleon and Murat rush up to it and look in the window; shrinking back, Maria Louisa inside exclaims: "Oh Heaven; Two Highwaymen are upon us," but after the Emperor is announced, she ironically retorts to him, "You are so much better looking than your portraits that I hardly knew you" -- this amid the blushing and confusion of the Archduchess.

The reader detects irony of a grimmer nature in the scene which represents the Old Guard and other regiments honouring the picture of the young king of Rome[6] playing at cup-and-ball, the ball being represented by a globe. Tragic irony had destined other ends for the son than it had for the father. The irony increases to the proportions of satire in the words of Napoleon himself as he views from a distance the Russian ecclesiastics passing through the regiments bearing the ikon and other religious insignia while

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[6]After the downfall of Napoleon, his son, the so-called King of Rome became a political pawn in Europe, especially after the Congress of Vienna. He died prematurely at the age of twenty-one.

the Russian soldiers kneel. Napoleon says:

"Ay! Not content to stand on their own strength,
They try to hire the enginry of Heaven.
I'm no theologian, but I laugh
When war, defensive or aggressive either,
Is in its essence pagan, and opposed
To the whole gist of Christianity."

To this seeming satire on Christianity, the remark of Bessieres provides an anti-climax:

"'Tis to fanaticize their courage, sire."

The horrible scenes of human degradation pictured among the deserters of Sir John Moore's army are stronger than any invective. Of this, the Spirit Ironic remarks in deeply ironic utterance:

"Quaint poesy, and real romance of war!"

In the scene after Waterloo, the Chorus of the Years is in awe at the havoc wreaked by the ironic events as it views and bespeaks the destruction of earth creatures, snails, moles, etc. by the trampling armies of Waterloo. Hardy was not content with having the leaders of war and the actual combatants viewed as ironic victims of the Immanent Will; he shows us the country folk of his own Wessex, the poor of Paris, the rabble of Spain, all adversely affected by it. The satire against war is extended throughout the drama; the Spirit of the Pities is continually bringing the irony of each situation before our eyes; in his asking 'why?' and receiving nothing but rebuffs or curt replies from the Spirits Ironic or Sinister, he brings out the irony of these

events.

At times, Napoleon admits that he is the victim of ironic circumstances; on these occasions he takes his place as the puppet of the Immanent Will, After Moscow, Napoleon exclaims to Maria Louisa who has been questioning him on the loss of the army:

> Napoleon (with a twitch of displeasure)
> you scarcely understand
> I meant the enterprise and not its stuff. . .
> I had no wish to fight, nor Alexander,
> But Genius who outshapes my destinies
> Did all the rest!

The following is his reply to the Queen of Prussia:

> Some force within me, baffling my interest,
> Harries me onward, whether I will or no.
> My star, my star, is what's to blame--not I.
> It is unanswerable.

In his troubled sleep, he murmurs:

> Why hold me my own master, if I be
> Ruled by the pitiless Planet of Destiny.

Hardy's tragedy lies in the tenet that conscious man is forced to be the puppet of a blind Will; herein lies the irony of his situation. The Spirit Ironic points out the hopelessness resulting from this situation; the Spirit Sinister indicates the resulting chaos.

In the After-Scene the Spirit of the Pities wonders if "blankness be for aye?"

> Men gained cognition with flux of time
> And wherefore not the Force informing them?

Hardy felt that, through evolution, the governing Force

would attain consciousness and that man's lot would be improved thereby. Hardy does not identify himself with the Spirit Ironic in its scepticism or with the Spirit Sinister in its sardonicism; he identifies himself throughout the drama with the Spirit of the Pities. The drama ends with the Chorus uttering the hope that the Immanent Will will become conscious and sympathetic. The Chorus says:

> Consciousness the Will enforcing,
> Till It fashions all things fair.

Much of the irony that is serious enough to affect man's destiny, and which we have called "tragic irony", has been caused by the unconscious Immanent Will decreeing things and not being able to foresee their serious consequences on the destiny of man. With the growth of consciousness, Hardy sees some practical ground for "evolutionary meliorism." This all important question of consciousness may be summed up in these words:

> In The Dynasts we have not only been shown with great poetic justice a full perspective of life as seen through the various elements of human personality, but reason itself has fully faced reality and not ended on a note of scepticism, despair, or fatalism, but on an attempt to face the problem of unconsciousness; which runs through all existence.[7]

What does Hardy owe to the Greek Dramatists for his sense of tragic irony? The Greek drama envisages a moral

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[7]Chakravarty, Amiya, The Dynasts and the Post-War Age in Poetry, Oxford University Press, 1938, p. 74.

order built out of the vicissitudes of life; Hardy can see no order resulting from them. The Greeks derived from human tragedy guides for right action; Hardy could see in it only a senseless cruelty with but a faint gleam of hope for the future.

It seems within the bounds of truth to say that The Dynasts was Hardy's greatest work of irony. Here he had a means of giving his ironic vision scope to extend itself. His system of Spirits and Choruses was the actual working out of ideas which he had expressed in a more cramped or confined way in the poems and in most of the serious novels. The Spirits, commenting and reflecting on the passage of events interpret the meaning of the action. The Spirits Sinister and Ironic are the embodiment of that deeply ironic sense of Hardy's which had always rejoiced in, and sorrowed over the ill-timed or perverse in life; it is his supreme effort to penetrate beneath the surface of life.

The soul of the ironic vision lies in the Spirit Ironic. It is characterized by irreverence, scepticism, disillusionment and a sense of incongruity. It points out the absurdities of man's pretensions and in doing this, it deprecates the serious purpose of human activity. It reinforces the irony of things by continually recalling man's condition as a mere puppet. The Dynasts was Hardy's 'great Ironic Vision' drawn from the sufferings of mankind in an era

when strife and suffering were great. It is Hardy's best effort in dramatic irony. The reader possesses the same advantage as that of the Greek audience; he knows beforehand what, in general, is going to happen and he is instructed by the choruses of Spirits and reaps the benefit of their instructions. Nothing in the action justifies the hopeful cry of the Pities at the end of the drama; their humanity demands an optimistic prospect. The hero of The Dynasts, if hero there is, is suffering humanity.

CHAPTER VIII

IRONY IN THE SHORT STORIES

POINTS DISCUSSED IN THIS CHAPTER

1. Because of the relatively small number of short stories, irony in them is of less importance than that found in either the poems or the novels.

2. The Pattern of Irony in the short stories contained in the volume Life's Little Ironies is divided into three main classifications.

   (a) Irony resulting from the fact that the intended good turns into disaster.
   Examples - For Conscience Sake
   - A Tragedy of Two Ambitions.

   (b) Irony resulting from the clash of actions represented by what a person does through ignorance and what he would have done had he possessed more information.
   Examples - Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion
   - On a Western Circuit.

   (c) Irony of fact rather than of conflict
   Examples - The Son's Veto
   - The Fiddler of the Reels
   - A Tradition of 1804.

CHAPTER VIII

IRONY IN THE SHORT STORIES

The short stories are the least important of the three genres Hardy used to portray his irony. There are at most only five volumes of short stories[1] and only three of these contain what might be termed good examples of what we may call Hardy's typical ironic short story. In this chapter we shall attempt to examine the nature of the irony in some typical short stories. They will be treated in much the same manner as was used in examining the novels and the poems.

Since Hardy has already in the title of each collection labelled the nature of the experience, perhaps the volume entitled Life's Little Ironies will furnish the most suitable examples of the irony encountered in the short stories. In certain of these, the irony tends to fall into patterns. In the first series of examples to be examined, the irony results from the fact that the good intended turns into disaster. The two in which the irony follows this vein are, For Conscience Sake and A Tragedy of Two Ambitions.

In the first of these, For Conscience Sake, Millbourne decides to ease his conscience by marrying, twenty

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[1]See the Bibliography at the end of this study.

years late, a woman by whom he has had an illegitimate daughter. His intentions are good but in doing this belated benevolent action, he almost ruins the daughter's chances of success in life. He finally gives up his well-meant attempt and deserts his wife and daughter. Irony has resulted in ill when good was intended.

In the second story, A Tragedy of Two Ambitions, two sons, ambitious for themselves, consider their shiftless father as their main obstacle to success. They make no attempt to rescue him when he falls into a weir in a drunken fit, and drowns. The irony lies in the fact that they do not attain the success they had hoped for and expected. Their negative sin is so far from producing the desired effect that they consider throwing themselves in the same weir one day. As in the former story, the well-intentioned action has the ironic result of producing the opposite effect to that foreseen.

The irony of the two other stories in this volume follows another mode; it may be termed that of the person blinded by ignorance. Here the irony consists in the clash of actions represented by what the person does through ignorance and what he would have done had he possessed complete information.

In Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion, Phyllis Grove's engagement to Humphery Gould has been broken off,

whereupon she falls in love with a York Hussar. She changes her mind about eloping to France with the soldier and his comrade because she overhears a remark that Gould made when he returned to visit her. When it is too late she discovers she has misunderstood Humphery's words; he had really come to tell her that he is already married. Shortly after this, she is called to witness the execution of the two soldiers who were caught while trying to desert. Ignorance of facts has here dictated the ironic mistake that had tragic consequences.

The same mode of irony is found in On a Western Circuit. Charles Raye marries a serving maid, Anna, principally because of the appealing letters he receives. But they are not from Anna; they are from her mistress, Edith Harnham, who herself is in love with Raye. A few hours after the marriage, he discovers the deception, and ignorance of facts has completed the irony. Here the irony is further complicated by the fact that Edith Harnham loves him. She has ironically become her own victim.

The type of irony found in three other stories of this volume, The Son's Veto, The Fiddler of the Reels, and A Tradition of 1804 is of still another mode. In these the irony seems to exist in fact rather than in conflict. The rule of ethics acts as motivation and this standard, when facts are contrasted, creates the irony when the events

prove wanting and idealism fails to prove its worth.

In The Son's Veto, the son refuses to allow his mother to marry a grocer; the main reason for this snobbery is the fact that his education is much superior to that of his mother. She dies of grief as a result. The irony lies in the fact that the son has his way in the matter and the mother is lost as a result. The irony here seems to have some affinity to that which was used in dealing with the conventions;[2] this is that conventional good may produce evil and the irony lies between the levels of what actually results and what should result if Right were to win through. The irony also implies that a revision of standards is necessary in the judging of values.

A fiddler, by the name of Mop Allamoor becomes the father of an illegitimate daughter; the mother's engagement to one Ned Hipcroft is broken off and Mop disappears. Years later Car'line, the mother, seeks marriage with Ned. After the marriage Ned finally comes to love the child more than he does the mother. When Mop, the child's natural father, hears of this he kidnaps the child, and this of course causes Ned untold anxiety. The irony here lies mostly in the fact that Ned had unbelievably changed his attitude from that which one might ordinarily have expected. There is a

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[2]See the Chapters on "Irony in the Early Novels", and "Irony in the Later Novels."

further irony in the fact that the foster-father is completely upset over the fate of a child whose father had caused him so much grief and who had a greater right to the child in any case.

In the short stories that Hardy wrote, the irony seems to fall into these three main types: first, the type of irony resulting from an action that was intended to produce good and did not, secondly, irony resulting from a clash of actions, thirdly, the type existing in the fact itself. There is some light dramatic irony in a few of the stories in the volume Wessex Tales; there is a little of the first type in the biographical sketches entitled A Group of Noble Dames. The short story was suitable for these types of irony since they admit of succinct delineation. If the irony is not quickly recognized or 'gathered' by the reader, only a sentimental story will be left. It may be that Hardy feared this result when he was confined by the compactness of the short story. There is little time for him to enlist the sympathy of his reader in this genre. The reader must actually bring his mind to bear on the fact causing the irony or the issue of the action which intends one effect and produces another. Hardy seems to have felt that he needed a wider range in prose to ensure the reader's proper attitude towards his idealism and to translate judgment upon experiences into irony.

CHAPTER IX

FACTORS IN HARDY'S IRONY

POINTS DISCUSSED IN THIS CHAPTER

1. The purpose of examining the factors in Hardy's Irony is to bring us to a deeper understanding of irony and a more thorough knowledge of the ironic temperament of Hardy.

2. Factors producing irony:
   - (a) The lavish use of accident and chance.
   - (b) The use of omens and premonitions.
   - (c) The mocking of Nature.
   - (d) Coincidence - (1) The complicating effect of coincidence.
     (2) Its nature in the novels.
     (3) Its results.
   - (e) The inflexibility of convention.
   - (f) Class division or social prejudice.

CHAPTER IX

FACTORS IN HARDY'S IRONY

Irony is produced in different ways by different writers. There are certain means used which are common to many writers; other writers, and particularly those whose main preoccupation is with irony, are not satisfied with these universal means although they often use them, and do so in new and unexpected ways. More often, we find such writers turning to new methods of producing irony. It is our purpose here to examine how Hardy succeeded in using certain factors in his irony. This will not be simply an objective examination of the various ways in which circumstances can be manipulated into eliciting the feeling of irony in the reader; it should lead to a deeper penetration of irony, a more thorough understanding of the ironic temperament of Hardy, as well as a greater understanding of his purpose in using irony as a means of communicating his ideas.

Hardy used accident and chance lavishly in the plotting of his narratives. But with him these seem to mean more than their names indicate; they are the fruits of an agency which man never seems to be able to discern. Perhaps the following excerpt from the novel A Pair of Blue Eyes explains Hardy's views of the unexpected:

> Strange conjunctions of phenomena, particularly those of a trivial everyday kind, are so frequent

> in an ordinary life that we grow used to their unaccountableness, and forget the question whether the very long odds, against such juxtaposition is not almost a disproof of it being a matter of chance at all.

Hardy sees that there must be invisible means at work directing these events and confusing man's efforts to succeed. He seemingly directs the reader to notice events leading up to the tragic outcome.

Another means that Hardy uses freely to give his irony a twist is the use of omens and premonitions. In some cases they are used as a warning; the person warned seems either to refuse outright to take notice of the warning or to be indifferent towards it, and the neglected omen serves to increase the irony for the reader. This helps to strengthen the position of the reader or spectator since his foreknowledge is fortified.

Nature is often used to mock man in the strait into which ironic events have led him. Nature puts herself in a mood to sympathize with the victim of ironic events. In the novel Tess of the D'Urbervilles, after the misplacement of the letter, Tess confesses her past to Angel Clare who becomes progressively stunned by the confession:

> The fire in the grate looked impish--demoniacally funny, as if it did not care in the least about her strait.

By the introduction of Egdon Heath into the novel The Return of the Native, Hardy has created an agent or a vague char-

acter whose function seems to be that it manufactures ironic events to the confusion of its victims.[1] The use of the hurricane in frustrating the marriage in the novel Two on a Tower is another example of the direct interference of nature in the ironic frustration of life.

Perhaps the biggest factor that Hardy uses to create irony is his all-pervading use of coincidence. Critics have roundly condemned him for deliberately going out of his way to call in coincidence to achieve tragic effects. Coincidence is used not merely for the lesser uses found for it by other writers, such as the creation of suspense and the complicating of the plot; Hardy uses it mainly to produce irony with these aforesaid results as by-products. On account of its importance here, it will be necessary to spend considerable time in attempting to evaluate its use.

In the tragic novels, a simple accident starts a whole series of events culminating in utter destruction--usually moral, often social as well. The word "chance" should be kept for an isolated action; coincidence involves two actions happening together by chance. In most cases the succession or series of events depends on a first action that may be attributed to chance. The reader is usually the

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[1]Egdon Heath is mentioned here as a part of the use Hardy makes of nature in producing irony. The Heath as a character itself is dealt with in the chapter on Irony in the Early Novels.

knowing onlooker and he 'gathers' the irony as the coincidence develops into its results. Sometimes the reader is not given special knowledge beforehand and the irony of the situation surprises him as well as the participants. He is not led into the irony but it bursts upon him. In the novel A Pair of Blue Eyes, Knight and Smith, riding together in the train to Endelstow, are ignorant of the fact that the same train bears the body of Elfride; not until the name-plate is read do they or the reader know the identity of the dead. Sometimes the coincidence is negative; in Jude the Obscure nobody appears to help or advise young Jude at a time when advice would surely have changed the course of events.

Coincidence in Hardy rarely, if ever, leads to happy results; its purpose is to bring about, through later ironic events, tragic results that adversely affect the destiny of his characters. In A Pair of Blue Eyes, a slight illness prevented Vicar Somerset from receiving his guest, Stephen Smith, and the Vicar's daughter Elfride acted as hostess for the occasion; this simple coincidence started a train of events which resulted in two broken-hearted lovers of Elfride, Smith and Knight, meeting at her funeral, each blaming the other for causing unhappiness. Mrs. Charmond's accident in The Woodlanders caused the renewal of her affair with her former lover that ended with such dire results. Examples of this can be found in almost every novel. The 'persist-

ence of the unforeseen', aided and abetted by coincidence leads ironically to tragic results; the characters are unable to overcome these grim machinations. Duffin brings out clearly how ironic use of coincidence has affected Hardy's philosophy:

> In the microcosm of Hardy's novels there is unquestionably a power--conscious or unconscious, personal or impersonal--that controls, influences, at least hampers and hinders the doings of man. The conception is so universally and consistently present that it is difficult not to see in it a main strain of Hardy's philosophy. He does protest, over and over again, that conception, like others, is to be regarded as the record of an impression, not of a conviction, but the change of name alters nothing, for an artist's impressions are his convictions, and an impression that persists throughout a lifetime is likely to have hardened into a belief.[2]

In many of Hardy's novels coincidence is the revelation of this 'power'; he translated the coincidences of life into tragedy. It is the revelation of the blind instinctive onrush.

The inflexibility of conventions and the manner in which these provide an impediment to the realization of man's happiness is another element or factor used by Hardy to produce irony. It is worth noting in passing that these same conventions were designed by society for the ultimate happiness of man; there is irony in the fact that Hardy uses

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[2]Duffin, H. C., Thomas Hardy - Study of the Wessex Novels, Manchester University Press, 1916, p. 193.

them to cause unhappiness. The conventions that Hardy deplores most frequently are those dealing with sexual relationships, marriage and divorce. In the novel Jude the Obscure, Jude who is addressing the crowd at Christminster says "I perceive there is something wrong in our social formulas." In deference to convention, Jude[3] marries a girl with whom he knows he can find no happiness and commits himself to a lifetime of misery. The difficulty of divorce in England becomes the cause of ironies in Hardy's view; it victimizes Giles Winterbourne in The Woodlanders as well as Jude and Sue Bridehead in Jude the Obscure.

Class division or social prejudice is still another factor used by Hardy to create irony. In The Hand of Ethelberta, this is used to create a deep irony in the character of Ethelberta herself. She refuses to marry a poor man in preference to a nobleman of dubious character simply to attain fortune for herself and her family. Her security, found in this way, proves a frustration and causes a 'personal' irony.

These factors are used in various combinations throughout Hardy's novels, short stories and poems. Often they work singly; in these cases the author concentrates on one factor and depends on it exclusively to produce his irony. This is true particularly of the poems and short

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3From the novel Jude the Obscure.

stories. In the novels we usually find several of these factors combined to produce the result of irony; the wider range of the novel lends itself to this combined force. As a result, the irony in the novels is more effective though perhaps less subtle.

CHAPTER X

TECHNIQUE IN HARDY'S IRONY

POINTS DISCUSSED IN THIS CHAPTER

1. The happy union of comprehension of irony with technique made Hardy an enduring Ironist.

2. Four ways of establishing the sense of irony in the reader.
   - (a) Selection of situations involving irony.
   - (b) The dramatization of these situations -- Dramatic Irony.
   - (c) The use of lesser ironies -- verbal.
   - (d) Use of the attitude of irony brought to bear on the situation to clarify and expand it.

3. Techniques used to achieve verbal irony:
   - (a) Characters speaking unconscious ironies.
   - (b) Irony in the comments used by the author.
     - Contradiction of meaning.
     - Imposition of something indicating extra hidden knowledge of the speaker in an ordinary statement.
   - (c) Inconsistency stated with mock gravity.

4. Techniques used to intensify ironic experience:
   - (a) Juxtaposition of the contrasting effects.
   - (b) Ironic attitude of the author toward his scene and characters.

5. A rather thorough study of techniques of irony in the novel Tess of the D'Urbervilles:
   - (a) Development in the reader of the consciousness of irony.
   - (b) Omens and premonitions -- Verbal Irony.
   - (c) Dramatic irony used in various ways throughout the Seven Phases of the novel--accident--chance and coincidence.

CHAPTER X

TECHNIQUE IN HARDY'S IRONY

No matter how penetrating the vision of irony may be, it would never have attracted our attention without craft. This craft translates irony into literature by suitable techniques. It was the happy union of comprehension of irony with technique that made Hardy an important and enduring ironist. The impact of any tragic event in his writings, enhanced by devices of dramatic irony, intensifies the emotional effect in the reader or spectator. This produces in him a strong sense of irony.

This sense of irony is established in the spectator in four ways. First, by the selection of the situation which involves irony; secondly, by the dramatization of this situation or the use of dramatic irony; thirdly, by the use of lesser ironies, principally those which might be termed verbal; and fourthly, by the attitude of irony playing around the chosen situation in order to convince the spectator of the irony, to clarify and expand it for him. It is evident that while the first and fourth are not the same operation, there is a close affinity between them. We have already observed in the preceding chapters how the situations have been selected; this was noticed principally in the examples from the various literary types of his writings,

the novels, the poems, The Dynasts and the short stories. To some extent too, we have already observed the third way mentioned above, that is the use of lesser ironies throughout the works; however it will repay us to look further into the technique of verbal irony. It also remains to examine carefully how Hardy dramatized the situations in his use of dramatic irony and how he established the sense of irony in the spectator.

We shall first examine Hardy's technique in the use of verbal irony. It is true that a lavish use of irony by an author tends to establish a sense of irony in the reader; yet other techniques are needed to assure a proper expansion of this sense. The variety of ironic techniques may best be seen in the novel Tess of the D'Urbervilles; in this novel special attention will be paid to the use of dramatic irony.

The simplest definition of verbal irony is that it is the use of words to show a meaning which is apparently different from the meaning intended. This statement contradicts the intended meaning or hides it by saying less than it is intended to imply. Hardy's verbal irony seems to work on two levels; it may take the form of a discrepancy between the way things appear and the way they really are, or between the way things should be and the way they are. This, of course, is true of other types of his irony besides verbal irony. But verbal irony must be read in its context in order to get

its full benefit. A situation involving dramatic irony may be related again in some one else's words and the irony will come through; this however is not the case with verbal irony since it requires the original words of the writer.

Hardy uses a variety of techniques to achieve verbal irony; he uses it consciously in having his characters speak, or at times in having the characters speak unconscious ironies. These, and particularly the former, are fairly common techniques among novel writers. Another way is that of using irony in his comments. There are two important techniques used in Hardy's discourse: first, that of contradicting the meaning that the words were intended to convey and secondly, that of imposing on an ordinary statement something that indicates the extra hidden knowledge of the speaker. Less important verbal ironies include those which might be termed understatements and contradiction, sometimes used singly, sometimes combined.

What might be termed a typical Hardyan technique of verbal irony is that in which he states an inconsistency with mock gravity. The reader is left to attempt to unravel the real meaning. The following example of this contains an inversion of humour:

> The landlord of the lodging, who had heard that they were a queer couple, had doubted if they were married at all, especially as he had seen Arabella kiss Jude one evening when she had taken a little cordial; and he was about to give them notice to quit, till by

> chance overhearing her one night haranguing Jude in rattling terms, and ultimately flinging a shoe at his head, he recognized the note of ordinary wedlock; and concluding that they must be respectable, said no more.
>
> (Jude the Obscure)

The verbal irony here amounts to a light satire on the behaviour of married couples.

Another technique, one which is used perhaps less often than might be expected by an author whose main preoccupation was with irony, is that in which the irony is shown by a juxtaposition of two contrasting effects; the irony is left to be gathered by the reader who may be helped by an indicative phrase of the author:

> Here stood this aspiring piece of masonry, erected as the most conspicuous and ineffaceable reminder of a man that could be thought of; and yet the whole aspect of the memorial betokened forgetfulness.
>
> (Two on a Tower) (Italics are mine.)

Aided by the 'yet' the reader is left to supply for himself the irony of the incongruity.

Still another means of intensifying the ironic experience in his readers should be noted here. It is a technique and yet it is not; perhaps we should term it an 'instrument'. I refer to the ironic attitude Hardy takes toward his scene and characters. This is achieved by an over-all attention to irony on the part of the author. He loses no opportunity to use the various types of irony in a single novel, poem, or short story; this has the effect of creating an ironic "mood" in the reader. He looks for

irony, he expects it and his spirit is receptive to it on every occasion. The mood of the reader in perceiving the irony corresponds to that of the author in creating it. In The Satires of Circumstance all the various techniques create in the reader a feeling of facetiousness in correspondence to the disposition of the author. In a typical Wessex novel such as The Trumpet-Major the mood is that of gentle mockery; in an idyllic novel such as Under the Greenwood Tree it is that of affection and in the more bitterly ironic novels, Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure as well as in The Dynasts it is one of sympathy and commiseration. The aura of irony pervades the work and communicates itself to the reader who becomes imbued with it because Hardy has disposed his techniques as the subject and mood dictated.

It will be worth while to take what may be considered Hardy's most controversial novel, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, and study more closely the exemplification of the various techniques. This novel is perhaps the most appropriate for our purpose, because although it is not usually considered his best, it is perhaps the happiest example of the implementation of many of the ironic techniques we have been observing.

In the first section of this novel the reader, helped by rather unimportant incidents, develops a consciousness of irony. At the very beginning the Parson tells Jack Durbey-

field that he is a descendant of the D'Urbervilles; this hint of noble lineage disturbs him and when Tess is introduced, the reader is led to feel that this inference of aristocracy in the family is not calculated to advance the felicity of Durbeyfield's dependents. On a journey taken at night Tess and her young brother have a conversation about the stars and Tess expresses the opinion that we live on a "blighted star, not a splendid and sound one". This attitude leads the reader to expect the worst as the novel progresses.

Omens and premonitions are used frequently in the first part of the novel to give the atmosphere of irony. When Parson Tringham knows that the claim of the Durbeyfields to kinship with the supposedly noble family of D'Urbervilles is false, Tess's mission to claim kinship is a stroke of dramatic irony, especially when the author prepares the reader by revealing emotions of doubt in Tess. A typical example of an omen portending disaster, which prepares the reader to expect further ironic developments of greater importance, is the incident that happens to Tess when on looking down, she pricks her chin on a rose thorn:

"Like all the cottagers of Blackmoor Vale, Tess was steeped in fancies and prefigurative superstitions; she thought this an ill-omen--the first she had noticed that day."

After Tess has fallen and she is "Maiden No More", Hardy approves of Tess and not the conventionalism she has

violated. Irony of fact is brought out in Hardy's comment on Tess's feelings:

> She looked upon herself as a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence. But all the while she was making a distinction where there was no difference. Feeling herself in antagonism, she was quite in accord. She had been made to break an accepted Law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly.

This attitude in Hardy makes all the later references by various characters to Tess's virtue ironic. These examples of dramatic irony are on two levels: first, if the speaker knew the truth he would not say what he says; secondly, Hardy, knowing all, upholds the opinion of Tess made by the speaker in his ignorance.[1]

In the following two phases of the novel entitled "The Rally" and "The Consequence", after the death and burial of her baby 'Sorrow', there are many examples of both verbal and dramatic irony; these arise from the ignorance of her past on the part of her friends and her refusal to reveal the truth. Her concealment of the truth from her new lover Angel Clare is more than simple dramatic irony. Its immediate irony prepares the reader for later tragedy when the

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[1]Although it is not strictly speaking irony, Hardy's condonement may perhaps be pure sympathy. But his intensity of feeling for Tess communicates itself to the reader who, Hardy hopes, will fall in with his ironic view of the convention that condemned Tess. It amounts to an oblique means of communicating irony to the reader.

truth of her past is revealed to him. In Phase Four -- "The Consequence" the irony of Angel Clare's delusion about Tess prepares the reader for the tragedy of Tess's confession. The uneasiness of Tess in her new-found happiness is another device employed to increase the sense of coming tragedy. Tess says "all this good fortune may be scourged out o'me by a lot of ill". These prophetic words are perhaps the best example of verbal irony in retrospect since, when the reader later learns of the cruel sufferings of Tess, he remembers how prophetic these words were. The forebodings as instruments of ironic anticipation, increase until Tess's wedding morn.

There is excellent dramatic irony in Angel Clare's confession to Tess on their marriage night that he also is guilty of misdemeanours in his past life. His ignorance that Tess has the same story to tell exemplifies the irony of the knowing and unknowing characters. It is difficult to find a situation in which this type of dramatic irony is used more effectively. The reader meets so many examples of irony where only the reader is the knowing person that it is a refreshing inversion to see such an effective exemplification of the type where one of the partakers is the knowing character. The irony is heightened for the reader who knows that Tess will shortly have the same type of revelation to make to Angel Clare.

TECHNIQUE IN HARDY'S IRONY

After the estrangement of Tess and Clare, ignorance of their separation causes many ironies. The neighbours, on seeing the smoke from their chimney, "thought of the newly married couple and envied their happiness". And these certain ironies of fact are made the centre of dramatic actions. Tess, who is no more guilty than Clare makes no effort to save herself or to plead her own cause. The fact of her guilt causes her to surrender to Hardy's irony of conventions. It drives Tess back to a union with her seducer Alec D'Urberville. It has come full circle and is well on its way to bringing about the complete ruin of Tess. The irony is deepened by the fact that in her own mind, Tess had decided to live by the conventions when she married Angel Clare; but those same conventions have ruined her chances and in Tess, achieved the opposite of their aims.

The ramification of the last two phases of Tess's career are a curious medley of the working of tragic irony. Angel Clare, having returned to England, and having undergone a moral change towards Tess, finds her as D'Urberville's mistress. By a strange juncture of ironic circumstances she murders D'Urberville and seems to find her long-looked-for peace with Clare. In a last ironic gesture of fate, she is arrested at Stonehenge, near the altar of the pagan gods.

In the famous and much discussed closing sentence of the novel: "'Justice' was done, and the President of the

Immortals had ended his sport with Tess", it is interesting to draw attention to an excellent example of verbal irony. The juxtaposing of the two words "justice" and "sport" creates a subtle contrast; especially so when 'justice' is put in quotation marks.

The techniques of irony used by Hardy in Tess of the D'Urbervilles certainly display both variety and excellence. Their interweaving is the work of a master ironist. He has imbued the reader with the spirit of irony through masterly use of verbal irony, preparation for ironic events of greater magnitude by the use of premonitions and omens, irony of fact caused by errors in judgment, and a full range of dramatic irony including accident, chance, coincidence. All these have fructified into utter tragedy.

CHAPTER XI

THE ARTISTRY OF HARDY'S IRONY

POINTS DISCUSSED IN THIS CHAPTER

1. The Real significance of Hardy's art considered from the point of view of irony must be considered in a twofold light:
   (a) in the light of his own artistic intention.
   (b) in respect to the standards of the critics.

2. In respect to (a) (above)
   (a) Hardy's appeal is to the emotions rather than to the reason.
   -as an observer he is both impassioned and analytical.
   -treatment of characters reveals his artistry.
   (b) Lionel Johnson's evaluation.

3. Other points of artistry that help in the production of irony:
   -the irony is enhanced by the prose style.
   -fine descriptions of nature.
   -the influence of ancient things as witnesses of ironic events.

4. Two kinds of reality in Hardy's works:
   -that concerned with circumstantial detail.
   -that concerned with the spiritual or moral order.

5. Impressionism and distortion as elements of realism.

6. The role of reality in irony.

7. Is there overuse of distortion to manufacture irony?

8. The place of comic irony.

9. Artistry in the use of irony in The Dynasts:
   -skilful arrangement of ironic sequence of events.
   -vividness of description helps the satire.
   -art shown in the skilful concomitance of the "Phantom" drama with the historical drama.
   -the "cosmic" view of the actions helps the cosmic irony.

CHAPTER XI

THE ARTISTRY OF HARDY'S IRONY

POINTS DISCUSSED IN THIS CHAPTER

10. Commentary on the art of the irony in the poem "The Convergence of the Twain."

11. Artistry in the use of irony exalts and purifies it.

CHAPTER XI

THE ARTISTRY OF HARDY'S IRONY

It should be borne in mind that the artistic side of an artist's production must not be overlooked when his outlook and thought are being examined. The real significance of Hardy's art should be viewed in a twofold light: first, in the light of his own artistic intention, and secondly, in respect to the standards of the critics. These must be considered from the point of view of irony; they may be viewed as a contribution to it or as a result of it.

It seems almost certain to anyone who has read much of Hardy's fiction that his appeal is to the emotions rather than to reason. In order to convince the reader, he attempts to surround him with an atmosphere of irony which has the effect of numbing the reason and arousing the emotions.[1] With him the appeal in fiction depended upon a conviction which may be termed an emotional reason rather than a logical reason.

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[1]Perhaps the efficacy of the use of Egdon Heath will serve as an example. Egdon, used as a background for ironic events, helps to create the atmosphere of irony. When this has been completed the reader is under the influence of Hardy's appeal to the emotions, and he feels frustrated in trying to explain logically the mistakes of the characters. The emotional appeal of the irony has taken the place of these explanations.

THE ARTISTRY OF HARDY'S IRONY

As an observer of life Hardy is both impassioned and analytical; if passion were lacking in his works, the result would simply be impressionism. His power of analysis forces him to look into the sufferings and problems of mankind and to seek an answer to the eternal 'why'. His preoccupation with irony is the direct result of his analysis of the problem of suffering. A true artist, he does not allow himself to be distracted from the natural sequence; the details in the novels are subordinate, simply a means to an end, and they help to formulate the design of irony.

Hardy's artistry is again to be seen in his treatment of character in the novels. They are not portrayed as heroes buffeted by a malevolent train of ironic events. Henchard's character is built up to show the effects of benevolent fate and the workings of tragic events upon it have not changed it basically. Gabriel Oak is not a martyr, although he was subjected to numerous perverse ironic incidents; nor are Troy, Fitzspiers, or Wildeve classed as villains although many perverse incidents of irony had their beginning in them.

Lionel Johnson, a severe critic of Hardy's philosophy pays tribute in the following words to his art in the elaboration of ironic events and in the treatment of his characters under ironic influences:

> Line upon line, as characters unfold, and passions wake, and motives meet or cross, the reader's mind falls into step with the writer's; to vary the figure, I might say that the reader answers the writer's call, as one instrument upon another, by sympathy. But so quietly do the fine actors perform their allotted parts, without strut and stare and fustian, but in the plain beauty of all natures, faithful to themselves; that when they have done, we seem to have assisted at the progress of a story within our actual experience; romance? we ask ourselves: psychology or what is the name for this spirit of simple truth? After all--this rich play of passions and emotions, with its ancient elements in their modern combinations, deserves no poorer name than truth.[2]

This helps to explain why the ironic events seem to act so naturally upon Hardy's characters, moulding them to their destinies. His artistry in the use of irony does not jar the reader into disbelief and revolt.

Other points of artistry which help to carry the reader along in the ironic groove will be mentioned here. The patient elaboration of Hardy's stories pays tribute to his prose style. The irony is enhanced by the innuendoes of Hardy's prose; the form is proper to the subject. The fine descriptions of Nature are of such artistry that they help the reader to appreciate the spirit of fate in the novels. Old things recall to Hardy man's struggle with ironic events; although these ancient things do not deal directly with life here and now, he looks upon them if not

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[2]Johnson, Lionel, The Art of Thomas Hardy, Dodd, Meade and Co., 1923, (originally published 1894), p. 66.

as instruments, at least as witnesses to ironic events influencing the life of man.

It has been mentioned previously that Hardy's appeal in fiction was to the emotions rather than to the reason, or to emotional reason rather than to logical reason. The question which naturally suggests itself then is: what realities will absorb the interest of a writer of fiction who stresses the emotions? Material realities are necessary but these are not foremost; they will have their place only when their presentation clarifies the passions and the intellectual and moral concepts.

In speaking of reality in Hardy, we may distinguish then between two kinds; first, that which is concerned with circumstantial detail and which may be termed scientific reporting; a slavish devotion to this type of scientific realism is not art, and Hardy seems to have paid little attention to it. The other reality is of the moral or spiritual order which remains in the soul after the physical remembrance has disappeared. This reality imputes to fiction not simply a recording of phenomena but an immediate perception of their meaning. This thought is put very well by Hardy himself:

> (The artist) should watch that pattern among general things which his idiosyncrasy moves him to observe, and describe that alone. This is, quite accurately,

> a going to Nature; yet the result is no mere photograph, but purely the product of the writer's own mind.[3]

From this quotation we may deduce that Hardy would include impressionism as a necessary element of realism. It was a representation of life that he aimed at, and this representation often involved some distortion:

> Art is a disproportioning--(i.e. distorting, throwing out of proportion)--of realities, to show more clearly the features that matter in those realities, which if merely copied or reported inventorially, might possibly be observed, but would more probably be overlooked. Hence 'realism' is not art.[4]

What has reality then to do with irony? The ironist busies himself with differences between the appearance of things and the reality of things or, as has been mentioned before, between the recording of phenomena and the immediate perception of their meaning. Physical fact then must be penetrated to come to the real truth. The true response of the artist then

> is to show the sorriness underlying the grandest things and the grandeur underlying the sorriest things.[5]

This is simply seeing unrecognized beauty through one's impressions; and this beauty is of the spiritual order, perceived by the soul rather than by the senses. He interprets

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[3]Hardy, Mrs. Florence E., The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891, p. 198.

[4]Ibid. p. 299

[5]Ibid. p. 223.

the incongruities of life in terms of their significance, and with some emphasis on the beauty of character that these tribulations create. In this way, spiritual beauty is communicated to the reader. While Hardy reiterates that in his works he is dealing only with impressions, he claims for them the reality of the spiritual or moral order. Evidently his so-called impressions are those of reality and truth; in other words, he does not mean only the appearance of things, but rather the way these things strike him, and his use of the word "impression" disclaims any intention of didacticism. His role was not that of teacher but of observer, and his irony was a way of revealing those impressions of reality and truth. The under-current of irony is that there are incongruities between appearances and realities and this is what irony was attempting to exemplify.

> Hardy's novels were not written for a purpose, to prove the truth of something; but with a prejudice, that it is a proven truth.[6]

It is apparent then that he is not trying to convince the reader; there is no dogmatism here. He is simply, by the use of irony, calling witness to the fact.

For many readers with a sceptical attitude there seems to be too much distortion in favour of irony for the truth to be borne out. It is true that he loses no opportunity of

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[6]Johnson, Lionel, The Art of Thomas Hardy. pp. 171-2.

using irony for his purpose. It is likewise true that some of this irony, which bears the highest emotional impact, offends the sensibilities of some readers. There is a feeling that the irony is too forced, too bitter, or too frequent. It is at this point that the reader feels that Hardy's use of irony is straining his art and this is perhaps true. The superabundance of irony has thinned the effect. The answer seems to lie in the reader's attitude; if he can surrender his imagination to Hardy's world, then the irony will enhance the emotional effect. The reader must envision Hardy's ironic picture of man's heroism and of his futility. It is the one working with the other that produces the irony and if Hardy seems to strain his art with an abundant use of irony, it is for added emotional power.

Most of the efforts of Hardy's art in the use of irony were directed towards the tragedies of life. Only now and then in the novels,[7] and more often in the poems is the result of irony comic in tone. The slyness of the humour is produced artfully by an exaggeration of gravity or an extension of irony beyond the credibility of the reader. But Hardy's emotional purpose in creating irony was not to be wasted on trivialities; there was too much tragedy in life

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[7]Attention is directed particularly to the sly irony of the rustics in the novel Under the Greenwood Tree and to the light satire in the Hand of Ethelberta.

toward which it could and should be directed. One purpose of comic irony is that it does help create a spirit of irony in the reader.

Artistry in the skilful arrangement of ironic sequence of events is exemplified in The Dynasts. The dramatization and the absorbing vividness of the description has helped to make the satire of war striking. The utter misery and social and moral degradation of the scenes depicting Sir John Moore's deserters and the flight from Moscow sharpen the grimness of the satire of war. Here Hardy has skilfully varied and adapted to the nature of the narrative numerous metrical mosaics. In this way drabness and monotony are avoided and the skill with which grim ironies are presented adds to the satisfaction of the reader's experiences.

As the historical novel unfolds, Hardy reveals a great deal of art in arranging that the philosophic drama between the Phantom Intelligences should move along as an ironic accompaniment to and commentary on the historical part. Skilful also is the pattern of the ironic discussions of the After-Scene. The conclusions of the cosmic irony have been systematized and crystallized into the comments of the Phantom Intelligences.

The cosmic view of the events which represents armies as "caterpillars crawling", soldiers working on the Lisbon fortifications as appearing like "cheese-mites", and

ships ploughing the oceans "like preened duck-feathers across a pond", helps the reader to view the cosmic irony through the eyes of the Phantom Intelligences. The strongest irony results in the greatest appeals of the spirit of the Pities and

> The force of an inner glow of ironical and pathetic ardour, which heats, animates, and raises such a mass, though it fails to melt it into one pure and coherent alloy, awakes a respectful and serious admiration in the reader.[8]

In poetry, the irony is graced with the usual poetic adjuncts such as well-turned phrases, fine choice of word, polished line, and embellished imagery. Irony in poetry is usually more compact and therefore more subtle than that found in prose passages. It is difficult to speak of these things convincingly in the abstract; for this reason and for the purpose of more direct reference and objectification, the liberty of quoting an entire poem here has been taken.

THE CONVERGENCE OF THE TWAIN

(Lines on the loss of the "Titanic")

In a solitude of the sea
Deep from human vanity,
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she.

Steel chambers, late the pyres
Of her salamandrine fires,
Cold currents thrid, and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.

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[8]Legouis and Cazamian, History of English Literature, p. 1290.

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Over the mirrors meant
To glass the opulent
The sea-worm crawls--grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.

Jewels in joy designed
To ravish the sensuous mind
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.

Dim moon-eyed fishes near
Gaze at the gilded gear
And query: "What does this vaingloriousness down here?"

Well: while was fashioning
This creature of cleaving wing,
The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything

Prepared a sinister mate
For her--so gaily great
A shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.

And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace, and hue
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

Alien they seemed to be;
No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history.

Or sign that they were bent
By paths coincident
On being anon twin halves of one august event.

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

The irony in this poem bears a close resemblance to that found in The Dynasts: the Immanent Will is at work again preparing the "sinister mate" in the form of the iceberg. This cosmic intelligence is the same phantom as the one that existed in The Dynasts since it is:

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"The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything". The cosmic irony is strongly objectified in the picture of the "Will" preparing the iceberg for its evil work while man is building the ship as his part of the plan. This is not irony born of coincidence; it has been planned by the "Will" to baffle man's expectation; a designed incongruity between what should be and what will be. The irony is deepened by the apparent improbability of the meeting:

> No mortal eye could see
> The intimate welding of their later history.

This "no mortal eye" being able to see is the cause of the tragic irony in the poem. Man is frustrated in his potentialities; he attempts to conquer the sea in the "smart ship" and his efforts come to nought. The "spinner of the years"[9] incongruously chooses his moment for the meeting, specifically to frustrate man's attempt to conquer the seas. The verbal irony where the "moon-eyed fishes gaze at the gilded gear" with the query on their lips is an example of the personalizing of the portended tragic event to gain a sinister effect. Though nothing is as yet changed in appearance, everything has been transformed in essence; and even the "dim" fishes of the deep have foreknowledge of the tragic event which is denied to man.

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[9]This is certainly not only a most euphonic phrase but it is in itself a verbal irony; the spinner casts events to suit his purpose which is usually to contradict man's ambitions. It is an example of a well-turned Hardyan phrase for the Immanent Will.

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Craft can not only enhance the effect of irony; it can frame it into an unforgettable miniature or cast it into a tableau that creates a great effect on the mind of the reader. Artistry in the portrayal of irony exalts the irony and in a sense purifies it; and indeed it can do this on no other basis than that of absolute sincerity.

CHAPTER XII

THE EVOLUTION OF HARDY'S IRONY

POINTS DISCUSSED IN THIS CHAPTER

1. Review of the sequence of the writings for the purpose of viewing the groupings of the writings.
2. Because of lack of true chronological order in the poems, definite developmental trend is difficult to trace.
3. Conventional dramatic irony in the early novels.
4. The irony becomes more involved in the novel A Pair of Blue Eyes; the irony depends on the ignorance of the characters.
5. In the next two novels, the irony deals with relations between the sexes.
6. The irony of gentle mockery in The Trumpet-Major.
7. The three novels having irony stemming from incongruities--the sense of waste appears.
8. The expansion of the irony of waste in The Mayor of Casterbridge.
9. The Main object of the ironic attack is the conventions in the last two novels; the more concrete cause of irony.
10. The highpoint of Hardy's Irony in The Dynasts; the introduction of the cosmic personalities to explain and clarify the irony for the reader.

CHAPTER XII

THE EVOLUTION OF HARDY'S IRONY

Before an attempt can be made to answer the question whether or not there was an evolution in Hardy's irony, it will be necessary briefly to review the sequence of his writings. Hardy's verse covers all his productive years of authorship. He began publishing verse in periodicals before he was twenty; and while these were collected into volumes for publication later, it is evident that the date on the various volumes is not indicative of the date of publication of the poems. The novels and short stories fall into an easier grouping. With one exception[1] they were all published between the years 1871 and 1896. The Dynasts was published in three sections: Part I, 1904, Part II, 1906, Part III, 1908. For the purpose of viewing the development of Hardy's irony, then, wisdom would dictate that the main investigation should be confined to the novels and The Dynasts, omitting the Short Stories in view of the established fact that no new trend in development of irony can be discovered here on account of their very limited number.[2]

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[1]The exception is the volume of short stories, A Changed Man and Other Tales, published in 1913.

[2]See the Chapter "Irony in the Short Stories".

However, the poems must not be dismissed summarily. They were published over such a wide expanse of time, and so prolifically, that it is extremely difficult to establish any trend in the development of irony in them. It is true that Hardy had read Greek tragedy before he was twenty years of age and that the impact of Greek tragic irony had influenced him greatly. In our chapter "Irony in the Poems" it was pointed out[3] that a few of Hardy's most bitterly ironic poems were among his first publications. His serious ironic attitude towards the tragedy of events was varied now and then in the poems by lapses into light comic irony, as in the fifteen Satires of Circumstance. The poems then can scarcely furnish us with a definite indication of sustained development of irony.

According to Tatlock,[4] dramatic irony is produced by a contrast between ignorance and knowledge. In Hardy's first novel, Desperate Remedies, this rather conventional dramatic irony has its origin in a case of mistaken identity, a favourite stock device. Likewise, in the novel, Under the Greenwood Tree there is only one example of dramatic irony, and this has no serious results. The tangled irony that

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[3]See the first part of the Chapter "Irony in the Poems". The reference here is particularly to the poem "Hap".

[4]Tatlock, John S., Dramatic Irony, University of California Chronicle 1923, p. 212.

occurs in the novel A Pair of Blue Eyes depends upon the ignorance of the three main characters; although there are serious results the irony here cannot be termed tragic. It does contain some bitterness of tone and reveals some conscious tendency in the author towards commiseration. In A Pair of Blue Eyes and The Hand of Ethelberta, Hardy directs his irony upon the relations between the sexes, playing rather lightly around the theme, particularly in the second novel. This is the beginning of the series of novels whose main ironies deal with this topic, at first with a somewhat mock-heroic effect, later with increasing seriousness. There is a momentary pause in this development, during which Hardy's irony took the form of a gentle mockery towards his characters. This occurred in the novel The Trumpet-Major; the irony here showed some affinity to that used by the romantic ironists. It may be termed one type of irony of fact. The sustained irony of a bland nature found in this novel, not only exemplifies the ironic attitude of the author towards the circumstances he is depicting, but initiates it in the novels. It takes the form of continual verbal ironies made at the expense of the characters.

The irony in the novels, The Mayor of Casterbridge, The Woodlanders and Two on a Tower, takes a new turn. In these it does not have its origin in ignorance, but it stems from incongruities and is brought about by the uselessness of

effort. This irony has serious tragic consequences for the first time in the novels and a sense of apalling waste dawns upon the reader. In Hardy, waste is ironic, since it reveals the incongruity between the way things are and the way they are meant to be.

As the novel-writing progressed, the irony of waste resulting from human ignorance becomes more encompassing. Its dire effects multiply until it engulfs its victim and brings about his downfall. Henchard, (The Mayor of Casterbridge) is the first important example of this. Tess and Jude are also examples, but in their case the waste is viewed not simply as a fault of character; it is a direct result of convention and of a strange interplay of circumstances. In these two novels, the irony has a bitterness not found in The Mayor of Casterbridge. In these, man's purpose is frustrated and evil is victorious over good. Errors in judgment contribute to the irony, but the irony is generally attributable to an overplay of cosmic cruelty in regard to man. The sentiment of unfulfillment is created in the reader by all the means at Hardy's disposal, omens, presentiments, ironic use of chance and coincidence, reversals of fortunes, even by recognition on the part of the characters that they are the ironic victims of a destiny that is bent on thwarting their plans and effecting their downfall.

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One important advance in the use of irony that Hardy made in writing the novels Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure is the addition of something concrete to which he could attach his irony: this is the conventions, or rather society's misinterpretation of the conventions. Until this time, at least in the novels, Hardy's blame had been directed towards some vague, impersonal force. He did not abandon entirely the use of this force in these two novels; it is still present to a large degree, but here, the main object of the ironic attack is the use of the conventions. Fresh irony results from the focusing of the force of irony in this new manner; man is now portrayed as the victim of his own ironies and is in a position to eliminate the cause of the incongruities that produce them, yet society makes no move to do so. When the incongruities result from the influence of fate, man is not in a position to prevent them.

These last two novels also reveal a new growth; the irony has resulted in a bleakness and desolation in human aspirations that have not been indicated before. The irony in Tess ends in utter melancholy, unrelieved by any hope, even that of the lovers being reunited in another world.

We may conclude, then, that there was an evolution of irony in the novels. At first, irony included only that found in a few comic situations; as the novel-writing progressed, irony became more serious, changing through irony

of circumstance, of character, to that of human upon human. This growth was accompanied by an abandonment of hope, at least of conventional hope, by an increasing portrayal of unmerited suffering and of the cruelty of indifference.

As has been mentioned in the chapter on The Dynasts[5] Hardy systematized his irony in the epic-drama. Here, instead of a vague set of forces, Hardy has given names to the forces that he finds at work in the creation of his irony. He has set up an array of spirits who possess a type of personality, and who speak and feel as man himself does. These personalities represent beings who speak to man as he would speak to himself when he views ironic events.

This represents the next step forward in Hardy's attempt to explain the nature of things through irony. He seems to have given up the attempt to have the reader interpret for himself the irony found in life, and to have given over this task to a group of cosmic beings whose duty is to interpret the irony for him. The irony of the historical drama is explained with the help of these allegorical figures of the Overworld. The conversations and observations of those abstract personalities do more than interpret the irony; they deepen it and intensify it to the point where not one tiny portion of the irony is lost to the reader. It is a

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[5]Refer to the chapter in the present work -- "Hardy's Ironic Vision in the Dynasts".

new method of creating the 'ironic vision' in the reader; and a method that had not been attempted before for this particular purpose.

Perhaps a simple illustration will bring out the effectiveness of this new stage in the development of Hardy's irony. It is as if the reader of the novels and poems can merely hear the tick of the clock of the Universe and read the time from the dial; in The Dynasts, because of the novel system of recording and interpreting the cosmic irony, the back of the clock has been removed so that the reader can see the working of the mainspring, the Immanent Will. He will not necessarily understand all he sees, but he sees it, and in doing so, receives the full impact of the ironic events and the 'vision' is intensified. None of it escapes him.

Certainly this new departure in the method of explaining and illustrating the ironies of the universe convinced the critics that it was an improvement over the method used in the novels; this is true insofar as the reader is aided in his conception of the ironic 'vision'. Sir Archibald Strong believes that:

> The Dynasts, both in scope and quality, is certainly the greatest English poem of the present age, and is perhaps one of the greatest English poems ever written. . .The Dynasts exemplifies and unites all of Hardy's greatest qualities.[6]

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[6]Strong, Sir Archibald, Four Studies, (1932), p. 81 and p. 99.

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The reader of Hardy knows what 'Hardy's greatest qualities' were; his preoccupation with irony is proverbial and therefore The Dynasts with its innovation in presenting irony to the reader, is the climax of his efforts to create the ironic vision in his readers.

This method of illustrating his preoccupation with irony and of clarifying it for the reader was in the nature of an expansion of his impressions. The Dynasts contained Hardy's most explicit statement of determinism since he uses formal terminology to express his ironic concept of the struggle between man and the exigencies of life. It constituted a step forward in the development in his ideas of ironic events. It involved a new element insofar as it represented a crystallizing into various agents, of forces which had hitherto existed only in a vague way in the mind of the reader. The method used in The Dynasts constituted a clearer approach to the Ironic Vision than anything heretofore attempted. If the definition of Ironic opinion can be written as that faculty which perceives experience in terms of ironic contradiction, then, truly, Hardy saw in the universe a cosmic irony underlying and determining the ironic nature of human events; and in The Dynasts as a climax to his elaboration of irony he has reached the high point not only of his ironic views but of their explanation.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FATALISTIC AND PESSIMISTIC ASPECTS OF HARDY'S IRONY

POINTS DISCUSSED IN THIS CHAPTER

1. The reader's evidence of Hardy's pessimism.
2. Hardy's explanation of his pessimism.
3. Hardy used irony to reveal tragedy.
4. His pessimism is not copied.
5. His tragic irony often used for the ennobling of his characters.
6. His pessimism was intellectual rather than temperamental.
7. The assumptions about existence that regulated Hardy's reactions.
   - Free will in man embraces only thought and feeling but not action.
   - Man's actions, devoid of free-will are controlled by the Immanent Will.
   - Man cannot be master of his own fate.
8. Hardy's irony results from incongruities of this system aided by character, heredity, and conventions.
9. Negation of free-will is the important element in Hardy's fatalism.
10. The clash in Hardy between fatalism and belief in freedom dictated by the dignity of man.
11. Hardy's pessimism involves some hope and idealism.
12. Hardy's answer to the question of evil and pessimism.
13. If evil can be remedied, tragic ironies are not meaningless.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FATALISTIC AND PESSIMISTIC ASPECTS OF HARDY'S IRONY

A great deal of controversy has arisen over the question of Hardy's pessimism; to the reader of his works the term is undeniable. He himself referred to if often, but in doing so he never failed to qualify it in some way which indicated that there was a possible solution for the tragic irony which beset humanity. An unbiased reader, coming face to face with ironic events that invariably lead to tragedy and downfall, seems justified in reading the conclusion that he was an arrant pessimist.

But although most readers had already labelled him a pessimist, if for no other reason than the fact that the result of his representations of irony almost always had a tragic effect, Hardy had explanations for his pessimism. These explanations sometimes took the form of apologies and, at other times of clarifications of his views. In these efforts he tried to rationalize the tragic results of irony. The following attempt at clarification was written on January 16, 1918:

> As to pessimism, my motto is, first correctly diagnose the complaint--in this case human ills--and ascertain the cause: then set about finding a remedy, if one exists. The motto or practice of the optimists is: 'Blind the eyes to the real malady, and use empirical panaceas to suppress the symptoms'.[1]

[1]Hardy, Mrs. F.E., The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, p. 183.

We may describe his aim as that of representing things that harmonized with his experience. Now this experience may have been biased: he may have intended to use irony to show only the tragedy of life. If he did try to show some insight into the 'realities of life', these realities were almost all of a tragic nature and the irony was used mostly for this purpose. Certainly the impression the reader gets is that he, unlike many other Victorian and modern novelists, was not concerned with exhibiting merely the 'slice of life'. He used his irony in obedience to the dictates of his temperament which felt keenly about life and which therefore was interested in the things that affect suffering humanity. Although he saw darkly, he saw deeply; and his pessimistic outlook became synonymous with the tragedy of life; the irony was used to indicate the rightful place of tragedy in literature.

This is his art; and to dwell on happiness lies outside it, although it is not right to call a novelist a pessimist merely because he chooses to depict, in the main, the sinister and tragic workings of ironic fate. In view of his avowed sincerity, it also seems unfair to try to prove that his pessimism was copied from the continental philosophers, and that it was a pose, with a developed set of

emotions to harness on his characters.[2]

Although he sees the futility of the struggle, at closer range he also sees the heroic grandeur of it. As the novels grow more despairing, ending in the desperate scenes at the close of Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure, the struggle grows grander, and the soul more elevated. The ironic events leading to tragedy seem to have served a more useful purpose than they would have served in the hands of a pessimist. The tragedy resulting from ironic events would, in the hands of a true pessimist, have led to despair; in Hardy's manner of presenting these, the soul grows greater with the struggle. The character grew as the struggle became greater and the ironic events had served one good purpose.

> In the double vision of man's greatness and man's futility lies the secret of Hardy's tragedy, of his irony in its various degrees.[3]

Duffin attempts to refute the charge of pessimism on the grounds of Hardy's respect for humanity and ennobling of character:

> Indeed, no writer who presents humankind so worthily can be a thorough-going pessimist. Your true pessimist is he who, like Swift, depicts man himself as degraded,

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[2]This is what R. P. Blackmur would have us believe according to his article "The Shorter Poems of Thomas Hardy" in the Southern Review, Summer, 1940.

[3]Child, Harold C., Thomas Hardy, New York, 1918.

> contemptible. From Hardy's dark canvas there stand out the heroic forms of a mighty Adam and a beauteous Eve. With him, man is far from god-like, but still a moral being, rich in interest and of high capacity. Negatively, Hardy has a few low types among his people, and no scoundrels of the Dickens and Thackeray order.[4]

Hardy was unwilling to concede utter and overwhelming defeat; something was salvaged from the train of the ironic events he depicted, even if it was intangible by nature. His pessimism was intellectual rather than temperamental, having its basis in a reasoned conception of things. Although his observations and recordings of the ironies of life affecting man's destiny never brought him a solution, his sensitiveness and love of humanity made him attempt one.

The question of Hardy's pessimism viewed as a result of his ironic recordings is one that has been bandied about by the critics for almost three quarters of a century. A similar treatment has been accorded his fatalism, which may be viewed either as the cause of the pessimism or as the result of it. Since the question of fatalism seems to be closely associated with that of free will, it will be profitable to examine briefly why Hardy found a mine of irony within the range of man's relationship to the universe. What assumptions about existence regulated Hardy's reactions? He seems to have seen no connection between the individual's

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[4]Duffin, Henry C., Thomas Hardy, A Study of the Wessex Novels, Manchester University Press, 1916.

wishes and the order of the universe. The freedom of consciousness is limited narrowly to thought and feeling, but action is pre-determined. This reduces free will to a ghost of itself, merely a figure of speech since we are all subservient to the activity of the Will and the constant shifting and changing of the material world deceives us. Man forgets that the little drama of his own life is but a tiny portion of the overall drama of the Will; thus he resents the Will's encroachments on his liberty. The Will is the reality of existence, and being unconscious, It is unaware of the interests of the individual.

These are his arguments and whether implied or explicit, they have been criticized over and over again. But above all else stands out this one clear fact: all things are determined by the first Cause which is the Will and we cannot expect to be masters of our fate. The lot of man, subject to the Will whose workings are ruled by chance, is the theme of Hardy's work. Man's ignorance of the working of the Will, coupled with his acceptance of the order of free will is the crux of Hardy's irony. The incongruities resulting from such a system are the materials of this irony. These incongruities, in forming the ironic train, are aided in forming further ironies by such factors as character, heredity, and man's unreasonable use of social conventions. And in all the ramifications of the ironies, Hardy never

once says that any evil happening could have been avoided by more will power.

In blaming everything else but the individual character, Hardy robs him of the control he should have over his destiny, and this is his fatalism. Perhaps his explanation of weakness of character lay in his sympathy for humanity which prompted him to overlook lack of will power; this sympathy may have led him to arrange his ironic events in such a way as to make them appear more formidable than they really were. Pity for man under adverse circumstances is a poor substitute for the dignity that comes with free-will no matter how sincere or effective is the irony that tries to make the substitution. The most important single feature in Hardy's whole plot structure is the negation of free-will and it is the most important element in Hardy's fatalism. His ironic substitution of an unconscious Immanent Will must necessarily throw mankind upon the mercy of events, most of which will be adverse.

In his efforts to make sense out of the world, Hardy met with contradictory testimony; as a result his explanation became complicated in his own mind:

> His reasoning shows him that it is impossible to reconcile the benevolence of an omnipotent and ommiscient deity with the fact of evil. The freedom of the Will, looked at in the light of the same reasoning, cannot be other than an illusion, for a break in the chain of cause and effect (such as "freedom" necessarily connotes) is unthinkable.

> Hardy's central hypothesis becomes that of an Immanent Will, working through all things by immutable laws, working like a machine, unconscious of its own operations.[5]

We have seen, especially in The Dynasts, how Hardy has used irony to expound his theory. This view of things, together with his use of irony to explain it, has caused critics to label him a fatalist.

But the matter is not so simply settled. Hardy's human dignity rebelled at this view of man as a thorough-going puppet and the implications of his reasoning were thereby complicated. Grimsditch explains clearly this clash between the fatalism dictated by Hardy's logic and the belief in freedom dictated by his conviction of the dignity of man:

> Hardy is too closely in sympathy with his ordinary, simple man to look at the matter in this detached way. He recognizes that the gulf between good and evil is and must remain a painful reality to mankind. Both are due to the workings of the Will, but man has somehow become percipient, feeling the love of good and the hatred of evil, while remaining a pawn in the game. . .Here the philosopher becomes at variance with the simple man, who feels within him, as all men feel, that the individual can choose between good and evil, true and false. And out of this clash between a determinism arrived at by logical processes and freedom felt as a deeply rooted innate belief arises Hardy's tragic apprehension of the world. The irony of situation is that man's every action is performed under the urge of this belief in his freedom, which is nothing but an illusion.[6]

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[5]Grimsditch, Herbert B., Character and Environment in the Novels of Thomas Hardy, Witherby, London, 1925, pp.19-20.

[6]Ibid., pp. 23-24.

From this duality of temper then seems to arise all the controversy over Hardy's pessimism and fatalism; in it there also seems to lie the answer to the question, "Why did Hardy use Irony as he did?". It was to explain the indignation he felt because man's effort was being rendered meaningless. Man had developed conscious intelligence only to find out that his efforts were futile. Hardy's irony is a complaint against this incorrigible state of affairs. The second contradiction that Hardy found was that existing between the laws of nature and human aspirations. To this may be added a more hypothetical contradiction, that between what nature has decreed and what nature ought to decree, or between the real and the ideal.

These contradictions then are the necessary conditions for the manifestations of irony in his writings. Some have called the results of this irony, fatalism; others have named it the scientific counterpart of fatalism, determinism. Whatever name is used to describe the philosophy, it involves pessimism. Although the irony is at times bitter, it does not reveal a pessimism which scorns humanity; it is not despair. An understanding of this irony reveals that the pessimism also carries with it its contrary, hope and idealism. In a conversation with William Archer, Hardy gives his answer to the question of evil and pessimism:

> People call me a pessimist; and, if it is pessimism to think, with Sophocles, that "not to have been born is best," then I do not reject the designation. I never could understand why the word "pessimism" should be such a red tag to many worthy people; and I believe, indeed, that a good deal of the robustious, swaggering optimism of recent literature is at bottom cowardly and insincere.
>
> But my pessimism, if pessimism it be, does not involve the assumption that the world is going to the dogs, and that Ahriman is winning all along the line. On the contrary, my practical philosophy is distinctly meliorist. "What are my books but one plea against "man's inhumanity to man"--to woman--and to the lower animals?. . .Whatever may be the inherent good or evil of life, it is certain that men make it much worse than it need be. When we have got rid of a thousand remediable ills, it will be time enough to determine whether the ill that is irremediable outweighs the good.[7]

In his own words, evil can be remedied, and if this is the case the tragic ironies in his works are not meaningless sacrifices.

Pessimism was not his last word, evidently; his irony did not hold up to ridicule the things he loved and respected. Whether pessimist or not, whether fatalist or not, Hardy's opinions on the thought of his day, the dual aspect of his attention, and the emotionally accentuated ideas of his temperament are assimilated into the pattern of his irony.

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[7]Archer, William, Real Conversations, London, William Heinemann, 1904, pp. 46-47.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MORALITY OF HARDY'S IRONY

POINTS DISCUSSED IN THIS CHAPTER

1. What has Hardy's irony to do with morality?

2. The lesser ironies and the "ironic attitude".

3. Irony derived from incongruities drove Hardy to find an explanation which involved moral questions.

4. Science failed to supply this explanation, and Hardy evolved his own explanation aided by German philosophers and English thinkers.

5. The oblique attack against his former faith was carried out by irony.

6. The two classes of contradictions Hardy found in the relation between man and the universe:
   (a) that found in the fatalism implied by findings of science.
   (b) that existing between the indifference of nature and the hopes of man.

7. The connection between Irony and Didacticism in the judging of values.

8. A cricitism of the moral material of Hardy's irony.
   - the ridiculousness of his explanation of things.
   - the hopeless situation of the free-thinker.
   - the inexcusability of using irony to condone man's faults.
   - irony directed against the conventions, particularly marriage.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MORALITY OF HARDY'S IRONY

What has irony to do with morality? Everyone has experienced ironic situations that had nothing to do with morality. However, it was a different matter with Hardy's irony. It reached into the affairs of man's destiny and touched, as it proceeded, on such items as Free Will, the future life, and sexual relationships; such matters necessarily involve moral questions. Even the smaller ironies deal with the question of morality since often their impact can be traced in devious ways to the larger question.

Many of the lesser ironies used in Hardy's works have in themselves, little or nothing to do with moral questions. But they do build up in the reader what might be termed an ironic attitude, and this attitude, Hardy hoped, would help the reader to become more critical when the irony dealt with more serious affairs. The lesser ironies seem to have been used by the author to cause the reader to approach the great questions with the same ironic attitude as that in which they had been written. In other words, Hardy attempted to convince the reader of his irony in smaller things so that the conviction would carry over into serious matters.

A good number of these lesser ironies fall under the classification of simple dramatic irony which is that based

on the incongruity between what seems to be and what is. This has the effect of making us believe that the character has been duped by circumstances or hoodwinked by nature. After being sufficiently exposed to this type of irony in the first few novels, we find that the irony used has now expanded from this relatively simple incongruity into one that is much more complicated, namely that between conditions as they actually are and as they ought to be or "the failure of things to be what they are meant to be".[1] This is the great irony that Hardy envisions. It represents his idealism at work viewing human situations in the light of what could be. The fact that man was given a certain capacity for happiness is mocked by the fact that he never or very seldom attains this happiness. The vision of things ideally appointed contrasting with the reality of suffering and disappointment supplies the irony.

Now this disparity implies a criticism and this criticism of conditions is contained in the irony. Both the impressions and the criticism drove Hardy to find an explanation and this must necessarily involve morality. But before proceeding to the question of this explanation it may be pointed out that the implications of this latter set of incongruities are perfectly arbitrary. What prompted Hardy to

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[1]Hardy, Mrs. Florence E., The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, MacMillan & Co., London, 1928, p. 163.

believe that things are meant to be otherwise than the way they are? In other words Hardy took it upon himself to set up his concept of what should be as the ideal system, and to use his irony to criticize everything that did not measure up to his ideals.

Now this is a very dangerous thing for a man to do. It was bound to involve him in the important moral questions of God and Man's relations with God. For his explanation he looked to the world of science, but the more science revealed, the greater was Hardy's effort to set things in order. Feeling that science made more confusion, he turned to the German philosophers and English thinkers who supplied a framework for his impressions. In desperation of finding an answer to the inconsistency, he set out as a freethinker to evolve some explanation derived from his own impressions.

It was the English freethinkers of the mid-eighteenth century who planted the germ of disbelief in Hardy's mind and replaced his faith in God by a faith in evolution. By the year 1870 when the movement had lost its pristine excitement, he found himself without faith or guidance. The German philosophers helped him to substitute metaphysical terms for those of religion and Hardy was well on his way toward evolving his man-made dogma. But the matter did not end here; his early faith kept bothering his conscience and while it was not strong enough to uproot what since had been

planted by science and philosophy, it did succeed in causing his mind to stick to the old patterns. This revealed itself in his irony by means of a protest against the tenets of his faith which he could not succeed in completely subduing.

The protest was not a direct attack but an oblique one; and irony was the manner in which this oblique attack was carried out. His ironic pictures of the effect on man of the old order of things led him to blame the dogmas and tenets of the faith in which he was reared and to rail against the Almighty. What he should have been railing against is his own misconceptions and their cause. The fruit of his irony was indignation that man's efforts to achieve happiness had been frustrated by the findings and interpretations of science.

Indignation, revealed by irony, fattened on the contradictions he found in the relations between man and the universe. These are of two classes: first, those found in the fatalism implied by the revelations of modern science, and secondly, those involved between the seeming indifference shown by the laws of nature and the hopes and ambitions of man. Irony then was a means of elucidating Hardy's explanation of his own system.

Since Hardy uses irony to clarify the explanation of his system, it will be worth while to examine the connection between irony and didacticism. All the shortcomings in life

which involve suffering appear to Hardy as ironic facts. We may say, then, that when Hardy dwells on an ironic fact, he is being didactic since the irony involves a criticism against certain conditions. When irony involves a judgment of values, the reader must be sympathetically receptive to these judgments in order to share in the ironic experience. If this is not the case, the irony loses its effect.

This is the means Hardy uses to clarify his explanation of things; and in this clarification he deliberately intends to convince the reader emotionally and intellectually. Perhaps this is a more effective means of convincing than if the writer had been plainly didactic. Such is the peculiar nature of irony that, when the reader renders his sympathy to the author's judgments, or even temporarily suspends his objections to these judgments, the writer has won his point and the reader's agreement is enlisted more readily. This insinuative method of convincing the reader does not usually meet with the open hostility that didactic methods often encounter. Hardy, according to Lionel Johnson, is not deliberately didactic. His novels were not "written for a purpose, to prove the truth of something; but with a prejudice, that it is a proven truth",[2] which is a way of objectifying truth. Hardy implies that his system of explaining

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[2]Johnson, Lionel, The Art of Thomas Hardy, New York, Dodd, Mead & Co., 1923, p. 171.

things is right and that his ironic situations simply act as testimonials to a fact.

The following excerpt shows plainly to what goal these testimonials were directed:

> Mankind's place and function in the cosmic scheme is the most outstanding characteristic of Thomas Hardy's art, whether in prose or verse.[3]

Hardy's preoccupation then was with the moral questions of life: man's relations with his Creator, the questions of the after-life, unmerited suffering, and above all, the important question of the existence of evil. Hardy's answer to these, shaped into incongruities and presented in the ironic manner, did have some convincing influence on his readers.

And what is this answer to which he devoted all the energies of his irony? It is a man-made artificial explanation of these eternal questions which down through the ages have occupied theologians and doctors of the Church. It is an agnostic substitution of an unconscious Immanent Will supposed to function like some huge automaton, for an omniscient God. There is no indication in any of his ironies that points even to the existence of a next world; suffering is wished upon man purposelessly. There is no moral reason for the existence of evil, except that it is a necessary nuisance sent to plague mankind, for no purpose other than

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[3]Grimsditch, Herbert B., Character and Environment in the Novels of Thomas Hardy, Witherby, London, 1925, p. 11.

to make life miserable for him.

Such a system, diametrically opposed to truth, could not succeed in fixing itself upon doubting humanity if for no reason other than that it was so far from the truth as to be completely incredible to any intelligent person; it was so far removed from common sense as to appear ridiculous. This was the use then to which Hardy put his irony. Nor was it a pose; his sincerity of purpose is convincing. It is hard to understand how a man could spend his time concocting tales which are interwoven with irony for such a purpose. Never has irony been put to such an evil use as that found in The Dynasts. This, of all his works, is the blasphemous 'pièce de résistance'. The great outcry of clerics and God-fearing people who objected emphatically to the senseless conclusions which Hardy would have them draw from his ironies, particularly in the two novels Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure and above all in The Dynasts can be easily understood and condoned.

The senseless explanation of things which Hardy tried to foist upon his readers by every conceivable type of irony provides, perhaps, the man-of-faith's most powerful explanation of the utterly hopeless situation of the free-thinker. It is preposterous to believe that one human brain can interpret the universe and solve the questions of philosophy by itself, with merely casual observation serving as his

experimental equipment.

This understanding of the situation is important because it indicates the use to which Hardy's irony was put. The oblique method of attempting to convince the reader by ironic objectification of the testimony he found is perhaps the most subtle use to which irony has been put in the history of literature. One has more respect for a man like Swift, who hid behind no subtleties and who used his irony in a forthright manner to condemn man for his foibles and senselessness. At least in Swift's case, the irony was directed toward man, not toward God and His universe.

It is meaningless and beside the point to use irony to excuse man for his own faults by denying him the free-will he possesses and making him a helpless and irresponsible puppet. How can the Hardy enthusiasts show the compatability of this view of man with the supposed 'dignity of man' which they are so ready to attribute to him? To use irony to justify by exemplification his deviation from the path of tradition perhaps made Hardy unique in this respect, but this uniqueness must have appeared as freakishness to those souls who have a respect for tradition, to say nothing of the shock it meant for them. Hardy perhaps looked upon his ironic treatment of 'experiences' as a vindication of his personal overthrow of accepted Christian concepts, particularly that of free-will.

Nor does Hardy limit the blasphemy of his irony to the Almighty. Not content with aiming his ironic blasts at the creature of his own brain, the so-called Immanent Will, he directs it also at those conventions which have been accepted since time immemorial, particularly that of marriage. He manufactures ironic incidents to belittle in this way what man has held dear over the ages. His irony tries to invent every chance of excusing Tess for her sin and of defending her when, although legally married to one man, she goes to live openly with another. Ironic explanations are a weak substitute for virtue or the attempt at virtue, as every level-headed individual understands. And hiding his condonement of this state of affairs under deliberately fabricated ironic incidents, simply makes his stand weaker. Why single out this particular commandment for condemnation through irony? Why not defend the robber into the bargain? Certainly excuses may be made for any offence against the moral code as well as against this particular one.

Of course what else could Hardy do with characters like Tess and Jude after he had robbed them of free will? When his irony does this for them perhaps the least it can do is to defend their resultant behaviour and blame the Immanent Will, or non-existent chance or something else equally as vague, but not their own weakness of character. The latter is never mentioned except to direct the ironic sequence into

the channel of heredity and blame it by proxy. If the ironic attack is directed towards environment, it is easy to make out a case against Chance.

In other words irony was used by Hardy to blame evil on everything else but the right things. If, as he might well have done, Hardy had extended his irony to excuse evil in other forms, particularly in such sins as robbery and murder, what would have been the result? Utter chaos, not only in the individual but in society. There is enough evil in the world without creating more by multiplying ironic concepts to condone it. If there were many ironists like Hardy and they were taken seriously, the result could well be a swift return to jungle existence.

It is a pity that such an artist in letters did not make better use of his talent for creating irony. It is a strong weapon and could have been used to direct man's attention to his foibles; in this case the irony would have done some good. It was inexcusable for one so talented to turn his gifts towards encouraging the one thing that a Christian should abhor above all else.

Two important Catholic critics have condemned Hardy for putting his irony to use in the cause of agnosticism: Lionel Johnson and G. K. Chesterton. In his Victorian Age in Literature, Chesterton says of Hardy:

> Hardy became a sort of village Atheist brooding and blaspheming over the village idiot.

Of course, this in a sense, is an over-statement. The "village idiot", Hardy would have considered those characters who were pushed about by the irony of fate working through the Immanent Will. Perhaps Chesterton calls them "idiots" because, bereft of free-will by Hardy, they lost their ability to think for themselves. Lionel Johnson, in keeping with what we might expect of a Catholic critic, does not agree with Hardy's philosophy, his theory of "the unconscious universe, or of conscious mankind". He goes on to praise Hardy's artful use of irony in these words:

> . . it is because I am thus averse from the attitude of a disciple, that I admire Mr. Hardy's art so confidently.[4]

One can express pity for suffering humanity without descending to condoning its sins by ironical devices. Hardy had set out to create a system for man which would blame factors other than those which ought to be blamed for the evil of his life. It is impossible to excuse Hardy for this false use of irony by pointing to his sympathy for mankind. Man is responsible for his actions and no use of irony, however artful, can excuse him from this responsibility. Hardy had made the mistake of overthrowing Christian concepts in his own mind and substituting for them a system worked out by his own human brain; this system he tried to defend by his use of irony, but the thinking man and the man of faith

[4]Johnson, Lionel, The Art of Thomas Hardy, p. 191.

are not convinced, no matter how cleverly the irony was used.

Perhaps the two following quotations express clearly what Hardy was trying to do to the established order of morality by his use of irony:

> concentrating attention on the shadiness and seaminess of life, exploiting sewers and cesspools, dabbling in beastliness and putrefaction, dragging to light the ghastly and the gruesome, poring over the scurvy and unreportable side of things, bending in lingering analysis over every phase of mania and morbidity, going down into the swamps and marshes. .[5]

This diatribe has reference to Hardy's attempts to excuse the sins of immorality in his characters by ironic explanations of fate. The same author points up the lack of will-power in his characters as an excuse for their weakness which Hardy attempts to explain by lack of free-will.

> Not content with drugging his reader with opium draughts of this pessimistic philosophy of life, the author of these West Country stories indulges also in the inculcation of the most numbing Fatalism. The philosophy of these Wessex stories provides for no "resisting unto blood, striving against sin" but only for lying down in sin, and under sin like so many moral dastards or enervated sets.[6]

These quotations represent the indignation of the Christian clergyman with Hardy for using his irony to excuse evil.

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[5]Wilson, Rev. A. Law, The Theology of Modern Literature, (Edinburgh, 1899). Chapter - "The Theology of Thomas Hardy", p. 381.

[6]Ibid.

THE MORALITY OF HARDY'S IRONY

The following quotation gives a succinct and unique analysis of Hardy's moral conceptions:

> Hardy is essentially a Calvinist who has substituted the Devil for God in a fatalistic universe. The coincidences upon which he depends (for his irony) are perverted miracles.[7]

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[7]Grabo, Carl, The Technique of the Novel, N. Y., Scribner, 1928, p. 128. (italics are mine)

CHAPTER XV

HARDY -- THE IRONIST

POINTS DISCUSSED IN THIS CHAPTER

1. Irony cannot be separated from the Ironist.

2. The author and the reader as Ironic spectators.

3. Hardy created irony in four ways:
   - encircling the known and unknown which act upon his characters.
   - use of verbal and dramatic irony.
   - preoccupation with the incongruities of life.
   - interpreting appearances in such a way as to turn them into ironies.

4. Pity underlying Hardy's Irony.

5. His irony shows that society has made the evil in life worse, yet his main irony is directed against the system under which man works.

6. Hardy's temperament predisposed him to irony; his stoicism.

7. Hardy's ironies did not touch his own experience as a partaker.

8. Influence of the scientists and of the thinkers on Hardy's thinking helped to direct his irony.

9. The range of his irony.

10. No writer in English literature dealt with irony so intensely or so exclusively as Hardy did.

11. In spite of its shortcomings Hardy's irony seems to indicate his sincerity.

CHAPTER XV

HARDY -- THE IRONIST

A great deal of attention has been given in this study to Hardy's irony; some of this has, to a certain extent, been viewed objectively. This is, of course, not completely so, as it is impossible to separate irony from the ironist. Since the subject of this study is Hardy as an ironist, it is thought wise to devote some time to examining more closely the nature of our ironist with a view to getting a better understanding of his irony:

> What, then, is the business of the ironist? It is to open up, in a style which is itself adapted to the matter. . .a path to the eternal problems of man which are in fact sempiternal because they must forever remain unsolved; to provide the consolation for that lack of control over his universe which man must ever desire and ever fall short of having; to show that the perspective of the human scene is now much as it was in the age of caves and mounds and megoliths, simply because the old questions are with us now as then; to point out that the path of consolation lies, at last, in the very realization of that bound beyond which we cannot go.[1]

Both the author who views events and characters and the reader who shares his knowledge may be said to be ironic spectators. The author as the pre-eminent Ironist commanding a view over all the elements making up the material of the story, prepares the reader for the drama by making him

[1]Smith, W. Bradford, "The Nature of Irony" Studies in English Literature, October, 1934, Vol. XIV No. 4.

anticipate eventualities which the characters do not suspect and by convincing him that fate has a part to play in it. In this way he makes the reader conscious of the irony accompanying the characters. The ironist shaping events and circumstances, distorts or misrepresents values to make his point.

In his irony, Hardy interpreted experience according to his own bias. As an ironist he created irony in four distinct ways: first, by permitting his mind to encompass the known and the unknown which act upon his characters; secondly, by his use of verbal and dramatic irony within his works; thirdly, by his preoccupation with the incongruities of life; and fourthly, by his peculiarity of vision which interprets appearances of existence in such a way as to turn them into ironies. This peculiar vision saw all mankind involved in a dilemma; man told himself that he had freedom of will, his heart sought satisfaction therein, but his destiny was controlled by an Immanent Will, careless of man's hopes and aspirations.

The more Hardy pursued this vision, the more pity he felt for duped humanity. He was attracted to life and repelled by it; his condemnation of the order of things is revealed in his irony, but underlying it is an attempt to redeem life. This is revealed perhaps most definitely by the Spirit of the Pities in The Dynasts. There may be several ways of accounting for this dual response; perhaps

precociousness of mind led him to see the cruelties of life before he could experience life's satisfactions; perhaps it was an attempt to cover up his loss of faith by scepticism; or perhaps his natural wistfulness and humanitarian instincts were at odds with the new science. This pity which showed itself when Hardy viewed unmerited suffering, shone only indirectly through the medium of his irony.

Through the irony that Hardy uses, the reader may plainly see his compassion for man; although we may disagree with the philosophy which his irony reveals, we must admit that he was convinced of the potentiality of life since he busies himself with an ideal. This does give his Ironic Vision some significance since, for him, suffering and everything that produces suffering is evil. If the reader can deduce some cynicism from Hardy's presentation of irony, he can also feel that this cynicism, in general, is not directed against mankind but against the system under which man works and which controls the world's irony.

Although at times Hardy implies that society is responsible for some of the ironies of life, this responsibility is not to be blamed on man, since the injustice is merely the instrument of a system. His irony is used to point up his impression that society has made the evil in life much worse than it need be. It also brings out the fact that man is not responsible for the evil that exists,

and the irony, to prove this, points to the malice of the system that controls him and demands of the reader sympathy for almost all his characters.

With the Immanent Will, then, must lie the responsibility for ironies of fact while man's stupidity has enhanced the evil through his unwise use of the conventions. However, another intermediary force intervenes in the conduct of affairs and is constantly referred to by Hardy under such names as "fate", "destiny", "accident", "Heaven", "chance"; and in most cases these bear the epithet of "cruel", "adverse", "malign", "blind". In the plotting of his narratives, irony represents these as being the workings of an agency which man is unable to discern and which function invisibly but inescapably.

Hardy's temperament was cast in such a mold that he could readily see irony in situations which would hold no ironic contrasts for an average person. So convinced was he in his own mind that his system was right, that he lost no opportunity of representing ironically his impressions of experience in order to convince his reader. He was temperamentally disposed toward irony so that his response to its promptings required no effort on his part. Hardy's soul seemed to contain a sadness or wistfulness which must urge him to take every opportunity to communicate itself to the reader; and because irony seems to identify itself with a

certain sadness of soul, Hardy's mind took naturally to expressing this sadness through irony. Out of the shortcomings of nature, he drew an unrecognized beauty, visible to the spirit rather than to the corporal eye; or as Zabel puts it he tried to make "an aesthetic of incongruity".[2]

Hardy, then, in his narratives, occupied himself with the workings of irony in the lives of men and the irony he represented is usually of a tragic cast. It is the arrangement of experience wherein man's aspirations are continually clashing with actuality. This invariably leads to tragic consequences and the reader finds himself engulfed in a world of tragic irony. In this way Hardy attempted, through his home-made metaphysic, to explain suffering and evil in the world; and he recognized the great irony in the fact that evil is incongruous and suffering unmerited. This seems to be the "central trait" of Hardy the Ironist as the critics saw it; it was his inner spirit giving him his vision of the irony of life:

> There is a sense of the ideal, but no idealized creations; a swift awareness, rather, of all the conditions that transform purposes. The contrasts between the appearance and the reality of things; the difference in two people's thoughts of each

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[2]Zabel, Morton D., "Hardy in Defense of His Art", Southern Review, University of Louisiana, Summer, 1940, p.125.

other; the dwindlings of passion and the indifference of 'crass casualty' in the general scheme that enfolds it all.3

Hardy had in his nature a certain stoicism which, combined with an experience of and sympathy with human nature, gave him a kinship with the rudimentary types of characters:

> blessed, and at the same time cursed, with excessive sensitivity and compassion for human and animal life, Hardy's only escape was to live an avowed stoic. By this means he thought to ward off pain; by scaling down his hopes and desires he might be content to realize that 'happiness (is) but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain'. This is a summary of that doctrine of resignation and renunciation which has been forming in his mind, a negative attitude to life which totally contradicts Hardy's naturally responsive heart. The fastidious mind rejects what the sager heart cries out for, and the endless conflict engendered is doomed to continue.4

This may well be the reason why Hardy's ironies are those only of an observer; his ironies are not the personal experiences of a partaker. They never seemed to have touched his own experience. As a result of this detached attitude towards the problems of life, he developed a prosaic objective view of some important things of life, and his irony was directed at these subjectively. For example, while disappointment at the very moment of bliss seemed to be the rule rather than the exception in his portrayal of the

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3McDowall, Arthur, Thomas Hardy, A Critical Study, London, Faber and Faber Ltd., 1931,pp. 21-22.

4Hardy, Evelyn, Thomas Hardy, A Criticial Biography, p. 199.

ironies arising from love between the sexes, there is not the least indication in the facts of his own personal life to show that his was, in any way, his own experience. It has already been noted[5] that Hardy's poetry and his novels are close to life since they begin and end at home. The world of the poems and of the novels lies at his own door and their ironies are generally drawn from his own experience. Being meditative, Hardy sought inspiration in nature and the inner life; his nature was opposed to accepting ready-made opinions and the conviction of his ironies had to come as the fruit of his own thought upon experience. This ironic vision does not seem to have included himself.

The ideas that arise about Hardy spring from a study of irony in his writings, and these ideas comprise both characteristics of him and implications concerning him. Through his irony, Hardy was able to deal with both his inborn belief in the value of human life and the fact that the science and philosophy of his age tended to belittle man's importance. Hardy saw Spencer and Huxley representing the universe as inexplicable, Darwin doubting man's spiritual existence; it was the fashion of the day to approach great questions with an air of doubt and enquiry, and Schopenhauer had bequeathed to him the explanation of the Universal Will.

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[5]See the Chapters on "Irony in the Poems" and "Irony in the Later Novels".

HARDY -- THE IRONIST

Deprived of his faith and thereby of the Christian explanation of things, Hardy faced the question of explaining evil and suffering. To him it was Irony, and for him in all his writings, Irony became the centre around which his explanation revolved.

It is the extent to which he used this Irony in his writings that overwhelms the reader. It manifests itself in various complexities, it reveals new techniques, and admits of some development. It reveals itself in a remarkable range of emphasis, from the results of ignorance, through unmerited suffering, to settle itself upon all the efforts of man in his struggles to attain happiness. This seems to point to the abundant influence of the irony of Greek tragedy upon Hardy, with this main distinction, that the Greek ironists lamented but did not take exception.[6]

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[6]In Greek tragedy, the Chorus seems to confine its remarks to wonder and lamentation. The ironic events arouse its wonder and some pity for the victims, but there seems to be no indication of any resentment against the gods for allowing these ironic events and their tragic consequences. There may be pity and awe but no defiance of God, and no bitterness.

In the play Libation-Bearers by Aeschylus here are some typical exclamations of the chorus sprinkled at intervals throughout one scene:

- Woe, woe, Oh fearful deeds!
- One trouble is here - another comes.
- What fancies trouble you, O son, faithful to your father? Do not fear.
- Oh, where will this frenzy of evil end?

The ironic events of the scene draw from the chorus these bland remarks. Compare these with the bitterness of the comments of Hardy's spirits in The Dynasts. Perhaps the deeply religious spirit of the Greeks helped them to bear tragedy with greater composure.

For help in this note, I am indebted to a book, The Greek Way, by Edith Hamilton, published by W. W. Norton, New York, pp. 227-270.

HARDY -- THE IRONIST

In reviewing English literature, we find irony used by many writers, on many occasions and for various reasons. In most of these, the irony has been occasional and usually is confined to social questions. No writer used irony so fully or so frequently as did Hardy; nor did any use his irony to express so vehemently the blame that Hardy attaches to the powers that rule the universe. Not one of them used irony to depress his spirit into the depths of pessimism as Hardy did; none used irony as he did to deal so bitterly with the incongruities of life. Although we may trace some kinship between Hardy's use of irony and that of a writer such as James Thomson, no writer displayed the genius in the use of ironic technique that we see in Hardy.

Hardy's irony was, then, unique in English Literature. The fact that it was unusually sentimental is one of its drawbacks; it lacked subtlety and variety yet it represented his personal reporting of observation. The ironies that he did record reveal an intensity and emphasis of feeling that convince the reader of his sincerity no matter to what extent he may feel that Hardy erred in his interpretation of the spectacle of life.

CHAPTER XVI

CONCLUSION - PART "A"

Hardy led a sheltered academic life, free from most of the difficulties and hardships which beset most men; Fate had dealt kindly with him and yet he devoted half a century to trying to explain the evil and suffering of the world by ironical conceits. Through irony he attempted to reveal the culpability of the Almighty in allowing inexplicable evil and unmerited suffering to exist in the world. Bereft of orthodoxy, he set up a system of Determinism operated unconsciously by the Immanent Will which guides relentlessly the destinies of his characters.

Sufficient examples have been given from the Novels, the Poems, the Short Stories, and the epic-drama The Dynasts to prove that Hardy's main preoccupation in literature was with irony. These various writings contain all the types of irony to which Hardy set his hand; their studied effect was to create in the reader the role of Ironic Spectator. The irony represented in The Dynasts represents Hardy's greatest effort, since it was his attempt to systematize in concrete form his Ironic Vision. Hardy's love of humanity has prompted him to identify himself with the Spirit of the Pities, but the essence of the irony lies with the Spirit Ironic.

CONCLUSION - PART "A"

The factors and techniques that Hardy used in his production of irony lead us to conclude that he is an enduring Ironist. In this study we have seen him using every possible technique known and even inventing some of his own to establish the sense of irony in the reader, to achieve verbal and dramatic irony, and to intensify the reader's ironic experiences. A rather thorough study of how these techniques were exemplified and objectified in his most controversial novel, Tess of the D'Urbervilles has indicated to us that in his narrative writings, Hardy has proven himself master of every technique in ironic production.

And in the production of irony Hardy has shown his literary artistry. The appeal to the emotions rather than to the reason enhances the effectiveness of the irony; the excellence of the prose style, the descriptions of nature, the fine character delineations have exalted irony in the novels. Artistry has been revealed in The Dynasts by a skilful weaving of the Phantom drama with the historical drama. In his striving after realism, he did not concern himself with that reality which is limited to the physical order but strove, through the revelation of his impressions, to portray reality of the spiritual or moral order, which seemed much more important to him.

In the study of the novels, we have attempted to point out the fact that Hardy's irony not only grew in

intensity as the novel-writing proceeded, but covered a wider field of incongruities and, in a sense, became more involved. With this growth there seemed to be allied a deepening of his fatalism and pessimism. This led to an attempt to show the negation of Free Will as such in the characters of the later novels. The irony now involved such factors as heredity and environment; and in its more complicated sense, the irony of fatalism and pessimism clashed with Hardy's innate conception of the dignity and worth of man. In this way we see Hardy's dualism of temper emerging; his hope for man was dashing itself against the wall of his fatalistic and pessimistic beliefs.

While much has been said about Hardy's cleverness and artistry in producing irony, fault must be found with the moral ideas and implications of it. We have pointed out that his home-made system of metaphysics has propounded a most preposterous explanation of the universe; it is one that anyone holding Christian concepts of first Causes and of right and wrong could in no way support or even deem to be in accordance with sound reason. His explanation of things is ridiculous and blasphemous; his use of irony in attempting to free man from the consequences of his evil is inexcusable. His oblique attacks against the conventions strike at the very root of civilized society. His wallowing about for an explanation of the order of things indicates the hopeless

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situation of the free thinker who sets out as Hardy did, to set himself up as a philosopher with only his limited powers of observation and his meagre experience as a basis for his conclusions.

In his own words, free thinking had led him to dismiss all concepts of a biblical religion and to substitute for it a new altruistic religion:

> Religion is to be used in the article in its modern sense entirely, as being expressive of nobler feelings towards humanity and emotional goodness and greatness, the old meaning of the word-ceremony or ritual-having perished, or nearly.[1]

It would seem that, through his irony, Hardy is attempting to make emotions and nobility of feeling the touchstone and guide of moral goodness in the world.

It was through irony that Hardy attempted to make cruel sense out of the world. It serves as the key to the morality of his fiction. He used the lesser ironies to establish the ironic attitude; he used dramatic irony to interpret his vision of reality; but the irony that he used for paramount effect was cosmic or philosophic irony depicting the incongruities between man and the heavenly powers that govern him. It is this type that pervades all his work and the other types of irony are its servants.

What then is the enigma that is Hardy? He is still

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[1]Notes written in January, 1907 - quoted in the volume Later Years of Thomas Hardy, p. 121

CONCLUSION - PART "A"

much of a paradox. Although his cosmic irony and his own words prove him to be an avowed agnostic, he did possess some feeling for the old traditional beliefs and tenets; he did admire and pay tribute to the Christian virtues; and he did say that some religion is necessary. It seems that Hardy's loss of faith lies at the root of the whole enigma. Casting aside one religion, he had to substitute another; and this substitute was an altruistic one, a figment of his brain based on rationalism. This altruism failed to provide him with a reasonable explanation of suffering and through his irony he rails against it, complains bitterly about it, and attempts to show the unfairness of it. His rationalistic outlook could do nothing else but render his outlook black. The alternative was stoicism and that seems to be what he resorted to. It is, of course, an academic question to ask what form Hardy's irony would have taken, if any, had he not lost his faith. He could still have produced irony, lacking extreme bitterness, and involving a more hopeful outlook.

In spite of the background of doubt against which his ironies were formed, Hardy did not despair. If his irony shows sorrow, pessimism, fatalism, and frustration, it must be concluded that there is a balancing emphasis on human loyalty, a sense of man's dignity and importance, a confidence in human nature, and some ultimate hope which Dobrée has set forth in the following excellent paragraph:

CONCLUSION - PART "A"

> But beyond all these, there is something that is implicit in all Hardy's work, something that is profounder than and lies beyond his sense of irony, itself a product of love and pity. This is the sense of the dignity of man. Whether or not he is the chance outcome of the Inadvertent Mind, he yet has his consciousness, and his courage, his pity and his patience, his divine capacity for sensation. He may only be a speck in the Universe, but still he is there, providing a meaning for himself, which even if unrelated to the 'burden and mystery' of creation, is in itself worth while. And when all the pageantry has faded, when the welter and carnage are over, when the blood has mouldered into dust and there is left 'only a man harrowing clods in a slow silent walk' in him still there will be the potencies of good and evil, all the ingredients for establishing a scale of values without which it is impossible for man, as man, to live.[2]

Through all his ironies, Hardy retained his confidence in man; this is not faith, but hope. The tragedy of Hardy's ironies was not the tragedy of any of his characters; the greatest ironic fact of all was that Hardy suffered the loss of his faith.

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[2]Dobrée, Bonamy - in the article "The Dynasts", Southern Review, Louisiana State University Publication, Summer 1940.

CONCLUSION - PART "B"

So much has been written of Hardy that the question arises: what does this work add to Hardy studies? His irony has been dealt with rather copiously by the critics; much has been written about his philosophy, his pessimism, and his determinism or fatalism. The purpose of this section of the conclusion is to determine as far as possible what advances have been made through this study in the understanding and appreciation of Hardy's irony.

The critics have written much in a rather inconclusive way about Hardy's irony with a great deal of reference to his works but with a lack of elaboration. An attempt has been made in this study to relate his irony to its source rather than to dwell on the numerous examples of it. The source of his irony is his viewing experience in terms of its incongruities; these incongruities constitute the main material of his work. The aim here was to illuminate the irony by discovering the common principle working throughout his objectification of it in his works.

The meaning of the term "irony" has been developed and the relation existing between its different manifestations has been traced. This illuminates the main problem of the study -- the irony of Hardy. On account of the rather loose use of the term "irony" by the critics, it has been my aim to avoid an over-simplification of the elusive term in order to create in the reader's mind a consciousness

of the nature of irony so that he will get the most benefit from his reading of Hardy.

The aim of this work was not to establish some new hypothesis, but to point out the range and vitality of Hardy's irony. In the elaboration, it is hoped, some headway has been made in helping the reader, through the understanding of the irony, to experience a deeper sensibility of Hardy's efforts. This has been achieved, partly through a working definition of the various types of irony, and partly by a demonstration of the manner in which Hardy used these types in his work to achieve his effects. No such treatment of Hardy's irony has come to my notice. This method may be termed the central treatment of the problem.

No great effort has been made on the part of the critics to deal with the irony of Hardy's short stories. It has been shown in this study that the irony in the poems is basically the same as that in the novels except for the fact that since the range of incident and impression is wider in the poems, the treatment of ironic incidents in them gains in subtleness. Some attempt has been made to determine the nature of the irony in the short stories.

The time and space devoted to the study of the cosmic irony exemplified in The Dynasts has perhaps sharpened the cruciality of Hardy's irony. This is, of course, not a new concept, but the treatment here does intensify and point up

the bitterness of the irony and does indicate the satire.

It is my belief that the examination of the factors of Hardy's irony has thrown some light on his ironic temperament. This idea is often referred to by the critics, but it has not been my good fortune to see it delineated. An attempt has also been made to indicate the cast of Hardy's character through examples of the use of various elements in the production of irony such as omens, premonitions and coincidence, and to show through these that he was predisposed temperamentally towards irony.

Again, one may notice in critical works a stray reference to Hardy's technique in the production of irony. This includes a putting together of the various means Hardy used to establish the sense of irony in his reader in order to intensify the ironic experiences. Nor has this effort been limited to a mere listing of these means; it has been achieved by constant reference to his works and particularly by a thorough examination of the techniques in the novel Tess of the D'Urbervilles. It seems that the indication of the various techniques used to produce irony accompanied by exemplification from the works has added something to Hardy studies.

The examination of reality and artistry in the works of Hardy has, it is hoped, added something to our understanding of his irony. His skill in the use of words has

enriched the irony; the comments on the poem "The Convergence of the Twain" have helped to exemplify this.

The fact that the irony in some of the novels which are not proverbially classed as "ironical" was indicated, has helped a little in adding to our knowledge of Hardy. Since the irony in this type of novel is not outstanding, it has usually been by-passed by the critics. It is my belief that the elaboration of this "overlooked" irony is a contribution to Hardy studies.

It would also seem that some contribution has been made by examining the evolution of Hardy's irony. The novels particularly were examined to detect some evidences of growth in the irony, both in intensity and in bulk. This growth in intensity of the ironic effect has also been viewed in respect to the object of the attack. The reader of this study can easily see the change from a rather simple ironic treatment of the relations between the sexes to the intensely bitter treatment of the conventions in the novels Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure. The continuation of this growth into the ironic vision contained in The Dynasts seems to prove the point that there is some evolution in Hardy's irony.

It is my opinion that the following three points on the morality of Hardy's irony contribute to a better understanding of the irony and throw some light on the question of

CONCLUSION - PART "B"

its moral background:

a) Many critics have condemned Hardy's philosophy; three Catholic critics have contributed to this condemnation. Chesterton has ridiculed his agnosticism; Shuster (see the Bibliography) has softened the attack and tried to explain Hardy's attitude; Lionel Johnson has objected to his philosophy. An attempt has been made in this work to trace Hardy's erratic philosophy and its fruits to their cause - - his loss of faith. The tracing of these results to their prime cause does, it is hoped, help the reader to understand Hardy's position.

b) In all the criticism of Hardy's philosophy and of its results, not enough has been said about the negation or extreme limitation of free-will in his characters. An appreciation of this seems vital in order to understand his use of cosmic irony. The fact that free-will is denied has been noted by the critics, but some contribution has been made towards a true understanding of Hardy when his cosmic irony is viewed constantly in the light of the negation of free-will. In this, too, an effort has been made to throw some light on the connection between the irony and the subtleness of the didacticism used in its presentation to the reader.

c) Since the reason for Hardy's attitude has been pointed out, a firm criticism of the moral material of his

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irony enlightens the reader on the attempts Hardy made to explain things and on the hopeless condition of the free-thinker. The conclusion is that this situation undermines all the subtle didacticism seen in Hardy's works; this conclusion seems to help the student assess the results of Hardy's ironic efforts.

The writer has also examined the question of pity which underlies Hardy's irony. The indication of his sincerity has been used, in part, to excuse his erratic outlook, and pity is the by-product of this sincerity. His defence of the individual and his blaming of God, society, or anything else he could think of, produced pity for his characters. His sentimentalism, in the opinion of some critics, goes a long way in excusing his errors. It does nothing of the kind; rather does it indicate the limitations of his philosophy.

In the examination of Hardy's use of the word "irony" in his works, it is felt that some contribution has been made towards a deeper understanding of his own interpretation of the term. These explicit uses of the term, when interpreted in the light of their context, help the reader to grasp what Hardy himself meant when he used the word "irony".

It should be noticed that, in this study, irony has been examined in all four literary genres that Hardy used. It may also be true that some ironic incidents have been

noted and commented upon which have not been mentioned in the critical material that I have examined; this is perhaps true particularly in the less-known poems.

It has not been my purpose to indicate every possible example of Hardy's use of irony, and then to point to its bulk; the idea of illuminating Hardy's irony by a discovery of the common principle working throughout it and by an elaboration of the ways in which this principle is objectified in the works seems to be the best method to be followed to add some knowledge to the subject. Beginning with an explanation of irony, then viewing Hardy's efforts in the light of this explanation has the effect of an orderly central attack on the question. It is my hope that this study may help Hardy students to a better understanding of their Ironist and of his efforts.

APPENDIX "A"

HARDY'S USE OF THE WORD IRONY

Perhaps it will be of some value to examine a few examples of Hardy's own use of the word "irony" and its derivatives. Since the use of the word in his works is multiplied, no attempt will be made to record every use of it. Because it is the purpose of this study to understand Hardy's irony, a brief examination of some of the ways he used the word may add to our understanding of his use of it. A comment or two has been added to some of these quotations, either to indicate the type of irony or to clarify the reference.

> Everyone except Gabriel Oak then left the room. He still indecisively lingered beside the body. He was deeply troubled at the wretchedly ironical aspect that circumstances were putting on with regard to Troy's wife, and at his own powerlessness to counteract them. In spite of his careful maneuvering all this day, the very worst event that could in any way have happened in connection with the burial had happened now. . . (Far from the Madding Crowd)

The second sentence, referring to the "wretchedly ironical aspect that the circumstances were putting on", contains a good example of philosophic irony. Gabriel Oak is powerless to stem the tragedy resulting from the ironic circumstances.

> The one feat alone--that of dying--by which a mean condition could be resolved into a grand one, Fanny had achieved. And to that had destiny subjoined this rencounter tonight, which had, in Bathsheba's wild imagining, turned her companion's failure to success, her humiliation to triumph, her lucklessness to

> ascendency; it had thrown over herself a garish light of mockery, and set upon all things about her an ironical smile. . . (ibid)

In his reference here to the "ironical smile", accent is placed on the mockery of the irony. Tragic fate referred to as "destiny" subjoining "this rencounter tonight" had completely taken control of the results of Bathsheba's efforts and mocks at her attempts to control the situation.

> Troy next advanced into the middle of the room, took off his cap, turned down his coat-collar, and looked Boldwood in the face. Even then Boldwood did not recognize that the impersonator of Heaven's persistent irony toward him, who had once before broken in upon his bliss and snatched away his one delight, had returned to do these things a second time. . . (ibid)

Troy is the "impersonator of Heaven's persistent irony". He is the puppet used by the Immanent Will to execute the Will's designs on humans. Boldwood is ignorant of this, in spite of the fact that Troy has been used as a puppet on at least one other occasion. Even the instruments of the Will are unknowing tools as are the victims of its ironic machinations.

> To calmly relinquish the struggle at that point would have been the act of a stoic, but not of a woman, particularly when she considered the children, the hopes of her mother for them, and her own condition--though this was least--under the ironical cheers which would greet a slip back into the mire. (The Hand of Ethelberta)

This is another reference to the mockery produced by irony. The word "cheers" indicates the exultation felt by the Will when human effort is frustrated. It reminds one of

the manner of speaking of the Spirit Ironic in The Dynasts.

> Moreover, he (Neigh) might have been speaking ironically when he alluded to the act as a virtue in a woman, which seemed the more likely when she remembered his cool bearing towards her in the drawing-room. (ibid)

Here is a rather simple verbal irony, one of many which Hardy uses to increase the ironic effect in incidents in his novels.

> Sol rolled on beside his new acquaintance with the shamefaced look of a man going to prison in a van, for pedestrians occasionally gazed at him, full of what seemed to himself to be ironical surprise. (ibid)

The irony here is an example of factual irony; "the shamefaced look" indicated irony in Sol as well as in the "pedestrians".

> She (Ethelberta) might have pleased her family better by pleasing her tastes, and have entirely avoided the grim irony of the situation disclosed later in the day. (ibid)

The irony is caused by the incongruity between what Ethelberta expected would happen, and what did happen. It is described as "grim" because of the results. The irony is deepened by the incongruity between what ought to be (what would please her family) and what is (what Ethelberta really did).

> To lose the two women--he who had been the well-beloved of both--was too ironical an issue to be endured. (Return of the Native)

Hardy takes care to indicate clearly to his reader the irony of the situation. The fact that "he had been the

well-beloved of both" is a point of intensification in the irony. There is an indication here also that, as Hardy observes the suffering caused by the irony, the reader shares his pity.

> De Stancy sat down in the stuffy drawing-room and wondered what other ironies time had in store for him. (A Laodicean)

De Stancy's wondering what the other ironies would be, shows that he is the victim or puppet of the Immanent Will. Stress is laid here, by the irony, on the fact that De Stancy is helpless to do anything about his future.

> The fatuousness of fore-thought had seldom been evinced more ironically. (Two on a Tower)

Irony brings out the uselessness of fore-thought; it is ironical to plan anything since fate interferes to destroy the plans.

> Up to this moment it could not positively have been asserted that the man, in spite of his tantalizing declaration, was really in earnest. The spectators had indeed taken the proceedings throughout as a piece of mirthful irony carried to extremes. (The Mayor of Casterbridge)

The first effect of the irony in this case is "mirthful"; "the mirthful irony carried to extremes" has tragic consequences. Comic irony has turned into tragic irony.

> This ironical sequence of things angered him like an impish trick from a fellow-creature. (ibid)

The "ironical sequence" referred to here has had the effect of angering him because fate has upset his plans. The anger is a result of the incongruity between what he expected

and what actually happened. The "impish trick" points to the malevolence of the Immanent Will in consciously upsetting man's plans in the same way that a trick performed by a fellow-creature would do.

> 'Is it a part of a country doctor's duties to learn that view of things, may I ask, sir?' said Winterbourne, adopting the Socratic eironeia with such well-assumed simplicity that Fitzpiers answered readily. . . (The Woodlanders)

Hardy's mentioning of the Socratic "eironeia" proves conclusively that he had studied carefully the irony of Greek literature, and that he applied this type of irony in his own writings. His adaptation of it indicates that it was not simply a theoretical irony that he saw, but that irony did exist in the experience Hardy observed.

> A dismal irony seemed to lie in the words, and its effect was to irritate him.
> ("Fellow-Townsmen", Wessex Tales.)

Here is another indication of the frustration caused by ironic events; since the irony was "dismal" it irritated him by upsetting his plans.

> But where was Tess's guardian angel? Where was the Providence of her simple faith? Perhaps, like that other god of whom the ironical Tishbite spoke, he was talking, or he was pursuing, or he was in a journey, or peradventure he was sleeping and was not to be awaked. (Tess of the D'Urbervilles)

The "Providence" of Hardy's philosophy is the Immanent Will. The cosmic irony points to the fact that whatever his occupation, he was unmindful of Tess and uninterested in her problems.

> But it had not been in Tess's power--nor is it in anybody's power--to feel the whole truth of golden opinions when it is possible to profit by them. She--and how many more--might have ironically said to God with Saint Augustine, "Thou hast counselled a better course than Thou hast permitted." (ibid)

Man, deprived of free-will, is unable to do what God asks him to do. The cosmic irony here lies in the discrepancy between what God asks and what He permits.

> "Why, maidy" (he frequently, with unconscious irony, gave her this pet name. . . (ibid)

This is a simple verbal irony. He does not know that Tess is no longer a maid, but mother of an illegitimate child.

> To Tess's sense there was, just at first, a ghastly bizarrerie, a grim incongruity, in the march of these solemn words of Scripture out of such a mouth. This too-familiar intonation, less than four years earlier, had brought to her ears expressions of such divergent purpose that her heart became quite sick at the mere irony of the contrast. (ibid)

The "solemn words of Scripture" were those in praise of a virtuous woman. Tess, who can no longer be classed as virtuous, feels the incongruity of the words being applied to herself in this dramatic irony.

> The boy's Christian name, even, was an imposture and an irony, for it implied hereditary force and brilliancy to which he plainly would never attain. ("Squire Patrick's Lady". A Group of Noble Dames.)

The name referred to here is "Rupert" which signifies brilliance; the fact that this child, supposedly illegitimate, would never attain brilliance is an irony of fact, which adds to the generally ironic theme of the story.

HARDY'S USE OF THE WORD IRONY

> "You possibly have not such a large assemblage of visitors here, on this somewhat forbidding evening, that you quite forget how this couple arrived and what the lady wore?" His tone of addressing the landlord had in it a quiet frigidity that was not without irony.
> ("The Honorable Laura", A Group of Noble Dames.)

The rather slight irony here seems to fall into that division mentioned by Thirlwall as dialectic irony. It refers to the irony often found in conversation which results from incongruities in the minds of the conversants; these are brought out to some extent by tone of voice as well as by the words used.

> By the irony of fate, and the curious trick in Sue's Nature of tempting Providence at critical times, she took his arm as they walked through the muddy street--a thing she had never done before in her life--. . .
> (Jude the Obscure)

The incident here seems trivial enough, yet the consequences of the action create the irony. It is an example of a kind of irony found fairly frequently in Hardy in which a slightly ironic action produces serious results; these results increase the importance of the ironic incident.

> Passing the evening, therefore, in a desultory waiting about the town wherein he avoided the precincts of every Cloister and Hall, because he could not bear to behold them, he repaired to the tavern bar while the hundred and one strokes were resounding from the Great Bell of Cardinal College, a coincidence which seemed to him gratuitous irony.
> (ibid)

The coincidence of the bell of Cardinal College ringing as Jude repaired to the tavern is an ironic reminder of Jude's now dissipated hopes of graduating from college.

The irony is described as "gratuitous"; it seemed malicious since there was no apparent reason for it.

> Come, Sprite, don't carry your ironies too far. . .
> (The Dynasts, 2. IV. v.)

> What irony is all this to me now!
> Time lately was when I had lept thereat.
> (ibid. 2. V. ii.)

> The tears that lie about this plightful scene
> Of heavy travail in a suffering soul,
> Mocked with the forms and feits of royalty
> While scarified by briery Circumstance,
> Might drive Compassion past her patiency
> To hold that some mean, monstrous ironist
> Had built this mistimed fabric of the Spheres
> To watch the throbbings of its captive lives,
> (The which may Truth Forfend), and not they said
> Unmaliced, unimpassioned, nescient Will!
> (ibid. 2. Vi. v.)

The word "Irony" is mentioned quite frequently in The Dynasts. The nature of the double action seems to call for this, especially in the conversations of the Spirits about the human part of the drama. The explaining and commenting on the ironic happenings seem to cause the irony to lose some of its subtlety.

> Blankly I walked there a double decade after,
> When thwarts had flung their toils in front of me,
> And I heard the waters wagging in a long ironic laughter
> At the lot of man, and all the vapoury
> Things that be.
> (from "The Voice of Things", Moments of Visions.)

The mockery of the waters "wagging in a long ironic laughter at the lot of man" is one example of the use of nature to produce irony or to increase the ironic effect. In most cases where nature is used for this purpose in Hardy,

there is a sympathy of nature with man's lot.

The word 'irony' is used in the titles of a few poems: "The Irony" (title of second section of "A Wife in London," Poems, Past and Present), "The Curate's kindness--A workhouse Irony" (title of a poem in the volume Time's Laughingstocks), "The Spirits Ironic", (in the volume Moments of Vision), "The Spirit of Irony" (in the volume Late Lyrics and Earlier), "The Phantom Ironic" (in Late Lyrics and Earlier).

APPENDIX "B"

TEN CONTEMPORARY POEMS CONTAINING REFERENCES TO HARDY'S IRONY

In this appendix are included ten contemporary poems in appreciation of Hardy. After Hardy's death, a great bulk of appreciative poetry appeared; most of this was written by young people.

Each of the following poems contains some reference either directly or indirectly to Hardy's irony. In many of these his irony is mentioned; in others, reference is made to his mood or his philosophy which prompted the ironic utterances.

These few examples of this type of poetry written about Hardy are included without comment, in the hope that they may add to the reader's penetration of Hardy's irony. They form a new type of artistic literary criticism; they bring freshness to our conclusions.

Indebtedness must be expressed to Donald J. Winslow for the use of these poems. Most of them are taken from the excellent collection of poems on Hardy which is found in his dissertation Thomas Hardy: His British and American Critics. (Boston University, 1942).

TEN CONTEMPORARY POEMS CONTAINING REFERENCES TO HARDY'S IRONY

THE LOOM OF THE POETS
(To Thomas Hardy)

I

They who are sceptred of the poets' race
    Their high dominion bear by this alone--
    That they report the world as they have known
The world, nor seek with slavish hands to trace
Poor profitable smiles upon the face
    Of truth when smiles are none, nor fear to own
    The bitterness of beauty overthrown,
    But hold in hate the gilded lie's disgrace.

And such are you, O singer of the gloom
    Where--through in travail you have slowly won:
Albeit your song is heavy with the doom
    Of men whose little strivings are fordone,
Yet is it woven on the living loom
    Of your own suffering beneath the sun.

II

And herein lies great solace. Who shall say
    If this austere and lovely utterance
    Be closer knit to truth than theirs who dance
With happy hearts along the laughing way?
Or matters it? We know that you as they
    Tell of the truth as you have seen it glance
    Across the shadowed tracks of fate and chance,
At best a fitful promise of the day.

Great patience must be ours ere we may know
    The secrets held by labyrinthine time;
The ways are rough, the journeying is slow
    The perils deep,--till we have conquered these
And break at length upon the golden clime
    He serves us best who sings but as he sees.

- John Drinkwater

From the volume Poems, 1908 - 1914.

TEN CONTEMPORARY POEMS CONTAINING REFERENCES TO HARDY'S IRONY

TO THOMAS HARDY
(On His Birthday)

To wisdom, truth, and beauty dedicate,
With vision clear as cloudless break of day,
You mark man on his immemorial way
Rousing old echoes down the aisles of fate;
Unwearied yet, the mystery meditate;
Decipher motive, balance and survey;
Reveal the invincible predestinate,
Austerely silent touching 'yea' and 'nay'.
O steadfast master, now your pilgrimage
Lights a new constellation on our sky.
A starry wonder and a heritage
Immortal in its pure humanity:
Through life's frustrated hope and desolate truth
Shall ever shine the beacon of your ruth.

- Eden Phillpotts

The Athenaeum, London, June, 1920.

TEN CONTEMPORARY POEMS CONTAINING REFERENCES TO HARDY'S IRONY

THOMAS HARDY

An Elegy

In Westminster they lay his dust,
    They lay his dust;
A nation, honouring his lyre
With dirge of organ and of quire,
    Is posthumously just.

Sad irony still rules his fate,
    Still rules his fate--
This pinch of Wessex marl must rest
Far from the folk that he loved best,
    Imprisoned with the great
. . . . . .
Master of words that drop like tears,
    That drop like tears,
Or gouts of blood upon the page,
Immortal over death and age
    And the oblivious years.

- Ian Colvin

Morning Post, London, January, 1928.
(quoted in part only)

TEN CONTEMPORARY POEMS CONTAINING REFERENCES TO HARDY'S IRONY

THOMAS HARDY
(1840 - 1928)

His purpose was fulfilled.
All he had willed
Of passion or of beauty to create
Or of the whims of fate
In subtle dreaming skilled
He fashioned soon or late.

The fate of human kind
Engrossed his mind,
Pain falling from some star
Or bitter spite to mar
Joys that the heart may find:--
He knew that these things are.

Wide as the world his thought
In all he wrought;
Yet that familiar land, his own,
Beloved through times long flown,
Gave him the might that fought
Dark thoughts of the Unknown.

- A. J. G. Russell

Poetry Review, March, 1928.

TEN CONTEMPORARY POEMS CONTAINING REFERENCES TO HARDY'S IRONY

THE BURIAL OF THOMAS HARDY

A Sonnet

They loved this gentle, melancholy man
    Who voiced their sorrow and their robust mirth.
And they, his own beloved, grieving clan
    O'er-laid his heart with fragrant Wessex earth.
With them, he knew and loved the gleaner's song,
    The ruddy glow flung from the malthouse door,
The lovely furrow, and the market throng,
    The everlasting sky, the upland moss.

Though life he patterned after his despair--
    The cruelest capering of a callous God--
Though men, despite their sacrifice and prayer,
    Should win no more than unrelenting sod,
He still lives subtly on, still throbs his breath
    In Jude and Tess, and on the Dorset heath.

- Norris Potter

Colby Echo, May, 1928.

TEN CONTEMPORARY POEMS CONTAINING REFERENCES TO HARDY'S IRONY

TO A PESSIMIST POET

Your art, a mirror to the mortal woes
    Of this sick age--needs it to be sicklied too:
    Liker the fungus' than the sunset hue,
Flower of the deadly nightshade than the rose?
Why mourn so sharp for living things their throes
    Of birth and death, when joys so deep and true
    Should intervene, and other woes how few--
How far from irremediable those?

Woes that should draw the sword, or weft and warp
    Of woe with joy thus deftly underscored;
Joys to adorn the mirror, string the harp,
    As of another David to the Lord.
Bring not the mirror alone: sweet, clear and sharp,
    O, bring the Harp, the Mirror, and the Sword.

- A. Romney Green

Wessex: An Annual Record, Southampton, University College, June, 1928.

TEN CONTEMPORARY POEMS CONTAINING REFERENCES TO HARDY'S IRONY

THOMAS HARDY

To him men seemed vain fugitives from doom--
    The playthings of ironic circumstance--
    The sport of mocking gods, the dupes of Chance.
Yet peace was on his heaths with gorse a 'bloom
By quiet streams and 'mid the woodland ways
Of that sweet Wessex where his heart still stays.

- Duncan Grey.

The Poetry Review, September - October, 1928.

TEN CONTEMPORARY POEMS CONTAINING REFERENCES TO HARDY'S IRONY

GIANT AND PYGMY

He strove to people Wessex lanes
With shades of those once prone to grope
And suffer there primeval pains,
Two thousand years or more ago.
'Twas bitter-sweet thus to observe
The age-long drama of our woe--
The rack of limb and stress of nerve
That mar the story of the Earth.
Yet though he sang with biting scorn,
And revelled in sardonic mirth,
Upon his lofty thoughts was borne
Love's sacred image undefiled.
He sang no message and he gave
No consolation; he compiled
Grim tones of satire fierce, yet brave
And true his song for woman proved:
None was by love more surely moved.

- Hibbart Gilson

(quoted in part from a longer poem "An Appreciation of Thomas Hardy", London, George Gill, 1928).

TEN CONTEMPORARY POEMS CONTAINING REFERENCES TO HARDY'S IRONY

END PIECE

He knew the Comic Muse, and made her free
    of seedtime and of harvest, barn and mill;
    and--sole since Shakespeare--with a happy skill
restored her to her wise rusticity;
he knew the large debate of Destiny,
    disputing with itself of its own will,
    and its conclusion in the ominous still
shape and close mouth of loveliest tragedy.
All the vast movement of the worlds he saw,
    proceeding and returning through the void
    of metaphysic to each dire event:
    Imagination with a deep content
beholds each crisis fashioned and destroyed
by that unswerving and unresting law.

- Charles Williams

"End Piece" to a section on "Thomas Hardy" in Charles Williams' Poetry at Present, 1930.

TEN CONTEMPORARY POEMS CONTAINING REFERENCES TO HARDY'S IRONY

THOMAS HARDY

Virile pagan with a Christ-like soul,
Man within whose words earth-spirits sing,
Egdon heather bells and Dorset lanes
Yet sense the tread of your familiar feet;
Holly battles holly, beaches rustle
Were your silent, bird-like figure passes.
Mellstock churchyard's yew is not alone
Harbouring you--tall fire around the Gate--
Gardened cottage of the younger days--
Lines of hawthorn hedge and elms that arch
From Higher bockhampton to the small, gray school.
Wessex ways own other figures, too:
Henchard brooding near the Hangman House;
Dark Eustacia on Rainbarrow's mound,
Jude, down-trodden dreamer, Oxfordway;
Clear-eyed Tess beside an age-old stone. . .

Poet of the earth, ironic voice,
Calling "Pity" to a darkling sky,
Heart of sorrow, pressing love upon
The darkened clod, bearing love unto
The bending man; compassionately you urge,
Forever sing of earth's long travailing.

- D. J. Winslow

Boston Evening Transcript, June 3, 1939.

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The first bibliography in this section, following that of Hardy's works, is a general one on Hardy's Irony; it contains works which were used as reference in the preparation of the present study.

Following this there is a bibliography on Irony. While this was used mostly in preparing the chapter on "The Nature of Irony", it should be said that some of the works mentioned here were useful in clarifying various points in the discussion of Hardy's irony as well. Following this there are some references to philosophical works which were found useful in dealing with the matter of Hardy's philosophic background.

The reader's attention is drawn to three important Indices that he may find useful in pursuing the study of Hardy. First, Professor Carl J. Weber's Hardy at Colby. Weber has been a leader in Hardy studies, and he was instrumental in making the remarkable Hardy collection at the Colby Library. This Index to Criticism and commentaries on Hardy served until 1942. Secondly, in that year Professor Weber brought out The First Hundred Years of Thomas Hardy: A Centenary Bibliography of Hardiana (Waterville, Maine; Colby College Library, 1942). This book, which consists of 276 pages "attempts to list everything that had ever been written about Hardy anywhere during his first hundred years". In

his "Foreword", Professor Weber notes that "The publication. . . .was intentionally delayed beyond the actual centennial date, in order that the book might include the numerous contributions called forth by the centenary itself." This work then may serve well the student of Hardy: in fact since it is so exhaustive, he needs no other. Thirdly, Carroll A. Willson's A Descriptive Catalogue of the Grolier Club Exhibition of Thomas Hardy which was printed in the Colby College Monograph No. 9, also is a very good index to criticism in Hardy.

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

THOMAS HARDY--VICTORIAN AND MODERN IRONIST

Hardy's name has proverbially been linked with irony; yet an examination of the critical material reveals very little instructive criticism bearing directly on his irony. More attention has been paid to his philosophy, his capabilities as a man of letters, and to the many other elements that shape his work.

The rather loose use of the word "irony" necessitates a close examination of the term to determine what is really meant by it. This examination starts at the origin of irony in Greek comedy, extends through such authorities as Thirlwall, and brings us to the various divisions we find commonly used. Since Hardy's irony is so all-inclusive it is necessary to study irony in all its phases in order to clarify the meaning of its subdivisions.

In forming the independent viewpoint which Hardy reveals in his ironic efforts we find three stages: first, the influence of the scientific and philosophic writings, secondly, the co-ordination of his impressions into a unified whole, and thirdly, the application to life through ironic writings of these impressions. A chronological examination of the novels reveals irony in almost all of them in varying degrees of intensity; the poems also reveal a widespread use of irony of

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all types, but it is in The Dynasts that Hardy systematizes his metaphysics and reveals his "Ironic Vision" of the world. The introduction of the celestial spirits which interpret the irony of the events of the drama is a new departure in the ironic interpretation of events and constitutes Hardy's most concentrated effort in irony.

An examination of the factors in Hardy's irony brings us to a deeper understanding of it and allows a more thorough investigation of Hardy's ironic temperament. Such factors as accident and chance, omens and premonitions, mocking of Nature, coincidence, inflexibility of the conventions, and social prejudice, were found to be those used most frequently for the production of irony. In the examination of the techniques used by Hardy, we find that the happy union of the comprehension of irony with technique in its production made Hardy a great ironist. These techniques establish a sense of irony in the reader and intensify the ironic experience. A thorough study of how these techniques were used in what might be termed Hardy's most ironic novel, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, shows how they were handled in practice.

Since literature is art, it seems advisable to determine the points of artistry that helped Hardy in the production of irony. The prose style and descriptions of nature help to enhance the irony; the reality concerned with the

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spiritual or moral order is far more important to Hardy than that which is concerned with mere circumstantial detail. Artistry in the use of irony in The Dynasts reveals the following conclusions: there is a skilful arrangement of the ironic sequence of events; vivid description helps the bitterness of the satire; real artistry is shown in the skilful weaving of the "phantom" drama with the historical drama; the cosmic view of the action intensifies the cosmic irony. One example of a poem was taken, "The Convergence of the Twain"; the skilful use of imagery to bring out and heighten the ironic effect is remarkable. This artistry is typical of many of Hardy's poems containing irony.

The question of the existence of a development or evolution in Hardy's irony is examined. Since the poems lack a true chronological order, a definite developmental trend is difficult to trace in these. In the early novels dramatic irony of the more conventional type is used. As the novels succeed one another, the irony broadens and intensifies; it becomes more bitter, and finds its source in a greater variety of objects. Hence there is some progressive development in the irony of the novels. The Dynasts represents the culmination of this development since it introduces cosmic personalities to explain and clarify the irony; the irony here transcends the irony of earth and enters the

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realm of the metaphysical.

The frequent accusation of "pessimist" directed at Hardy demands some enquiry. The reader interprets his ironic recordings as pessimism, but Hardy offers his own explanation of it. He uses irony to reveal tragedy, but its use is often construed to be an ennobling of his characters. Hardy's pessimism does involve some hope, but more idealism; it is intellectual rather than temperamental. His ironies reveal the absence of free-will in man whose actions, as revealed in The Dynasts, are controlled by the Immanent Will; this negation is an important element in Hardy's fatalism. His ironic representations of the incongruities aid him in his explanation of the universe, and this explanation is fatalism. It is his answer to the question of evil and to his pessimism.

Since Hardy's representations of the incongruities drives him to an explanation which involved moral questions, we are justified in the study of his irony, in examining the nature of the morality which it contains. The two classes of contradictions he finds in the relation between man and the universe are, first, that found in the fatalism implied by the findings of science, secondly that existing between the indifference of nature and the hopes of man. The moral aspect of Hardy's irony assumes more importance when viewed

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in the light of the didactic purpose. A criticism of the moral material of Hardy's irony reveals the ridiculousness of his explanation of things and the hopeless situation of the free-thinker. Using his irony to condone man's shortcomings is inexcusable; Hardy is guilty of a serious breach of morals when he deliberately uses irony to attack the conventions which mankind has always considered to be the props of civilization and decency.

As an ironist and, consequently, as an ironic spectator, Hardy admits the reader into his ironic vision by creating irony in four main ways; first, by encompassing the known and the unknown which act upon his characters; secondly by his use of verbal and dramatic irony, both of which become cosmic irony when their application is transferred to the "phantoms"; thirdy, by his preoccupation with the incongruities of life; fourthly by his interpretation of appearances in such a way as to turn them into ironies. His main irony is directed against the system under which man works and which, in his view, has made the evil in life worse. This interpretation leads him to take refuge in stoicism although his ironies do not seem to touch his own experience as a partaker. Hardy as an ironist is unique in English literature inasmuch as no writer has dealt with irony so exclusively or so intensely as he did. His preoccupation with irony does

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not seem to be a pose since there are many indications of his sincerity.

The conclusion that must be reached is that Hardy's loss of faith lies at the root of his whole erroneous ironic conception of life. His ironic representation of it and explanation of it reveal the utter futility of man's efforts to explain the universe and man's position in it by purely rationalistic means.