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than he could bear . . . . So he stayed, saying nothing; only, with the sense of her own sustained, renewed, and wonderful action, knowing that an arm had passed round him and that he was held. She was beside him on the bench of desolation" (p. 425).

Leon Edel concluded his Introduction to the *Complete Tales*, XII, by stating that "James could sail to no Yeatsian Byzantium. For him there seems to have been only the cold bench and the desolation of . . . metropolitan jungles" (p. 10). Surely Edel exaggerates beyond belief whatever attitudes James may have held, as revealed in the late fiction. These stories demonstrate that, no matter what James himself may have been experiencing, he had not lost faith in an innate human potential to nobility. His late characters, exemplified by the men of these stories, are "real," not superficial; their experiences are traumatically involving, not aesthetically detached; and their fates are affirmative, not disillusioned.



HARDY'S POETIC DEVELOPMENT:  
THE CASE OF "DURING WIND AND RAIN"

By DENNIS TAYLOR

Hardy is supposedly a poet whose poetic skill never evolved in any important way. He is also supposedly a poet whose successful poems are few and are as likely to occur early as late in his career. These two assumptions, accepted by much modern criticism of Hardy, are interrelated. Unable to see how Hardy develops, we are unable to see the consistent high quality of his poetic production.

To refute this view in a short space, we might consider one of Hardy's most famous poems, "During Wind and Rain." It was the end product of some years of experimentation whose precise stages we can trace. Thus the case of "During Wind and Rain" may suggest that Hardy's greatest poems are the culminating results of many lesser known poems.

The success of "During Wind and Rain" seems to consist in

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a number of elements. The dramatic frame of the poem is beautifully consistent with its subject. The speaker looks out at a graveyard during the advancing stages of a storm; and he remembers the advancing stages of a human lifetime. The storm begins with the rising of the wind, then, the fleeing of the storm birds, then, the beginning of a gale (strong enough to rip the rotten rose from the wall), and finally, the coming of rain. At the same time the life remembered advances from childhood (in the nursery rhythms of the first scene described as an impressionable child might experience it) through youth (associated with elders and juniors and their shared project) into the time of courtship and finally into the prosperous years of adulthood:

They change to a high new house,  
 He, she, all of them — yea,  
 Clocks and carpets and chairs  
     On the lawn all day,  
 And brightest things that are theirs . . . .  
     Ah, no; the years, the years;  
 Down their carved names the rain-drop ploughs.  
(*Collected Poems*, p. 466)<sup>1</sup>

The smaller experience of the speaker caught in an evolving reverie recapitulates the larger experience of a lifetime caught in an evolving life style. The reverie is periodically interrupted by the advancing storm just as the life remembered is periodically interrupted by the advancing years. And the final unknitting of the reverie is like the final unknitting of life itself. Moreover, the reverie and the life are interrelated. When the speaker sees the sick leaves reeling down, he then remembers a scene where they cleaned up and tamed these leaves: "Making the pathways neat . . . And they build a shady seat." When the speaker sees the white stormbirds wing across, he then remembers a scene where "pet fowl come to the knee." When the wind beats against the wall, the speaker then remembers a scene where "They change to a high new house." In its choice of images, the reverie tries to tame nature and halt the inexorable processes of time. But nature plays the last trick on the reverie. When the speaker remembers the "Clocks and carpets and chairs/ On the lawn all day," nature intrudes with

<sup>1</sup> *The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy* (London: Macmillan, 1965).

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the present reality of other things on the lawn — gravestones down which the rain is ploughing.

The style of the poem is beautifully consistent with this drama of reverie and time. That style may strike us at first as very curious with its surprising use of the present tense ("They sing their dearest songs"), its stark formality ("Elders and juniors" . . . "Men and maidens"), its touch of stiltedness ("He, she, all of them — yea"). But the style reflects the quality of the remembered scenes: they bind the mind as though they still exist and yet they have grown old-fashioned and brittle over the years, like photographs in an old family album. In contrast to the remembered scene, the final line of each stanza surprises us with its concreteness. If we had supposed that the images of white storm birds or rotten rose were dictated by a conventional ballad formula, we discover to our surprise by the end of the poem that these are very real objects which the speaker now sees.

"During Wind and Rain" is a superbly concentrated poem. We are in a position to trace its evolution out of several poems placed prior to it in the *Collected Poems*. Given the problem of dating Hardy's poems, our chronology can only be approximate; but I think it is persuasive:

"*Lament*" (*Collected Poems*, p. 323): one of the love poems of 1912-13, grouped with the first poems of the series and probably written, like many of them, in either December, 1912, or January, 1913.

"*The Change*" (*Collected Poems*, p. 426): written in January-February, 1913.

"*The Interloper*" (*Collected Poems*, p. 458).

"*The Five Students*" (*Collected Poems*, p. 463): perhaps the latest of the series so far if Hardy identifies the poem's "dark . . . She" with his sister who died in November, 1915.

"*The Wind's Prophecy*" (*Collected Poems*, p. 464): "rewritten from an old copy." This poem forms a center piece of a kind of triptych with "The Five Students" on one side and "During Wind and Rain" on the other.

The first three of these poems, along with "During Wind and Rain," show Hardy's borrowings from the recollections of his wife whose diary he read shortly after her death. We can see that gradually Hardy's memories of the past and Emma's memories began to mingle until they came to represent one life, symbolic of all human life, whose significance grows "Smaller and clearer as the years go by." In this series we can watch Hardy at work, learning how to write a better poem as he reassembles his materials. Each poem has a virtue or technique which "During Wind and Rain" takes up and perfects:

1) the contrast of a remembered past and a present grave. In each stanza "Lament" ritually repeats the juxtaposition of a scene from Emma's life with her present "yew-arched bed":

How she would have loved  
A party to-day! —  
Bright-hatted and gloved,  
With table and tray  
And chairs on the lawn  
Her smile would have shone  
With welcomings . . . . But  
She is shut, she is shut  
From friendship's spell  
In the jailing shell  
Of her tiny cell.

Some of these images (i.e., "chairs on the lawn") will be repeated in "During Wind and Rain" which will also make use of the clipped dimeter rhythms of "Lament." But a great distance still separates the two poems. There are no surprises in "Lament"; the memory images are not structured in a dramatically progressive fashion; the graveyard is merely referred to, not actually seen by a dramatic speaker.

2) the hypnotic spell of the past which comes alive stage by stage in the speaker's consciousness. In "The Change," his mind seems powerfully engulfed by memory. And each stanza, as in "During Wind and Rain", is punctuated by a mournful ballad refrain: "Who shall spell the years, the years!", "Who shall unroll the years O!"

Out of the past there rises a week —  
Who shall read the years O! —

Out of the past there rises a week  
    Enrined with a purple zone.  
Out of the past there rises a week  
    When thoughts were strung too thick to speak,  
And the magic of its lineaments remains with me alone.

The speaker then goes on to remember the successive stages of a love relationship. Two images, the "candles flinging / Radiance" and the "white owl," may look forward to the candle-lit scene and white storm-birds of "During Wind and Rain." However, while the memory images are more structured than those in "Lament," the final import of those memories is unclear in "The Change." A mysterious "doom that gave no token" and led to a broken heart hounded the lovers and left the speaker only "sweet reverberances." In "During Wind and Rain," the nature of the doom — hidden temporal change — is entirely clear and its reverberances are universal.

3) the use of a dramatic present tense to convey the memory images. Thus "The Interloper," like "During Wind and Rain," begins with a description which seems to make present what is actually past. These memory images now binding the mind are stated with a suggestive vagueness and starkness so that they seem like brittle portraits in a family album: "There are three folk driving in a quaint old chaise"; "Next / A dwelling appears by a slow sweet stream":

Where two sit happy and half in the dark:  
They read, helped out by a frail-wick'd gleam,  
    Some rhythmic text;  
But one sits with them whom they don't mark,  
    One I'm wishing could not be there.

This last memory and others ("I discern gay diners in a mansion-place," "People on a lawn — quite a crowd of them. Yes") forecast specific moments in "During Wind and Rain." But unlike those in "During Wind and Rain," these memories follow no coherent plot and are shadowed by a phantom presence whose import is obscure. Indeed Hardy tried to clarify the poem with an epigraph referring to Emma's madness.

4) the contrast of nature's progress and the human progress. In "The Five Students," man lives out the scenes of his advancing life and these are juxtaposed with natural

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scenes beginning in spring and going through summer, autumn, and winter:

Icicles tag the church-aisle leads,  
The flag-rope gibbers hoarse,  
The home-bound foot-folk wrap their snow-flaked heads,  
Yet I still stalk the course —  
One of us . . . . Dark and fair He, dark and fair She, gone:  
The rest — anon.

The poem makes explicit what "During Wind and Rain" more deftly suggests: the deceptive stability of the human scene, the stages of man which advance nowhere, and the tortoise and the hare effect where man runs and nature creeps but overtakes: "The leaf drops: earthworms draw it in / At night-time noiselessly." The spare puppet-like pronouns will also be used in "During Wind and Rain" where, again, one's entire identity as a human being is vulnerable before nature's plough. What "During Wind and Rain" will add to "The Five Students" is the style of remembering of "The Change" and "The Interloper." The result will be that the nature contexts of "The Five Students" will be juxtaposed with richly developed human scenes still lived in memory and embodied in spare present tense images. The human scenes in "The Five Students" are somewhat abbreviated and grotesque: five students striding down a road and gradually dropping away.

In "During Wind and Rain," Hardy will consider anew the questions: where is the lyric speaker now? How precisely does his poetic utterance relate to his present situation? In answering these questions, "During Wind and Rain" achieves an immediacy and vividness not yet felt in the other poems. What gave Hardy the hint for this new degree of immediacy may have been "The Wind's Prophecy":

5) a speaker's reverie interrupted by a present storm. As the storm advances from stage to stage in "The Wind's Prophecy," it interferes with the speaker's romantic vision. The poem is about Hardy's first journey to Cornwall when he was about to meet Emma and abandon his cousin and girlfriend, Tryphena. As he journeys, the storm grows in violence and seems to undermine his hold on Tryphena. In the

first stanza, "a cloud bellies down with black alarm." In the second stanza, the foam begins to fly and the wind is like "bursting bonds." In the third stanza, the sky becomes "hoarse" and the ocean swells with "hammerings" and "smitings." In the fourth stanza the breakers "Huzza like a mad multitude" and the wind "outshrieks from points and peaks." When Hardy was rewriting "The Wind's Prophecy" he may have noticed how the journey of a speaker through a present storm-driven scene is like the journey of man through an entire time-driven life in "The Five Students." In either case, nature's changes seem to undermine man's vision whether that vision consists in a romantic loyalty or an entire life style. This dramatic principle, which works on a small and a large scale, is what "During Wind and Rain" tries to comprehend.

"The Wind's Prophecy" is a flawed poem. Its ominous import is obscure and its descriptions seem out of proportion to its subject. Nevertheless its influence on "During Wind and Rain" was probably critical. In "The Wind's Prophecy" the speaker is placed in a single present scene which conditions his reflections; and this dramatic placing has profound implications for the speaker's entire life. Indeed "During Wind and Rain" is a kind of reverse image of "The Wind's Prophecy." The way in which the speaker's interrupted reverie recapitulates his past lifetime in "During Wind and Rain" is like the way in which the speaker's interrupted reverie forecasts his future lifetime in "The Wind's Prophecy."

Finally, "The Wind's Prophecy" may have contributed to the peculiarly dramatic effect of the last line of "During Wind and Rain": "Down their carved names the rain-drop ploughs." Here the outline of a life still lived in memory is suddenly transformed into the rain-etched outline of names on a grave. Nature's impersonal pattern emerges from and replaces man's personal pattern. What was fresh and alive turns out to be obsolescent and skeletal. This kind of shocking transformation occurs in analogous form in "The Wind's Prophecy." The outline of the speaker's romantic vision ("My eyes now as all day / Behold her ebon loops of hair!") is replaced by a pale impersonal pattern in the natural scene: "gulls glint out like silver flecks / Against a cloud . . . clots of flying foam / Break from its muddy monochrome, / And a light blinks up

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far away." Intimidated by this eerie illumination in the scene, the speaker desperately insists on his interior illumination: "there reigns the star for me!" Nature rebuts by an image ("The all-prevailing clouds exclude / The one quick timorous transient star"), and the silver-gray contrasts in the scene deepen into the stark black-white contrast of the spectral pharos-shine:

Yonder the headland, vulturine,  
Snores like Old Skrymer in his sleep  
And every chasm and every steep  
Blackens as wakes each pharos-shine.

Is not the shock we feel at seeing this emergent light like the shock we feel in seeing the emerging carved names in "During Wind and Rain"?

Thus when Hardy came to write "During Wind and Rain," he was prepared to include several elements: the contrast between Emma's life and her present grave as in "Lament"; the stages of their love relationship, each stage punctuated by a ballad refrain, as in "The Change"; the vivid present tense description of a lived past as in "The Interloper"; the contrast between the stages of man and the changes of nature as in "The Five Students"; and the interruption of the speaker's reverie by an advancing storm, as in "The Wind's Prophecy." Amazingly "During Wind and Rain" is able to comprehend all of these elements and yet is shorter and seems simpler than any of these other poems. What Hardy did was 1) make the stages of Emma's life and his life with Emma symbolize the stages of human life in general; 2) make this human life the subject of the speaker's reverie, and make the reverie advance stage by stage like the life; 3) contrast the human life and nature by contrasting the speaker's reverie with the present natural scene; 4) make the interruption of the speaker's reverie seem like the interruption of a human lifetime; and 5) use the ballad refrain as the connecting link between the memory images and the intruding natural scene.

Thus "During Wind and Rain" did not spring fully formed out of Hardy's head. It is the product of an accretion of elements which is more than the sum of their parts. The poem is fine example of Hardy's patient genius and is a culminating

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clarification and epitaph of his life and poetic technique.

If "During Wind and Rain" is typical of Hardy's poetic production, we should be able to find many other examples of his evolving craft. We may find that the great poems illuminate all the poems, and that all the poems contribute to the great poems. Once we see Hardy's evolution, we may respond to his poetry not in a restrictively selective way but like Dylan Thomas ("I like all his poems. Completely unselective about him")<sup>2</sup> or like Philip Larkin: "May I trumpet the assurance that one reader at least would not wish Hardy's *Collected Poems* a single page shorter, and regards it as many times over the best body of poetic work this century so far has to show."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Thomas, "An Introduction to Thomas Hardy," *An Evening with Dylan Thomas*. (Caedmon Records, TC1157, 1963).

<sup>3</sup> Larkin, "Wanted: Good Hardy Critic," *Critical Quarterly*, VIII (Summer 1966), 174-179.

