Chapter - 2

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Philip Larkin confessed:

When I came to Hardy it was with a sense of relief that I didn't have to try and jack myself up to a concept of poetry that lay outside my own life. . . . What I like about him primarily is his temperament and the ways he sees life."
Many other well-known modern poets have liked and enjoyed Hardy’s poetry with similar reactions, at one time or another. Larkin in his essay maintains that Auden, Dylan Thomas, Vernon Watkins, Betjeman, and Cecil Day Lewis are a few famous names, in the literary world, who have acknowledged their feelings for Hardy and his poems. If this is any indication one should confess that Hardy is more contemporary than many modern writers. T. S. Eliot surely had some justification for saying that only poets should criticize poetry. He himself was highly appreciative of Hardy and his work. Even Ezra Pound claimed that “no one has thought me anything about writing since Thomas Hardy died.”

T. S. Eliot advocates minimizing the use of poet’s personality in poetry. He himself deliberately tries to exclude large areas of personal experiences from his poetry. It appears essential for him to dissociate the man who suffers from the mind that creates. Hardy’s poetry exhibits the opposite. His poems:

are one and all, haunted with the presence of the writer. Every line of them – best or worst – is sealed with his own hand.

F. L. Lucas probably has Eliot in his mind when he says:

There are modern critics who harp without ceasing on the theme that the writer must efface his personality; in their own case such abstinence may be easy; it may even be well advised; but in the supreme authors of the world their personality is an
ineffaceable and essential part of their work. It need not be obtruded; as a rule, it is better not obtruded; but between every two lines of the greatest it is there—the foot-print of the lion. . . . Which is one reason why poets are born, not made; since personality is not to be taught. It rings clear in all that Hardy wrote. 4

C. Day Lewis too confirms about Hardy that “almost all his finest poems are deeply, nakedly personal.” 5 Such comments about Hardy should not be misinterpreted to label him as an egotist writer:

The professional egotist, actually conscious of the impression he is likely to make edits himself in order to make an intended impression. The result is that he seldom produces an accurate likeness. 6

Hardy simply and truthfully gives voice to his unedited feelings in his poems. These sometimes may be autobiographical but even then he cannot be blamed for self-analysis or exhibitionism. His poems are spontaneous unselfconscious cries of the heart. It could well be said that Hardy’s poetry does not confirm to Eliot’s views on poetry. At the same time, the fact demands no proof that both Hardy and Eliot were great poets, though so unlike:
Out of Hardy’s poems emerge new options for the elegy and for logic poetry, options that make it possible for the later writers to pursue alternatives to other influential poetic mediums, especially those associated with Yeats and Eliot. All three poets challenge the singular character of the self. But Hardy’s style is neither abstract nor fragmented in the manner of Eliot, who uses ambiguous pronoun references, multiple literary allusions, and a group of speech based on liturgical language, among other techniques to disrupt the continuity of spontaneity and individual voice. Hardy projects at times an anti-self comparable in some ways to the anti-self in Yeats, but he does so in less mellifluous style.

Any endeavour to analyze Hardy’s poetry, then, automatically calls for an understanding of his personality. His long life, outside his books, might seem uneventful but his inner life undoubtedly must have been rich and intense. To understand his inner nature and to identify the sources of his diverse literary output is not easy. The present chapter will try to draw the sketch of Hardy’s temperament; the experiences of his life which provided nourishment to all that he wrote. It is also intended that:
... his inner life ... which finds expression in every line he wrote and has commended his novels, stories and poems to millions of readers all over the world.

will eventually come to the fore, making itself visible as the chapters develop.

"The two most obvious facts about Thomas Hardy's life are its length and uneventfulness" Trevor Johnson begins his book with these words and goes on "to say that he lived for eighty-eight years is in itself not especially impressive." Although Johnson's scholarly works on Hardy helped to enhance Hardy's already established reputation, still such remarks at the beginning of even a good book can cause hindrance. The misconception created by such statements, repeatedly through many books, and the popular myth encouraged by numerous biographers would have the reader wrongly believe that:

Thomas Hardy was a snobbish, impotent, pessimist who had little understanding of women and who suffered from a feeble intellect.

Hardy's public image was that of a dignified, quiet and thoroughly unremarkable human being who had managed, somehow and without clear explanation, to triumph over the isolation of his childhood in Dorchester the least populated country of England. His relatively few years of formal schooling, the obscurity of his five years (1862-67) in London and the commercial craftiness of his earliest publishers added to the mystery of his personality. He did not travel extensively. He never belonged to a literary school. Like many Victorians his life was shrouded in discreet obscurity. And
his early critics, even in the first four decades of twentieth century, though less Victorian in temperament, could do little to unveil the true genius of Thomas Hardy. Hardy granted permission to journalists and fellow writers to meet him at Max Gate only infrequently. It would surely have created an entirely different inference if this “Grand old-man of English letters . . . the last Victorian” (Dale 51) had not outlived his generation. So it won’t be incorrect to say that if Hardy had not lived for eighty-eight years he might as well not have had the reputation that he enjoys, when his contemporaries are forgotten, posthumously. The politics of literary reputation, as any contemporary academic could say, is built or marred by the opinions of the, allegedly, reputed critics.

Two contemporary examples are at our disposal. Arundatthi Roy’s *The God of Small Things* would not have made it so big if the opinions of critics like John Updike and Jason Coulee had not influenced the common reader and the academicians into enthusiastically grabbing and reading the novel at first opportunity. Here Arundhatti’s talent is not doubted. Surely, she has provided the literary world with a novel way of telling a story. Her technique is entrapping. Similarly, Salman Rushdee’s *The vintage Book of Indian writing 1947-1997* endeavours to canonize Indian authors. The conclusions Rushdie draws in the introduction of this book are surely biased or the result of ignorance but such views can effect the reputation of the writers included or neglected. A more recent example could be Chetan Bhagat’s *One Night @ the Call Center.* Similarly, the influence of media and the part critics played in building or marring Hardy’s reputation can be an interesting topic for research. It seems sufficient here to say that it had its part in the entire picture of Hardy and his reputation, as it developed over the years.

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Hardy’s climb to general public acceptance as a poet was accelerated in the years 1918-1920 and onwards. He received occasional compliments through favourable reviews from Lawrence Binyn (1909) Lytton Strachey (1914) and Lascelles Abercrombie and the like. But the views expressed by these writers were wanting in balance and probing approach. Still, these writers did pioneer a more perceptive appraisal of Hardy which began with Middleton Murry in 1919. Murry was the first eminent critic who firmly asserted that Hardy “is a great poet uttering the cry of the universe”. Compared to their predecessors the post war critics were less eager to label Hardy as a cynic or pessimist. I A Richards acknowledged the quality of Murry’s judgment. Walter de la Mare and the young generation of upcoming writers like T E Lawrence, Siegfied Sassoon, Robert Graves found in Hardy “a kind of spiritual grand-father” (Gibson & Johnson, 16) did much to turn the tide in Hardy’s favour.

From 1950 onwards the flow of books and articles on Hardy has eroded many misconceptions about the ‘old man’s philosophy’ and has provided new fields to be furrowed and cultivated. Critics now tend to concern themselves with manageable themes scrutinizing the actual achievement of poems or group of poems. Exploratory and inductive articles attempt to break new grounds, to affect a synthesis or advance a hypothesis. Such attempts require frequent returns to the text. The growing pile of books on Hardy is evidence enough to prove his reputation. It also proves that Hardy, like any other great writer, can never be completely comprehended. Every study leads to a new alley for further exploration and the process will for ever continue. The demand of Philip Larkin “Wanted: Good Hardy critic”15 is as true today as it was in 1966.
It is easier and more convenient today to ride on the back of literary critics and avoid pitfalls, though it is also true that one should be more alert while riding on someone else’s back. When Hardy’s own account in *Life* is accused of being full or artful misstatements there is every possibility of un/intended or promiscuous statements in other scholarly works. Thus it is intended here to study Hardy’s poems through an interpretive approach. This chapter also makes an endeavour to determine the degree of influence his life had on his poetry.

The needed information is not necessarily recorded in the thinly disguised autobiography that Hardy dictated to his second wife in third person. But even the thickly revealing biographies written thereafter by J.I.M. Stewart\textsuperscript{16}, Robert Gittings\textsuperscript{17} and more recently Martin Seymour Smith vary in emphasis and interpretation. In spite of their different attitudes towards Hardy, every writer – biographer, reviewer or critic – agrees about two things – Hardy’s date and place of birth. Hardy was born in 1840 at Upper Bockhampton, Dorset.

\begin{verbatim}
It faces west, and round the back and sides
High beeches, bending, hang a veil of boughs,
And sweep against the roof. Wild honeysucks
Climb on the walls, and seem to sprout a wish
(If we may fancy wish of trees and plants)
To overtop the apple-trees hard by.

Red roses, lilacs, variegated box
Are there in plenty, and such hardy flowers
As flourish best untrained. Adjoining these
Are herbs and esculents; and farther still
A field; then cottages with trees, and last
The distant hills and sky.
\end{verbatim}
Behind, the scene is wilder. Heath and furze
Are everything that seems to grow and thrive
Upon the uneven ground. A stunted thorn
stands here and there, indeed; and from a pit
An oak uprises, springing from a seed
Dropped by some bird a hundred years ago.

In days bygone --
Long gone — my father's mother, who is now
Blest with the blest, would take me out to walk.
At such a time I once inquired of her
How looked the spot when first she settled here.
The answer I remember. 'Fifty years
Have passed since then, my child, and change has marked
The face of all things. Yonder garden-plots
And orchards were uncultivated slopes
O'ergrown with bramble bushes, furze and thorn:
That road a narrow path shut in by ferns,
Which, almost trees, obscured the passer-by.

'Oour house stood quite alone, and those tall firs
And beeches were not planted. Snakes and efts
Swarmed in the summer days, and nightly bats
Would fly about our bedrooms. Heathcroppers
Lived on the hills, and were our friends;
So wild it was when first we settled here.'

This is how 'Domicilium' one of Hardy's earliest surviving poems written between 1857 to 1860, published in 1916, presents a snapshot in words, for the cottage and its surroundings, where he was born. He seems to have made pun on his own name— 'Such Hardy flowers/as flourishes best untrained.' John Hardy, Thomas Hardy's great-grand father is supposed to have turned-up in paddle town with a bag of tools, no doubt falsely, from nowhere like ‘... a seed / dropped by some bird a
hundred years ago.’ And from this seed sprung the Hardys as ‘(a) n oak upraises’, still deeply rooted into the place with a secure and firmly rooted family background. It was this John Hardy, the poet’s great-grandfather, who built the cottage for his son, where Thomas Hardy was born. The doctor who delivered him at eight in the morning, on Tuesday, 2 June, 1840 declared the infant dead. Thanks to the common sense of the sharp eyed mid-wife that his last rights were delayed for eighty-eight years.

Thomas Hardy had especially tender memories of his grand mother, Mary Head. His imagination was coloured by the descriptions of her early struggles, as she told of them when he was a boy. When Hardy was born she was sixty-five and eighty-five when she died. From the oddly poignant retrospective freedom with which the elderly often speak, a sensitive child, especially of such retrospective habit as Hardy may later construct essential truths. Indeed the cottage and its surroundings as portrayed in ‘Domicilium’ are constructed on his grand mother’s recollections of the place. When she first came to live there it stood quite alone. But when Hardy’s parents took it over in 1839 many other houses had joined it to from a hamlet. With the passage of time, as Hardy’s father expanded his family, the house also saw enlargements and alterations.

Hardy’s mother, Jamima Hand, was three months pregnant when she married. His maternal grandmother, Elizabeth (Betty) Swetman, married a George Hand, servant, gardener, shepherd, an odd job man much below her. Hardy in Lives says that the marriage was clandestine. It is known that a daughter was born only eight days after the ceremony. Betty’s father died in 1822 and George Hand soon followed him. Betty insisted that her husband be buried by the side of a woman who was his
mistress. 'Her Late Husband' (151) is possibly inspired by this incident. The title of the poem is followed by (Kings Hintock, 182--) which certainly seems to correspond with date of George Hand's death. Though research scholars cannot verify it as the grave stones are no longer readable.

**HER LATE HUSBAND**

*(King's-Hintock, 182--)*

"No—not where I shall make my own;
But dig his grave just by
The woman's with the initialed stone-
As near as he can lie-
After whose death he seemed to ail,
Though none considered why.

"And when I also claim a nook,
And your feet tread me in,
Bestow me, under my old name,
Among my kith and kin,
That strangers gazing may not dream
I did a husband win."

"Widow, your wish shall be obeyed;
Though, thought I, certainly
You'd lay him where your folk are laid,
And your grave, too, will be,
As custom hath it; you to right,
And on the left hand he."

"Aye, sexton; such the Hintock rule,
And none has said it nay;
But now it haps a native here
Eschews that ancient way . . .
And it may be, some Christmas night,
When angels walk, they'll say:

"'O strange interment! Civilized lands
Afford few types thereof;
Here is a man who takes his rest
Beside his very Love,
Beside the one who was his wife
In our sight up above!'" (CP, 151-52).

Mr. Hand was difficult husband for Betty, and a bad father to their seven children. Apart from being a violent drunkard he was anti-Christian to such an extent that the children had to be baptized out of his enraged sight. Jemima, Hardy's mother, told him stories about this grandfather, which certainly must have contributed to some of Hardy's writings. 'By the Barrows' is one such poem which reads:

Here once a woman, in our modern age,
Fought singlehandedly to shield a child—
... from a man's senseless rage (CP, 246).

Nearly all the children in Hardy's poems are born orphaned or fatherless. Their father leaves them either after conception or does not care for them. Numerous poems discuss this theme. For instance in 'Panthera' (246) and 'Her death and after' (34) to name only two, the child is ill-treated by the father. In 'The Christening' (244) the mother alone takes the child to church while the father deliberately remains in the woods. The suggestion that Hardy's views about the father, human or the almighty, spring solely from stories told to him about this grand-father might seem farfetched: but these stories surely must have added colour, though to what extent is unknown and unknowable, to his over all view in the matter.
This drunken feckless father of Jemima, who died young, left her mother to bring up seven children on parish relief. Such circumstances must have made Jemima what she eventually was, tough, resilient, down to earth and ambitious, always endeavouring that her children should have the advantages denied to her by fate. Though no hand with a pen, she was an omnivorous reader. It is believed that she knew the writings of Addison, Steele, Richardson and Fielding. She was also familiar with standard works such as *Paradise Lost* and *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. She encouraged Hardy not only to read but also to make notes for which she gave him a notebook. He was only eight when she gave him Dryden’s *Virgil* and Johnson’s *Rasselas*. It seems that Hardy inherited his cynicism from her. Hardy and his mother harboured the notion that:

\[
\ldots \text{a figure stands in our van with an arm uplifted} \\
\text{to knock us back from any pleasant prospect we} \\
\text{may indulge in.}^{19}
\]

Hardy for sure was greatly influenced by her but to say that he was under her thumb seems untrue.

He was no less influenced by his father. The elder Hardy was a master mason and jobbing builder. He was much more successful in business than what his son suggested. The poet was akin in temperament to the senior Thomas Hardy:

\[
\ldots \text{in whom a reflective melancholic streak was} \ldots \\
\text{evident. He liked going alone into the woods of} \\
\text{heath} \ldots \text{- lying on the bank of Thyme or}
\]
Camomile with the grass hoppers leaping over him\textsuperscript{20}

It again won’t be an overstatement to postulate that Hardy derived his bent of infatuation, which provides the raw material for most of his writings, from his philanderer father.\textsuperscript{21} They often went together for late night dance and music gatherings. Hardy in \textit{Life} calls him ‘more than just a lady’s man.’

To the courtesy of his manners there was much testimony among the local ladies with whom he came into contract. (Smith, 11).

There was a tradition of music making in the Hardy family—music for worship and music for dancing. Thomas Hardy’s grandfather and father were gifted amateur musicians. Hardy inherited the tradition. The country ballads and folk dance tunes, the hymns and the psalms, the haunting patterns of rhythm and music in contrasting modes and moods provided a constant source of inspiration to Hardy — the poet and the novelist. Donald Davidson commenting on Hardy’s novels says: “he wrote as a ballad maker would write if a ballad maker were to have to write novels.”\textsuperscript{22} If this is true of his prose how much more would it obviously hold for his poetry can easily be conjectured. Thom Gunn says: “The single important influence on him is that of the ballad.”\textsuperscript{23} Arther R. Macdowell also acknowledges that: “the old country tunes ran in his mind and added their echo in his verse.”\textsuperscript{24} Hardy could as well be describing himself when he writes of Tess:
That innate love of melody, which she had inherited from her ballad singing mother, gave the simplest music a power over her which could well-nigh drag her heart out of her bosom.

Hardy’s poems repeatedly demonstrate his love for the simplest songs and music representing the homely melody just as in ‘Any Little Old Song’.

Any little old song
Will do for me,
Tell it of joys gone long,
Or joys to be,
Or friendly faces best
Loved to see.

Newest themes I want not
On subtle strings,
And for thrilling pant not
That new song brings:
I only need the homeliest
Of heartstirrings (CP, 666).

Other characteristics perceptible in Hardy’s personality are evident in the well written paragraph, in third person, in Life which reads:

Though healthy he was fragile, and precarious to a degree, being able to read almost before he could walk, and to tune violin when of quite tender age. He was of aesthetic temperament, extraordinarily sensitive to music and among the endless jigs, hornpipes, reels, waltzes and country dances that his
father played on an evening in his early married years, and to which the boy danced a pas seul in the middle of the room, there where three or four that moved the child to tears, though strenuously he tried to hide them. . . . This peculiarity in himself troubled the mind of ‘Tommy’ as he was called and set him wondering to a phenomenon to which he ventured not to confess. He used to say later that, like Calantha in Fords’ *Broken Heart* he danced on at these, trying to conceal his weeping. He was not over four years of age at this date (*Life*, 15).

Having told us of the trouble caused in his own mind, he, in *life*, goes on to point two further characteristics of personality at this childhood time. One was his habit awaiting the evening sun’s addition of ‘intensity’ to the Venetian red walls of the Bockhampton staircase, and of his then reciting Isaac Watt’s Hymn: ‘And now another day is done’ not for any religions purpose but because the line suited the scene. He then goes on to draw our attention to another childhood habit of ‘dramatic scene of the church service’. He would dress himself up in table-cloth and act as a vicar delivering a sermon reminiscent of all the other he had heard. This boy who dressed and sermonized as a vicar, who danced to his father’s tune in the middle of the room was always very formal in behaviour sometimes even coldly so. He did not wish to grow up to be a man, to possess things. He wished to remain as he was, in the same spot and to know no more people than he already knew. This early evidence of
the lack of social ambition followed him throughout his life. Later, in one of his poems – 'Childhood Among the Ferns' he writes about an event reminiscent of his childhood:

The sun then burst, and brought forth a sweet breath
From the limp ferns as they dried underneath:
I said: "I could live on here thus till death";

And queried in the green rays as I sate:
"Why should I have to grow to man's estate,
And this afar-noised World perambulate?" (CP, 825).

This essence of him, the innate character over which a personality is formed by external circumstances, was missed by his parents, who were always worried about his physical weakness. It was also overlooked by the critics and early biographers who paid more, undue, attention to 'matters of demonstrable facts' because Hardy had chosen to fictionalize them. Though early critical and biographic studies varied in interpretation and emphasis, Hardy's so called pessimistic philosophy, his views on man's relation to the 'Immanent Will', marriage and divorce, capital punishment and the like provided the major material for analysis, rather than the basic data of his life. Though these early secondary works could do little to uncover the mask behind which Hardy chose to obscure himself, as Lois Decon & Terry Coleman suggest, –from his fellow pupils at school, his colleagues in architecture, his publishers, fellow writers, readers of Life & literature even servants, pressmen, interviewers\textsuperscript{26} – they did much to keep his name academically respectable while the reputation of other Victorian artists and writers witnessed decline.
Thomas Hardy was one of the most misunderstood English poets. Behind his self imposed masks lay a determined resolve which could not take a coherent intellectual shape during his childhood and adolescence years. The driving force of his basic character was his curiosity to know the world and to ponder upon the meaning of existence. It labelled him as a gloomy pessimist. His mother and other family members had, similar misgivings when they saw him wrapped in a white table-cloth, acting as a parson. Many critics thoroughly believed and even spread the incorrect view that for Hardy ‘life had no meaning’, when his limited submission was that he was unaware of a coherent purpose of existence. As he clearly states in ‘The Darkling Thrush’, to cite only one example:

So title cause far carollings  
Of such ecstatic sound  
Was written on terrestrial things  
Afar or nigh around,  
That I could think there trembled through  
His happy good-night air  
Some blessed Hope whereof he knew  
And I was unaware (CP, 137).

Nearly all Hardy critics, when it comes to commenting on his education, confidently call him an autodidact, without even a second thought. Hardy himself protested when he came to read a 1911 thesis on his work describing him as an autodidact. This is rather to underestimate the education he received at the Dorchester British School, run by Isaac Last. Though his school education seems inferior to what he might possibly have acquired at a public school, his education at Last’s, which included besides Latin, elementary drawing, advanced arithmetic, geometry and
algebra should not be undervalued. Besides, school education does not consist merely of subjects and syllabus. It is the overall impact of the atmosphere and the surrounding on the pupil’s personality that is more important. It can not be said with certainty if Hardy could have written the novels and poems that he did if he had not spent his childhood in Dorchester, studying, playing, and growing-up there as he did. Physically he enjoyed good health throughout his life mainly due to his daily five mile walk to last’s school. The impression on his imagination of the heath which he trod daily provided the canvas which Hardy used as a background for his creative writings. Isaac Last was a strict and fearsome master. But even he appreciated the young Hardy and saw in him a bright, well-behaved and promising student. He gave the young Hardy a Latin Testament and another book as a prize. Hardy in fact had become a voracious reader while still at this school and the book worm in him remained unchanging lifelong.

Even in 1856, when he was apprenticed to the Dorchester architect, John Hicks, Hardy said that he had just begun to be interested in French and Latin classics, hinting that he did not much want to leave school then. It is a known fact that he desired university education and even endeavoured to fulfil this desire by accepting honorary doctorates. In 1905 he accepted an honorary degree from Aberdeen University, in 1913 from Cambridge University, in 1920 from Oxford University and in 1925 he was pleased to be conferred an honorary doctorate from Bristol University. He continued to mark his Bible and these marks remained a dominating influence in his writings. He attacked not God, but the concept of God as portrayed in the scriptures and the misbeliefs such scriptures generated. For instance, he often became too involved in debates about infant baptism.
The atmosphere Hardy confronted in Hick’s office was both educative and congenial. His fellow students were educated and often positively argumentative on theological matters. Hardy became not only first-class draughts-man, here, measuring the estimates for church restorations; he also set himself on a remarkable plan of study. In summer he rose at four and at five in winters and would study until eight, every-morning, before leaving for the office. By the year 1858 he was working through the *Iliad*. He was soon, due to continued effects, able to make sense of it. Horace, Virgil, Ovid, were next in line for study. It is interesting to note here that the young Jude Fawley’s knowledge of the *Iliad* was akin to Hardy’s. Hardy was forced to temporarily abandon his pursuit of the Greek masterpieces and learn the New Testament in order to hold on to his arguments with his colleagues in Hick’s office.

Hardy met the Reverend William Barnes, a rather awe-inspiring figure. Barnes was an M.A. from Cambridge and had numerous books to his credit. He kept a classical and mathematical school in Dorchester and was even regarded as a university in himself. Apart from being a folklorist, linguist and a philological authority of international repute he was also a gifted teacher and a fine poet. Hardy attended his locally famous readings in the Dorset Vernacular and was a regular reader of his dialect verse as it appeared in local newspapers. In addition to editing an anthology of his poems, Hardy also wrote a moving elegy on his death—‘The last signal’ (CP, 444).

Much before Reverend William Barnes or Isaac Last could influence Thomas Hardy; Mrs. Julia Augusta Martin taught the little Tom his alphabets. She was the wife of the owner of Kingston Mauward estate. On the property purchased by her husband, Mrs. Martin started the ‘National’ school for the upper Bockhampton parish,
by paying for the building of a Church of England. Sometime after his eighth birthday, Thomas Hardy was admitted to this school. Mrs. Martin, who was childless, is said to have taken a fancy to the boy, almost from his infancy. "She had been accustomed to take him into her lap and kiss him until he was quite a big child" (Smith, 21). Martin Seymour Smith in his biography, *Hardy*, further maintains that "one does not have to be a Freudian to see what the frustrated Julia was unconsciously up to." (Smith, 21).

Mrs. Julia is revealed to the literary world through Thomas Hardy's account of her in *Life*. But at the same time one should remember that Hardy's unusual employment of supercharged memory with erotic significance is no secret. It seems likely that the boy who accompanied his father to the country dances, who saw men and women expressing their feelings during these dance gatherings, through body language and appropriate songs of love and tryst, even unfaithful affairs, who was, even at this tender age, acquainted with the society in which unmarried girls became pregnant – his own mother Jemima (Hand) and his maternal grandmother, Elizabeth (Betty) Swetman are known examples from his autobiography in third person. He must have been curious about sexual behaviour and could have misinterpreted Mrs. Martin's feelings towards a boy of eight. It would be interesting if someone could take-up this as a hypothesis and objectively analyse Mrs. Martin's character to detect the so called frustration due to childlessness. Another connected aspect that demands consideration is that when Hardy was recollecting all this, at an advanced age, alone in his study; he was free to indulge himself in fantasies upon all aspects of his past life. However, it is not intended to deny that this one sided 'affair' remained in Hardy's mind and provided him with plenty of emotionally surcharged material for
his unpublished novel, _The Poor Man and the Lady_. Few poems also confirm Hardy’s passionate feelings for ‘her ladyship’ for instance, ‘In Her Precincts’ (CP, 444) and ‘The clock of the Years’ (CP, 496) to name only two. Mrs. Martin and Hardy could not meet again until he was twenty two and she an elderly woman. Recollecting all this, Hardy later wrote:

> Though their eyes never met again after his call on her in London, nor their lips from the time when she held him in her arms who van say that both occurrences might not have been in the order of things if he had developed their reacquaintance earlier, now that she was in her widowhood with nothing to hinder her mind from rolling back upon her past. (Smith, 147).

But what is clearly perceptible and over locked or missed by eminent critics is that Hardy here is fantasizing his own amorous desires, implanted in his mind at the tender age of curiosity. Instead of applying Freudian concepts to Julia Martin’s behaviour with the child it would be more proper to psychologically interpret the above quoted statement by Hardy in _Life_ under the same light. It clearly indicates that Hardy here, in his old age fantasy, imagines her husband as a villain, ‘an obstacle’ and he actually wants her mind to roll-back, probably not in reality, but in his fantasized world, not ‘upon her experiences’ but upon his experiences of what he attributes to her past.
It won’t be an exaggeration to state that with Hardy sexual feeling is more a matter of mind than loins. He dwelt erotically upon all aspects of his past but these erotic speculations were largely mere fantasies resembling reality only to the degree to which fiction resembles the world. In ‘The Clock of Years’, he writes:

And the Spirit said,
"I can make the clock of the years go backward,
But am loth to stop it where you will."
And I cried, "Agreed
To that. Proceed:
It's better than dead!"
He answered, "Peace;"
And called her up - as last before me;
Then younger, younger she grew, to the year
I first had known
Her woman-grown,
And I cried, "Cease! -

"Thus far is good -
It is enough - let her stay thus always!"
But alas for me - He shook his head:
No stop was there;
And she waned child-fair,
And to babyhood.

Still less in mien
To my great sorrow became she slowly,
And smalled till she was nought at all
In his checkless griff;
And it was as if
She had never been.

"Better", I plained,
"She were dead as before! The memory of her
Had lived in me; but it cannot now!"
And coldly his voice:
"It was your choice
To mar the ordained" (CP, 496-97).

This poem clearly conveys Hardy's self-regarding nature and potential discursiveness of contemplating the beloved. Probably, it is not about any particular woman. It only suggests that the process of memory, in Thomas Hardy, when left free from orthodox reproach becomes the raw material for literary creation. Such reminiscent experiences formed the basis for many literary pursuits and lay behind much of his future character and action. He remained idealistic in the manner of adolescents rather than displaying the lustful conquests perceptible in young men. Though adolescent attractions are natural, the tenacity with which he retains the memory of intense emotional experiences and converts them into universal human experiences through his intensely creative contemplations define a creative process that was peculiar to Hardy. He also records, with equal intensity, his attraction for the girl he saw on horse-back and he mentions four more girls who similarly attracted him during his childhood days. But individual identities blur as soon as one enters the poetic arena.

Tryphena sparks was just another Dorchester dame with whom Hardy maintained a life-long retrospective relationship. What gives her an edge over his other female friends, for critics and biographers like Lois Decon and Terry Coleman, J. O. Bailey among others, is the confusion created by the often repeated speculation, including the suggestion that their relationship bore an illicit child named 'Randolph'/Randal, or Ranty, Randy/ dy/tie etc. Mrs. Eleanor Bromell (1878-1965) Tryphena's eldest daughter, at an advance age of eighty-one, recollected rather
confusedly that when her mother came out of Stockwell College, in 1871, the young Thomas Hardy gave her a ring. This story was provided further credence when Irene Cooper Wills, a friend of Florence Hardy, confirmed that she was told by the second Mrs. Hardy that the ring Tom eventually gave to his first wife had been intended for a Dorchester girl. Tom passed out rings regularly. He is supposed to have given a ring to Cassie Pole too. Millgate states:

The two were often alone together, and it can not be proved they made love. . . . But there was certainly no child, probably no formal engagement, and perhaps not even a dramatic parting but simply a gradual relapse into the amicable cousinly terms of the past. 28

While considering this episode one should not forget that Florence enjoyed doing Emma down. It was Florence who tried to convince Hardy in his old age and his readers ever after that Emma’s family had a history of insanity. But it has been proved untrue. Only one of Emma’s distant cousins, whom she had probably never met through-out her life, was admitted in an asylum. Further when Tryphena Sparks died in 1890, her eldest daughter Eleanor was only twelve; too young for any Victorian mother to confide in about her premarital relations. This same elder daughter of Tryphena has been quoted in an essay: “Hardy loved her but they said she was a whore. . . . They said she ran around with other men” (Smith, 95). However, this is not to infer that Hardy’s poetry or prose is not influenced by his acquaintance with Tryphena a sparks. Hardy was an artist. Anything under the sun can influence an
artist. If Julia Martin, Louie, Mrs. Henniker, etc. could become the subject of his poetry, why not a relative who was also very intimate. The intimacy between Tryphena and Hardy was developed when he had just returned from London, for good, after five years stay. Tryphena was sweet sixteen in the summer of 1867 when Hardy met her. She was beautiful and a relative, living at Puddle-town, within walking distance. She was an educated Dorchester girl, destined to become a school headmistress, later. Hardy perhaps starved of informed conversation, after leaving London, must have relished her company. Hardy easily susceptible to women throughout his life might have been passionately driven towards her. But it can not be said with certainty that they made love, leave alone having a child. Just as he may not have made love to Martha Sparks in London, to Elizabeth Nicholls with whom his affair was more serious and lasted longer, or to Eliza’s sister Jane or to any number of unheard women.

Hardy’s relationship with Tryphena was further complicated due to her alleged involvement with his friend Horace Moule:

Horace’s family status was that of continually forgiven Brilliant Black sheep, and as such, he would have appealed to the dramatic and the unconventional in Tom, for whom he must, if only initially, have been something of a role model (Cited in Smith, 51).
Hardy was profoundly affected by Moule's character and fate. Hardy maintained, throughout his life, that this friend of his had the potential to become a major poet. Horace Moule, who is known today due to Hardy, was instrumental, when alive, in establishing Hardy as a novelist. He not only reviewed his novels favourably but also encouraged him to write despite hostile criticism. Moule was a published writer when Hardy came to know him. He not only spurred Hardy to tackle classical Greek but also lent him books on controversial topics. Tryphena, Maule and Hardy formed a strange triangle which is perceptible in some of his novels like *Jude the Obscure* and *A Pair of Blue Eyes* to name only two. Lois Deacon says:

> We find Tryphena in both Eustachia and Thomasin in the *Return of the Native*, while the two warring sides of young Tom Hardy are presented in the guise of Damon Wildeve and Clym Yoebright . . .

> Moule is also always to be found in one of the main characters.29

Horace's life culminated with his suicide in 1873. This incident along with the public hangings Hardy had witnessed as a young boy, the death of a boy-shepherd due to starvation, made so deep an impression on his mind that he could not help expressing it in one way or the other in his novels and poems.

Hardy was not in communication with Tryphena after her marriage with Charlie Gale, in 1877. In 1890, while travelling to London by train, Hardy wrote the first few lines of 'Not a Line of Her writing have I'. This poem was later published in *Wessex poems* (1898) entitled 'Thoughts of Ph . . . a'. (CP, 55) Hardy himself called it
“an instance of curious sympathetic telepathy” (Life, 224). The woman Hardy was thinking of was dying at that time. In this poem Hardy calls Tryphena his “Lost Prize” It is an epithet which undoubtedly stands for a cherished friend or girl-friend in this case. It should not be forgotten that Hardy due to his highly speculative habit presents even a girl he has only glimpsed as a lost prize. An instance of this is quoted by Martin Smith from Hardy’s ‘poetical matter’ notebook. This entry on April 1868 records Hardy’s thoughts after seeing an unfamiliar woman on steamboat to Lulworth Cove:

Women on the paddle-box steps; all laughter: then part illness & the reminder laughter... Saw her for the last time standing on desk as the boat moved off. White feather in hat, brown dress, Dorset dialect, Classic features, short upper lip. A women I wd. Have married offhand, with probably disastrous results. (Smith, 97)

Another instance can be quoted from one of his poems, ‘To Lizbie Browne’. Remembering this sweet Lizbie Browne in the second last stanza of the poem Hardy writes:

But, Lizbie Browne,
“tI let you slip;
Shaped not a sign;
Touched never your lip;
sWith lip of mine,
Lost Lizbie Browne! (CP, 118).
Well, these examples clearly confirm the point that Hardy was often stung by the women he saw and considered many of them as lost prizes. If he had not done so he would not have been able to convert them into raw material for a truthful poetry of impressions. This also confirms Hardy’s susceptibility to introspective pursuit on the path of sexual attractions, paths that might have been taken. The words ‘Lost Prize’ have been repeatedly extended beyond elasticity to convey much more than Hardy might have seriously intended. These words have been used more than once, intentionally for numerous dames. Even in this case, it could stand for any girl whom he believed he loved until he realized that she was no more than one of the commons among the crowd with whom he could share nothing except a creative reminiscent thought. But this is not to deny Tryphena her place as an influential inspiration for Hardy’s literary output.

In 1870, when Crickmay, Hardy’s new employer, after taking over Hick’s business sought Hardy’s expertise to restore a remote church in Cornwall it was like entering another world for Hardy. He set out reluctantly on a journey that turned out to have life long consequences for him. It not only provided him with a setting and background for his novel – *A Pair of Blue Eyes* but it also provided him his wife–Emma Lavina Gifford. She was the second daughter and fourth child of a solicitor, John Attersoll Gifford. Born in 1840 she was only six months younger to Hardy. They were irresistibly drawn towards each other. Her delicate hint of love filled him with radiant joy as he writes in the poem ‘At the Word FAREWELL’
She looked like a bird from a cloud
   On the clammy lawn,
Moving alone, bare-browed
   In the dim of dawn.
The candles alight in the room
   For my parting meal
Made all things withoutdoors loom
   Strange, ghostly, unreal.

The hour itself was a ghost,
   And it seemed to me then
As of chances the chance furthermost
   I should see her again.
I beheld not where all was so fleet
   That a Plan of the past
Which had ruled us from birthtime to meet
   Was in working at last:

No prelude did I there perceive
   To a drama at all,
Or foreshadow what fortune might weave
   From beginnings so small;
But I rose as if quicked by a spur
   I was bound to obey,
And stepped through the casement to her
   Still alone in the gray.

"I am leaving you . . . Farewell!" I said,
   As I followed her on
By an alley bare boughs overspread;
   "I soon must be gone!"
Even then the scale might have been turned
   Against love by a feather,
- But crimson one cheek of hers burned
   When we came in together (CP, 405-06).
Their courtship continued for four years, largely through correspondence. She encouraged him with his writings, made fair copies for his novels, discussed them with him intimately and seemed best suited to be the intellectual companion, he probably, so earnestly desired. The affair prospered, unlike most of the previous ones mainly because of the fact that for most of the time they only idealized each other from a distance. They finally married, much against the will of Mr. Gifford, in 1874.

Hardy and Emma spent a few years in perfect matrimonial bliss before the relationship started to turn sour. But, the reasons provided by major critics seem insufficient. Critics, Michael Millgate have blamed their childlessness and let it go at that. Others like Martin Seymour Smith and Tim Armstrong, sympathizing with Hardy, blamed Emma for the bitterness in their marital relationship. They try to prove that Hardy was not physically impotent and whole heartedly supported the idea of an illegitimate child born due to his alleged relationship with Tryphena. The main purpose of many of these writers seems not Hardy’s potency but that they unconsciously endeavoured to blame Emma for alleged infecundity as the main cause for the break up in their relationship. On the other hand, Trevor Johnson commiserating with Emma says:

We may begin by sympathizing with Emma who liked company . . . . She, in what Hardy admitted, hated the lonely cottage-life. She did not posses, like Hardy, a practical anodyne for loneliness and depression in work. Their relative prosperity, bringing servants in its train, deprived her even of pleasure in small domestic tasks.(Johnson, 29).
Well, Emma’s isolation must have caused frustration but Johnson forgets to mention that two of Emma’s brother’s children lived at Max Gate with them and were virtually brought-up by the Hardys. It seems more probable that the frustration, which surely existed, was due to the social problems of feminine sterility. It must have sprung from the unfulfilled womanly desire of motherhood. Emma started to proclaim herself as Hardy’s superior, in birth, breeding and education, which she certainly was not:

She would apologize to visitors for his unorthodox opinions, explaining that he really did not mean what he said. And this was only one example of how she snubbed him in public; on another occasion she had said ‘Try to remember, Thomas Hardy, that you married a lady!’ This was the root of the problem. She did feel that her family was much more distinguished than her husband’s.30

Such notions, which she harboured throughout her life, could not have resulted from one particular professed major reason of childlessness.

Unlike Emma, Hardy also experienced frustration for different reasons from his childhood to old age. Hardy has reiterated time and again through his poems, that given a choice he would not have been born. A man with such firm convictions regarding birth might not have wanted to become an instrument for the same. Though this does not mean that he had deliberately or knowingly abstained from it. Any book dealing with the psychology of sex could tell about the effects of the unconscious
mind on the sexual productivity of a person. Moreover, Hardy was a poet influenced by Shelley and later by Meredith's disturbing portrait of marriage in his 'Modern Love'. He must have felt himself trapped in an orthodox arrangement. To substantiate this point it would be adequate to seek support from the views expressed by Kamala Das who took ten years to make her marriage viable. She says:

Creative types should not marry; marriage takes away your space and capacity to think. It splits you.

You can not lie on your husband's (spouse's) bed and think your separate thought.

Although Hardy kept on living with his wife, until her death, they both drifted into opposite directions. But the matter regarding her alleged insanity and a family history seems arguably untrue. It seems more appropriate to call it acute frustration which was caused by Hardy's and Emma's differing bent of mind, beliefs concerning religion and their requirements – marital and artistic respectively.

As far as Emma's influence on Hardy's life and work is concerned commentators grudgingly cite examples of his criticism of marriage from his novels and poems. Happier interludes they enjoyed hardy get noticed. Emma is judged by what she became when she was old, without at times considering the circumstances that brought her there. The initial spell she cast upon Hardy had a more lasting influence on his work as is evidently perceptible in the 'Poems of 1912-13' written after Emma's death.
Apart from these biographical influences it seems appropriate to consider the influence of architecture on Hardy’s temperament. Even after renouncing the profession, as a means to earning livelihood, the rules of architecture continued to influence his writings. The protagonists of his first three novels were architects. Most of his poems also illustrate an attention to architectural detail which only the trained eye could provide. But it would be false to assume that he simply transferred insight from one field to another. Hardy also knew a great deal about theatre, actors and playwrights. His interest in theatre was life long and intense. He adapted several of his short stories and novels for the theatre. He developed a theory of theatrical minimalism which finally led to the writing of *The Queen of Cornwall*. Elements of this theory are also perceptible in the stage directions of *The Dynasts*.

No consideration of influences, on Hardy’s writing, can be complete without considering the so called modern influences. Hardy was a Victorian only by birth not by conviction. Merryn Williams has aptly said that Hardy:

seems to exemplify the more modern, adventurous, questioning spirit which came into literature about the turn of the century and led on directly to the work of D.H. Lawrence. (Merryn, 61).

Like the Russian writers in whose hands writing became the fittest medium for setting forth a profound interpretation of human existence even Hardy’s novels resemble not only the reality of life but also the rationality of thought. Hardy was no less influenced by the French writers like Zola with whom Hardy is often compared. Both
set out to make a close study of human life in relation to heredity and environment. Being a well informed modern man he was no less influenced by the post-Darwinian scientific thought which led him to treat human beings as helpless victims of the indifferent cosmic forces. Lionel Stevenson writes:

The doctrines that Hardy deduced from the Darwinian hypothesis are basically similar to those of Meredith; but the antithetical personalities of the two authors led them to different conclusions. They both saw man's dethronement from pre-eminence in the cosmos as the favourite protégé of a benevolent creator meant that his ideals and desires have no guarantee of fulfilment. But Hardy emphasized the tragic irony of inevitable frustration, whereas Meredith sought to use cosmic irony to show his readers how to sublimate their selfish aggressiveness.  

Hardy was originally a poet. Nearly all his poems exhibit the expression of personal emotion. In the preface to *Wessex Poems* Hardy himself calls them 'dramatic or personative' in conception. Objects and episodes in life, whether real and imaginary, produce upon him a deeper and more precise impression, as is obvious from his poems. The accumulation of such impressions to some extent obliterates and to a grater extent reinforces each other. This is what produces a coherent emotional
nucleus, which Hardy uses for creative purposes. It is this coherent emotional nucleus which is often consolidated by a kind of speculative thought that differentiates between the creative process of a poet and the thought process of a philosopher. The creative literary artist does not generalize: or rather his generalization is not abstract. It cannot be so, at least in Hardy's case, as his attitude to life is predominantly emotional. His thoughts partake much more of the nature of residual emotions, which are symbolized in the objects which aroused them, than of discursive reasoning. Out of the multitude of his vivid perception emerges, with their emotional accompaniments a sense of the equality of life as a whole. It is this sense of an emphasis upon a dominant quality pervading the human universe which gives the works of Thomas Hardy that unique universality which Matthew Arnold attempted to isolate in his famous criterion of the highest kind of poetry – 'Criticism of Life'.
NOTES


7 Dale Kramer ed, *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p 204. (All further citations from this book are from this edition and are referred to as Dale in parenthesis).

8 Norman Page *Thomas Hardy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1977), p.4. (All further citations from this book are from this edition and are referred to as Page in parenthesis).

10 Martin Seymour Smith *Hardy* (London: Bloomsbury, 1994). Front inside Jacket. (All further citations from this book are from this edition and are referred to as Smith in parenthesis).

11 Arundhati Roy *The God of Small Things* (Delhi: Indiaink, 1997).


13 Chetan Bhagat *One Night @ the Call Center* (Delhi: Roopa & Company, 2005).


21 He would accompany his father to bridal festivities, where he would play country dance tunes on the violin. He wondered why his mother, a progressive woman, did not object to these performances. His father he said ‘objected to them strongly’
Thomas II might have found the presence of his son a hindrance to joining fully in the celebrations, at which lay the opportunity to seduce a woman (Smith p. 27).


26 Lois Decon & Terry Coleman Providence and Mr. Hardy (London: Hutchinson, 1966).


30 Cited in Merryn Williams A Preface to Hardy (London: Longman, 1976), p.37. (All further citations from this book are from this edition and are referred to as Merryn in parenthesis).
