A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES - THOMAS HARDY

POETRY


NOVELS, SHORT STORIES, ESSAYS, LETTERS AND OTHER WORKS BY HARDY


**PRIMARY SOURCES: ROBERT LEE FROST**

**POETRY**


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...
Thomas Hardy and Robert Frost are typical spokesmen of the turbulent years of transition around the turn of the twentieth century. Nature poetry of Hardy and Frost is a link between the pre-Darwinianpantheism of Wordsworth and the post-Darwinian mechanicism of later. The new nature poetry presages the materialization of nature. Change is the main motivating spring behind their bardic expressions.

A succession of new scientific inventions, loss of faith in religion, general moral decline and spirit of enquiry uprooted faith in the old order of nature. As Hardy says in *Jimmie’s Christmas*, "the animosity of contemporary logic and vision was deadly". Darwin’s theory of "natural selection" formed the turning-point of an entirely new way of thinking. It left a grim
picture of a blundering, inapt nature. Hardy calls it, 'a rapt determinator'. Man became insignificant in the vast scheme of things. Scientific evidence led to a notion of a mechanistic universe without purpose or meaning. Nature was felt to be a common battlefield where different species fought. Most of them were annihilated, while some of them survived.

Conscious design, providence, benevolence had all evaporated from the modern view of nature. As a theme for poetic exaltation, it no longer had any value. Hardy and Frost emerged as nature poets on such a desolate scene. They acknowledged the existence of an insentient nature. The design of things is seen as dark, terrifying, tragic and without divine sanction. God is shown to be dissociating himself from nature. 'I have no remembrance of such place; / Such world I fashioned not!' Frost presents a mocking view of 'Pan' in "Pan With us".

Hardy and Frost find a blind force at work. Hardy refers to 'the sightless orbs of nature'. He uses the epithet 'blind' frequently. Frost's stars are also without the gift of sight.

Hardy beholds an 'unmaliced, unimpassioned' power groping in darkness. In Frost, an active hostile force is seen to be unleashed. 'The wind works against us in the dark, / And pelts with snow'.

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The vision of a diminished nature called for a new artistry. The nature poetry of Hardy and Frost is characterised by an unembellished simplicity and precision that leaves nothing unexplained. They were keen observers of nature. Hardy's novelist's eye seem to enrich the poet's vision. Their delineations are an adulation to subject-matter, concentrating only on the observable. They discarded the mysticism of the romantic nature poetry. They gave conventional images like the cycle of season, birds, stars and tree a new impetus. Hardy's grave, positive and stark descriptions tend to be static and convey a sense of finality. The stillness and lifelessness of the images are evocative of the poet's view of the transitoriness of existence. Frost's images on the other hand are full of life and action. All his images centre around action. The poets aptly deploy counter-images, synecdoches and pathetic fallacy to bring out deeper implications of the scenes depicted. Their imagery is based on science proven facts. Frost's dictum, 'we love the things we love for what they are' epitomises their basic approach.

Like Virgil, Senec and Shakespeare before them, Hardy and Frost are enthralled by rural world simplicity and rustic stability. Hardy's Wessex and Frost's New England portray the peaceful georgic mode of life, unhindered by city and machines. From the secluded regions the poets convey universal facts.

'Heart-balt, spirit-lane and city-opprost' the poets turned to villages. Art machines invaded the rural Dorset and Vermont. bleak, absolute, country-homes reflected them...
to pastoral world of splendour and joy. Profusion serriment, love, music and joy mark Hardy's pastorals. Hardy infuses in nostalgic recollections of the bygone era of maypoles joustings and harvest suppers. Frost's pastorals are vibrant with his penchant for Georgic activities.

Their renunciation to mechanisation and urban mode of life with their deep-rooted affinity to rural homes are blended into a synthesis. Hardy admits the pastoral as a perspective, envisioned through his nostalgic recollections. 'In the dairy where I lived so long in Frost, the pastoral is a vision to which he extends an invitation."

The outstanding feature of their pastoral is the persistent attempt to make sense of man's relationship to nature. Man is an integral part of the pastoral vision. The interesting interaction between the two entities man and nature is a constant theme.

Hardy's main concern is focused on the human experience in an alien natural world. He remarked once, 'an object or mark raised by man on a scene is worth ten times any such formed by unconscious nature'. In the natural scheme of 'plump' and 'pray' Cruelty and suffering are dominant. Nature remains an imperceptible audience. Human beings are caught in her intricate web. Hardy questions, '0, dote a bird deprived of wings'/do earth-bound wilfully'.

Frost's view of man's status is that individual man is small, lost and unimportant in the midst of a vast changing nature. Absolute landscape inspiring a sense of

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loneliness and fear is common in Frost. 'It was too lonely for her there and too wild'. Frost like Hardy holds the natural world at its most impersonal and unfeeling, unable to express kinship and unwilling to return love. Man is a fugitive, running towards destruction. Predestined and helpless Martian man surrenders to forces mightier than he. Nature is described as 'sinister, malign and evil'. It is the will of a cold impersonal indifferent, Immanent Will. Frost's poetry portrays an active malevolence, a relentless hostility operating against man. The savage brutality stagger[s] man. 'It breaks away in some new kind of slaughter'. Unlike Hardy who tried to match man and nature in a futile duel, Frost understands the barriers separating the two forces. Nature as Frost acknowledges is a permanent 'other'. Man and nature constantly confront each other.

The poems "The Mowing", "Mending Wall" and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" show different degrees of interaction.

Hardy meekly accepts the endless process of flux in which human life is swept away. Frost advocates a courageous stand. The traditional significance of man and the modern scientific reductive view of him are matched.

Man can resist the pull of nature at times. Acceptance and resistance are two important facets of man's interaction with nature. Nature tries to overwhelm man in countless ways. The immediate natural world is on a set course...
towards chaos, tossing man in its path if unresisted. 'The universal cataract of death/that spends to nothingness - and unresisted, save by some strange resistance in itself'.

Frostian man lives by encountering nature in the form of obstacles. The preacher reserve in "snow" insists on completing his mission while a blizzard is raging. He defies the weather and in that very act, courageously encounters, resists and conquers nature. In establishing and reiterating the chasm separating natural from human Hardy and Frost decisively deviate from the romantic tradition.

Hardy's docile surrender and Frost's courageous resistance culminate in the two different paths of monism and dualism. Hardy sees the universe as a unified whole. The "Immanent will or nature is one, that permeates as one stuff the wottering whole". Man is a part of the universal system, differing in no fundamental tendencies from the celestial stars or terrestrial animals. The theory of evolution regards all organic creatures as belonging to a single family. The centre of altruism has subsequently shifted from humanity to the whole of consciousness collectively. Hardy's symbols are consistent with his monistic philosophy. A total subordination to the will is seen in the poem "Dear Lamivot", "Pedigree", and "Money Room Time at an Inn". Hardy's monistic philosophy visualises nature as arbitrary and autonomous. Its governing laws are necessity and determinism. Hardy says, 'Neither chance nor purpose governs the universe, but necessity.'
Man and other creations can only suffer, but cannot alter the system. Hardy calls it illusion by the insouciance of the will. Monism

Monism tends to be pessimistic. It is a narrow perception which does not allow for creativity. Thus, Hardy views the passing scene as an immense tragedy. Like Pantheism, which it resembles in the essential doctrine of unity, monism nourishes a fatalistic mood. 'For primal doom pursues her faithful, fatal in the end. Nature's callousness leaves a trail of 'shattered purposes' and unfilled dreams', where her creations groan'.

there is no conscious intelligence at the helm. An injustice of uncompensated pain destroys hope and faith in nature's holy plan. Hardy reiterates his stand. 'Tough to tolerate was life's early blood—so tart the fruit it brought! Nature in its endless battle struggles with man's pilgrimage as pain'. Against such a sustained, passive indifference, man is a luckless, chanceless and tragic victim.

Frost perceives a dichotomy in the scheme things. The enigmatic nature and humanity stand on either side of the well-chosen middle path of the poet. The plurality of nature's manifestation seduced him into dualistic doctrines. Where Hardy discerns unity, Frost finds separateness. Man and nature, inner and outer are found disunited. As he says in a poem: 'there are roughly zones, whose laws must be obeyed'. The barrier visualized between the natural and the human is maintained continuously. Nature will not let man mingle with her completely, but on man and unity the romance celebrated is cleared irrevocably. Man adds to this eternal barrier, other limitations conditioned by science and technology. Occasional interactions
are not uncommon. They are only on an experimental level, never ending in a total merger. There is a close transaction between the old man in "An Old Man's Winter Night" and the things which constitute his immediate surroundings. His old man's surroundings. The old man's physical existence is conditioned by the circumambient objects, which are inseparable.

In the personification of the night, the person and the object are shifted to a middle ground. Man and outer surroundings are inter-related in the activities of the night. 'The log that shifted with a jolt/Once in the stove disturbed him and he shifted'. But in the final analysis, it is suggested that it is only an emblematic world well outside the human sphere, a presence not deeply concerned with man. The stardust night symbolising nature reveals a remoteness that does not encourage any intimacy. The very attempt of unifying diverse entities is to Frost, a defiance against nature's lack of purpose. Dualism permits creativity out of which a mild cautious optimism results. An deserted heath does not remain desolate for long. Spring reclaims and revives life.

Out of the rubble comes the seedling, a nascent life and a new hope for humanity to continue. 'The sturdy seedling with arched body comes / Shouldering its way and shedding the earth crumbs'.

The nature poetry of Hardy and Frost is the product of transition which has a special significance for America and England and collectively as a new literary trend. The poets had encountered nature in the scientific era. Their experience
and outlook bear the indelible mark of the transitional era's turmoil. Though their literary heritages were different, their reactions to the time's chaos is similar. Hardy lamented the loss of the romantic perspective of nature. Frost overcame his dismay and sought in the emblematic encounter an indication of counter-love, a positive response from nature. Their nature poetry is in essence an attempt to reconcile the feelings of rage, resentment and desire for an amicable truce with nature.

\[ \text{Kali Rocks} \]

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