TURNING FROM TENNYSON TO HARDY, WE 
 turn, most would agree, to a writer who is different in many ways
from the earlier poet. Yet for all their differences, both poets share
a thematic concern with love, loss, and the burden of memory.
And there is a deeper thematic connection between Tennyson and
Hardy: the thematics of a subversion and renewal of forms worked
out through figurative language.

A paradoxical and interesting irony lies in the extent to which,
on a certain level, the relation between Tennyson and Hardy in
terms of style and form is one almost solely of difference. The irony
is that, on a deeper level, the two poets cancel these disparities
through their concern with problems of figuration and through
the way they both foreground the rhetoric of tradition as a problem.

The connection between Tennyson and Hardy in terms of this
thematic struggle is nowhere more evident than in Hardy’s past­
toral poetry. As we read Hardian pastoral, we see that like Tenny­
son, Hardy is daunted by the rhetoric of tradition. His pastoral
language seems to mean what he does not wish it to say. In terms
of themes such as love, loss, and memory, Hardy’s pastoral figures
say too little and too much: they say too little to the extent that the
force of traditional pastoral forms has been emptied out, and they

157
say too much about the task of representing these experiences within the framework of a language imposed on and inhibited by the rhetoric of tradition. Again like Tennyson, however, Hardy’s deliberate exaggeration or foregrounding of pastoral rhetoric allows the problem of tradition itself to be an enabling source of poetic power. The more we read Hardian pastoral, the more we see that Hardy’s irony is as much about the subversion and renewal of the rhetoric of tradition, as it is about the thematic incidents he represents by means of this rhetoric.

Tennyson and Hardy share the concern with the space of pastoral as being produced by figurative language, and as the area within which the duplicity of such figures is explored. Like Tennyson, Hardy subverts existing pastoral forms through the ironies of the genre’s rhetoric, in order to create new pastoral forms. As we begin to read specific poems, we see Hardy employing pastoral figures and strategies only to disrupt them in ironic reversals as striking as the more readily observable ironies on the level of thematics.

“In a Wood” is from Hardy’s Wessex Poems (1895). Although he based the poem on a prose passage in The Woodlanders, it is not a poem from that novel.

Pale beech and pine so blue,
    Set in one clay,
Bough to bough cannot you
    Live out your day?
When the rains skim and skip,
Why mar sweet comradeship,
Blighting with poison-drip
    Neighbourly spray?
Heart-halt and spirit-lame,
    City-opprest,
Unto this wood I came
    As to a nest;
Dreaming that sylvan peace
Offered the harrowed ease—
Nature a soft release
    From men’s unrest.

But, having entered in,
    Great growths and small
Show them to men akin—
Combatants all!
Sycamore shoulders oak,
Bines the slim sapling yoke,
Ivy-spun halters choke
Elms stout and tall.

Touches from ash, O wych,
Sting you like scorn!
You, too, brave hollies, twitch
Sidelong from thorn,
Even the rank poplars bear
Lothly a rival's air,
Cankering in black despair
If overborne.

Since, then, no grace I find
Taught me of trees,
Turn I back to my kind,
Worthy as these.
There at least smiles abound,
There discourse trills around,
There, now and then, are found
Life-loyalties.¹

J. O. Bailey discusses this poem in terms of Hardy's progression from the Romantic understanding of a beneficent nature to a post-Darwinian understanding of nature: "the poem presents his development from the period of his youthful Wordsworthian view of nature to his mature, Darwinian view." But one can look at "In a Wood" in terms of Hardy's development and transformation of pastoral conventions. One can read this poem in the context of a literary tradition that goes back through Thomson, Spenser, Virgil, Theocritus, and Homer.

We find one of the pastoral conventions that Hardy uses in "In a Wood" in Spenser. Critics have not usually read Hardy in the light of Spenser, but Spenser was an early influence. In the Early Life, Florence Emily Hardy describes Hardy's youthful interest in Spenser: "He also began turning the Book of Ecclesiastes into Spenserian stanzas, but finding the original unmatchable abandoned the task."² Robert Gittings tells us that Hardy owned the
works of Spenser in Moxon’s Popular Poets series; Gittings sug­
gests also that in 1871 Hardy put Tryphena Spark’s initials next to
a stanza from the “Epithalamium.” This suggests Hardy’s interest
in Spenser continued past his earliest adult years. Spenser may have
been more of an influence on Hardy’s poetry, especially his descrip­
tions of nature and his use of pastoral topoi, than is generally
thought to have been the case. Spenser provides, at the very least,
a valuable analogue in terms of Hardy’s use of pastoral topoi. “In
a Wood” may not be a Spenserian poem, but Hardy’s use of liter­
ary conventions in this poem draws on his knowledge of Spenser
and of classical writers of pastoral.

The first stanza of “In a Wood” describes the trees “pale beech
and pine so blue” in terms of potential violence—a violence that
can destroy “sweet comradeship.” This opening landscape is a tradi­
tional locus amoenus. But it is one in which the unity and friendship
described in nature turn to division and hostility. The words “mar,”
“blighting,” and “poison-drip” imply a nature filled with antago­
nistic forces. In stanza two, Hardy most clearly alludes to the idea
of the pastoral bower:

Heart-halt and spirit-lame,
   City-opprest,
Unto this wood I came
   As to a nest;
Dreaming that sylvan peace
   Offered the harrowed ease—
Nature a soft release
   From men’s unrest.

The imagery here is similar to the descriptions of bowers in the
early poetry of Keats. Images and phrases such as “nest,” “sylvan
peace,” and “soft release” in Hardy’s poem are similar in quality of
thought and feeling to descriptions in early Keats poems, such as
“To Solitude,” “To George Felton Mathew,” and “Sleep and Poetry.”
The Keatsian bower derives from Spenser; the Keatsian contrast be­
tween city and country derives from Virgil and Horace. These are
Hardy’s models also. The city/country contrast becomes even sharper
in Hardy than in Keats or his classical models: Hardy’s hyphenated
words stress the speaker’s sense of weariness with city life: “heart-
halt”; “spirit-lame”; “city-opprest.”
As do the speakers in early Keats, Hardy's speaker enters the bower hoping to escape the city's oppressiveness. But there is an important difference between the early Keatsian bower and this _locus amoenus_ in "In a Wood." In Keats, the ambivalence of the bower image centers on the deception and escapism that qualify the pleasure experienced within the pastoral scene. When Hardy's speaker enters within the wood, however, his problem is not escapism: the problem he faces is that there is no pleasure, no possibility of escape. The _locus amoenus_ is a negative one. In Hardy's "In a Wood," the "ease" afforded by the pastoral world is illusory.

The poet suggests this illusiveness in lines five and six of stanza two: "Dreaming that sylvan peace / Offered the harrowed ease." He conveys the sense of illusion in two ways in these lines. First, "dreaming" connotes ideas that have no basis in reality, or hopes that may not be fulfilled. Second, Hardy's syntax is ambiguous. The words "the harrowed" can be read as a prepositional phrase with the preposition "to" elided. In this case, "ease" is the indirect object offered to the harrowed city-dweller. But "harrowed" could be read as adjectival, modifying "ease" as direct object. In other word, the city-dweller may be offered "harrowed ease." "Harrow" means to plunder or spoil, and the ambiguity of syntax and phrasing suggests that the "sylvan peace" may not offer escape. This bower may actually rob or spoil the person's ease who enters within it.

The dream of sylvan peace gives way to the harrowing or spoiling of the bower world in stanza three:

```
But, having entered in,
    Great growths and small
Show them to men akin-
    Combatants all!
Sycamore shoulders oak,
    Bines the slim sapling yoke,
Ivy-spun halters choke
    Elms stout and tall.
```

Here the speaker defines the ironic kinship between man and the natural scene in terms of strife: "to men akin- / Combatants all!" On a thematic level, this passage shows Hardy's turn from the Romantic view of nature to the Darwinian view. But in terms of pas-
toral conventions, the passage involves the return to past literary traditions and the transformation of those traditions. The bower in “In a Wood” contains evil and destruction. It is comparable to the false bowers in Spenser. But Hardy is drawing upon an even more specific pastoral topos: the catalogue of trees. In Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Orpheus retires to a grove after the death of Eurydice:

There was a hill, and on it
A wide-extending plain, all green, but lacking
The darker green of shade, and when the singer
Came there and ran his fingers over the strings,
The shade came there to listen. The oak-tree came,
And many poplars, and the gentle lindens,
The beech, the virgin laurel, and the hazel
Easily broken, the ash men use for spears,
The shining silver-fir, the ilex bending
Under its acorns, the friendly sycamore,
The changing-colored maple, and the willows
That love the river waters, and the lotus
Favoring pools, and the green boxwood came,
Slim tamarisks, and myrtle, and viburnum
With dark-blue berries, and the pliant ivy,
The tendrilled grape, the elms, all dressed with vines,
The rowan-trees, the pitch-pines, and the arbute
With the red fruit, the palm, the victor’s triumph,
The bare-trunked pine with spreading leafy crest,
Dear to the mother of the gods since Attis
Put off his human form, took on that likeness,
And the cone-shaped cypress joined them, now a tree,
But once a boy, loved by the god Apollo
Master of lyre and bow-string, both together.

We also find the catalogue-of-trees topos in Spenser. Here is the Spenserian grove:

Enforst to seeke some covert nigh at hand,
A shadie grove not far away they spide,
That promist ayde the tempest to withstand:
Whose loftie trees yclad with sommers pride,
Did spred so broad, that heavens light did hide,
Not perceable with power of any starre:
And all within were pathes and alleies wide,
With footing worne, and leading inward farre:
Faire harbour that them seemes; so in they entred arre.

And foorth they passe, with pleasure forward led,
 Joying to heare the birdes sweete harmony,
 Which therein shrouded from the tempest dred,
 Seemd in their song to scorne the cruell sky.
 Much can they prays e the trees so straight and hy,
 The sayling Pine, the Cedar proud and tall,
 The vine-prop Elme, the Poplar never dry,
 The builder Oake, sole king of forrests all,
The Aspine good for staves, the Cypresse funeral.

The Laurell, meed of mightie Conquerours
 And Poets sage, the Firre that weepeth still,
The Willow worne of forlorne Paramours,
The Eugh obedient to the benders will,
The Birche for shaftes, the Sallow for the mill,
The Mirrhe sweete bleeding in the bitter wound,
The warlike Beech, the Ash for nothing ill,
The fruitful Olive, and the Platane round,

The carver Holme, the Maple seeldom inward sound.
(The Faerie Queene I. 1. 7–9; Yale Univ. Press edition)

The development of the catalogue-of-trees topos from the grove of Orpheus in Ovid, to Spenser’s wandering wood, and then to the “sylvan peace” in “In a Wood,” tells us something about Hardian pastoral. Curtius observes the place of rhetoric in the Ovidian grove. Ovid’s long list of trees is a formalized description, but it is also a classical example of pathetic fallacy. Orpheus’s song is a pastoral elegy, and Ovid uses pathetic fallacy to describe nature’s response. As in the classical elegies the “Lament for Adonis” and the “Lament for Bion,” Ovid’s rhetorical “placing” of the natural scene involves the reciprocal sympathy between the poet figure and the landscape. The landscape responds in an anthropomorphic way to the person’s sorrow: when Orpheus sings, the “shade came there to listen.”

The speaker in “In a Wood” hopes to discover reciprocal sympathy within the pleasance. He hopes to find a “sweet comrade-ship” in nature; instead, he discovers a negative kinship. It is the idea of a negative locus amoenus which relates Hardian pastoral to
Spenser. Unlike the sympathetic kinship between man and nature in Orpheus’s grove, the Spenserian grove is a place of deceit and evil. The Redcrosse Knight and Una enter the wood to escape “an hideous storme of raine.” As was the speaker in Hardy’s “In a Wood,” they are looking for a nest and place of “ease”:

> Enforst to seeke some covert nigh at hand,
> A shadie grove not far away they spide,
> That promist ayde the tempest to withstand.

What Hardy’s speaker discovers about the nature of the wood bears comparison with the description of the Spenserian grove. The sheltering aspect of the bower is illusive in this *locus amoenus* in Spenser. And it harbors evil.

> And all within were pathes and alleies wide,
> With footing worne, and leading inward farre:
> Faire harbour that them seemes; so in they entred arre.

The Spenserian “seemes” signals the deceptive aspect of this *locus amoenus*: what seems to Redcrosse and Una to be a “faire harbour” is actually an evil place designed to lead the knight from the path of “holienesse.” Hardy’s poem may not be directly based on the Spenserian grove, but it is broadly based on the traditional pastoral topos of the catalogue of trees. And the Spenserian analogue reveals some interesting points of comparison: Spenser’s “faire harbour” is like Hardy’s dream of “sylvan peace.”

Spenser hints at the falseness of the wandering wood through the word “seemes.” Hardy hints at the strife in his *locus amoenus* through the syntactical ambiguity of “Offered the harrowed ease.” Spenser emphasizes further the wood’s deceptive quality at the catalogue’s closure: “the Maple seeldom inward sound.” By ending the description of trees on this note, Spenser suggests that the outer appearance and the inner reality of the wood are not the same. There is something “unsound” about the wood. And that is what Hardy discovers in his bower also:

> Sycamore shoulders oak,
> Bines the slim sapling yoke,
> Ivy-spun halters choke
> Elms stout and tall.

[my emphasis]
But Hardy’s negative *locus amoenus* contains even more somber implications than does Spenser’s. Spenser’s wandering wood leads to Errour’s den. And when Redcrosse slays Errour, that slaying holds out the possibility that evil can be localized, contained, and vanquished. Alternative pastoral bowers that are good rather than evil remain possibilities; Redcrosse and Una follow a path out of the wood and may reach one of these better places. The speaker in Hardy’s “In a Wood” leaves his negative bower also. But the alternative place, the human community to which he returns, contains the same kinds of deceit and strife:

Since, then, no grace I find
Taught me of trees,
Turn I back to my kind,
Worthy as these.
There at least smiles abound,
There discourse trills around.

Redcrosse and Una leave the wandering wood and eventually find “grace” within a larger human community. The speaker of “In a Wood” turns from the negative *locus amoenus* to people who, in his view, are as worthy as the trees—i.e., not very worthy.

The comparison of this Hardian bower, specifically the catalogue-of-trees topos, with Orpheus’s grove in Ovid and with Spenser’s wandering wood suggests several points about Hardy’s development of pastoral. Unlike Orpheus’s grove, Hardy’s pleasance does not involve a sympathetic relation between the human figure and the landscape. As with Spenser’s wandering wood, Hardy’s bower is false and deceptive. But in Spenser there are positive bowers also. And there are possibilities of moral affirmation that are apparently denied Hardy’s speaker. Hardy’s human community is as unsound as his forest.

One final point about “In a Wood” and Hardy’s development of pastoral: the opposition between country and city derives from classical sources, but it stems also from Wordsworth and Keats. In these two Romantic poets, this opposition is usually bound up with the poet figure’s search for inspiration and for his poetic subject. Hardy’s speaker is also such a poet figure. When the speaker turns from the woods, he turns from poetic tradition. Even more
than Keats and Tennyson, the Hardian poet is outside of the pastoral community, and when Hardy turns to the larger world for inspiration and for a new sense of community, the larger world also fails him: "There at least smiles abound, / There discourse trills around." Unlike Keats, Hardy does not place himself back within pastoral through concrete, sensuous descriptions of natural process. Nature is too discontinuous and arbitrary. Unlike Tennyson, Hardy does not fully re-create the idyll form and attain a place within the tradition that way. More than either of these poets, Hardy establishes pastoral that involves a melancholy sense of the poet's disinheritance from the tradition. Hardy's sense of exile from pastoral tradition means that, even more than in Tennyson, the distant framed perspective of the idyll form becomes one of fragmentation and discontinuity.

"To Flowers from Italy in Winter" is from the volume *Poems of the Past and the Present* (1901).

Sunned in the South, and here to-day;
   - If all organic things
Be sentient, Flowers, as some men say,
   What are your ponderings?

How can you stay, nor vanish quite
   From this bleak spot of thorn,
And birch, and fir, and frozen white
   Expanse of the forlorn?

Frail luckless exiles hither brought!
   Your dust will not regain
Old sunny haunts of Classic thought
   When you shall waste and wane;

But mix with alien earth, be lit
   With frigid Boreal flame,
And not a sign remain in it
   To tell man whence you came.

J. O. Bailey says Hardy's "extension of compassion to organic nature" is "whimsical." But the poem seems much more elegiac than whimsical. On the simplest level, one can type the poem as a description of the frailty of all natural life: the poet wonders if flowers can feel the pain of exile as people do. Yet the poem addresses more
interesting questions than simply that of the nature of organic life. "To Flowers from Italy" is about pastoral tradition and Hardy’s relation to classical writers of pastoral such as Virgil and Theocritus. In the Early Life, we are told that Hardy read Dryden’s translation of the Aeneid in his youth; Hardy’s interest in Virgil continued throughout his life. Hardy’s friendship with Reverend William Barnes strengthened his interest in Virgilian pastoral (Barnes’s dialectal poems show the strong influence of Virgil’s Eclogues). Hardy was also interested in Theocritus. Here is one of his notes for a poem: “Cf Theocritus & the life at Bockn when I was a boy—in the wheatfield, at the well, cidermaking, wheat weeding, &c.”

Flowers are a traditional symbol of pastoral poetry and an iconographic element within the pastoral world of Theocritus and Virgil. One of the nearest sources for Hardy’s pastoral flowers could be William Barnes. Here is a passage from Barnes’s “Tweil,” a poem included in the selection of Barnes’s work that Hardy would later make for publication in 1922:

In wall-zide shcădes, by leafy bowers,
     Underneath the swayên tree,
O’leâte, as round the bloomên flowers,
     Lowly humm’d the giddy bee,
My childern’s small left voût did smite
Their tiny speâde, the while the right
Did trample on a deăisy head,
Beside the flower’s dousty bed,
An’ though their work wer idle then,
They a-smîlen, an a-tweîlen,
Still did work an’ work ageân.

Barnes’s poem, like Hardy’s “To Flowers from Italy,” is about the fragility of natural life and about the maintaining of this life. It is also about the fragility of the pastoral world and pastoral poetry. Hardy makes the point in his introduction to his edition of Barnes. Hardy speaks of Barnes’s poems as “idylls.” And in his discussion of Barnes’s use of traditional Dorset dialect, Hardy observes the “silent and inevitable effacements” of the language of tradition: “In the villages that one recognizes to be the scenes of these pastorals the poet’s nouns, adjectives, and idioms cease to be understood by the younger generation.”
Hardy's melancholy sense of the fragility of tradition is not limited to the Dorset dialect and the folk life of rural England. This melancholy sense of the passing away of the language of tradition, and of the conventions of literary tradition, involves Hardy's knowledge of English and Western literary history. We sense this awareness of history even in the way Hardy talks about Barnes's achievement. In Hardy's view, Barnes is not a minor dialectal poet; he is a part of the great British tradition. Barnes "really belonged to the literary school of such poets as Tennyson, Gray, and Collins, rather than to that of the old unpremeditating singers in dialect." The three poets Hardy mentions wrote pastoral and are a part of the transformation of the classical pastoral tradition. Hardy's interest in Barnes's work stems from the younger poet's interest in the pastoral tradition and his own place within it.

This is the problem addressed in "Tweil" and "To Flowers from Italy." Barnes resituates himself in pastoral through the use of dialect. Hardy's attitude is more complicated; it is an attitude that bears comparison with Tennyson. "To Flowers from Italy" echoes uncannily Tennyson's introductory poem for "Demeter and Persephone," "To Professor Jebb":

Fair things are slow to fade away,
Bear witness you, that yesterday
From out the Ghost of Pindar in you
Rolled an Olympian, and they say
That here the torpid mummy wheat
Of Egypt bore a grain as sweet
As that which gilds the glebe of England,
Sunned with the summer of milder heat.

So may this legend for awhile,
If greeted by your classic smile,
Though dead in its Trinacrian Enna,
Blossom again on a colder isle.

This poem expresses Tennyson's sense of exile from the classical writers. In "Demeter and Persephone," which this poem introduces, Tennyson uses flowers as a symbol of poetic creativity, but also as a symbol of a fall from innocence. Hardy may or may not have been familiar with these two Tennyson poems, but his "To
Flowers from Italy" uses similar images to address similar problems. Both poets use images of organic death and birth. Both use images of the "translation" of flora from the warm south to the coldness of England. And if Tennyson's poem suggests implicitly that he is a melancholy exile from classical pastoral and myth, Hardy's does so explicitly.

Hardy's identification with the flowers constitutes a statement of his own poetic situation: "Frail luckless exiles hither brought! / Your dust will not regain / Old sunny haunts of Classic thought." Even more than Tennyson, Hardy feels disinherited from the "haunts of Classic thought," and Hardy expresses this disinheritance through the use of pathetic fallacy. Tennyson uses pathetic fallacy and language that is both literal and figurative to create his new idyll form; Hardy's use of pathetic fallacy is ironical. Just as the bower in "In a Wood" is expressly false and characterized by strife, pathetic fallacy in "To Flowers from Italy" is false to the values of pastoral.

Hardian pathetic fallacy produces the opposite effect to the sympathetic response of nature in the "Lament for Bion":

In "Demeter and Persephone," Tennyson uses a similar thematics involving pathetic fallacy when Demeter searches for Persephone. The difference between Tennyson and the classical pastoral elegy lies in nature's not responding sympathetically to Demeter's sorrow. Nature is unable to tell her where Persephone is. Nature provides no answers: "We know not, and we know not why we moan." The poet uses pathetic fallacy to connote the very distance from the pastoral world of innocence that both Demeter and Tennyson feel. But Tennyson still uses figurative language seriously. Nature is really endowed with human attributes.

Hardy represents his more severe sense of poetic disinheritance in "To Flowers from Italy" by raising the idea of pathetic fallacy
and then interrogating it, as an idea. In lines 2 through 4, he uses the tentative and interrogatory conjunction “if” and the adverbial “as.” Hardy does not create a picture of flowers that think and feel; he presents that possibility as a question. Bailey sees the tone as whimsical, but it is really skeptical and ironic. Pathetic fallacy is figurative language to be questioned, rather than a language of pastoral affirmation. Tennyson’s “To Professor Jebb” images the rebirth of classical literature and myth through the “translated” and transplanted seed of grain. Hardy describes the end of this possibility through the flowers that end in dust and silence. Their dust will “mix with alien earth . . . / And not a sign remain in it / To tell man whence you came.”

Hardy continues his exploration of pastoral through flower imagery in the fine poem “The Last Chrysanthemum” (this poem is also from the Poems of the Past and the Present volume of 1901):

> Why should this flower delay so long  
> To show its tremulous plumes?  
> Now is the time of plaintive robin-song,  
> When flowers are in their tombs.

> Through the slow summer, when the sun  
> Called to each frond and whorl  
> That all he could for flowers was being done,  
> Why did it not uncurl?

> It must have felt that fervid call  
> Although it took no heed,  
> Waking but now, when leaves like corpses fall,  
> And saps all retrocede.

> Too late its beauty, lonely thing,  
> The season’s shine is spent,  
> Nothing remains for it but shivering  
> In tempests turbulent.

> Had it reason for delay,  
> Dreaming in witlessness  
> That for a bloom so delicately gay  
> Winter would stay its stress?

> -I talk as if the thing were born  
> With sense to work its mind;
Yet it is but one mask of many worn
By the Great Face behind.

As with "To Flowers from Italy," "The Last Chrysanthemum" describes the fragility and transience of organic life. J. O. Bailey says the poem is about "ecological adaptation," but this view is a bit too literal. The last flower appears and remains very late in the year; the season is now late autumn, "When flowers are in their tombs." "To Flowers from Italy" addressed the problem of "translating" or carrying over the flowers of Italy and "classic thought" to England. In "The Last Chrysanthemum," Hardy addresses the problem of literary exile from a slightly different angle; from the perspective of being too late: "Too late its beauty, lonely thing, / The season's shine is spent." There is a strong elegiac note to the poem: "Now is the time of plaintive robin-song."

Part of the poem's pathos stems from autumnal sadness and the image of the lone flower that will soon die. But the pathos is also related to pastoral elegy and to Hardy's sense of disinheritance from its conventions. Unlike "To Flowers from Italy," there is no specific reference to "classic thought" in this poem. Here classical thought means literature as well as philosophy. But there is an allusion to a classical writer of pastoral who was very important to Hardy. We know that Hardy read Dryden's Virgil as a youth, and Donald Davie has shown us the influence of Virgil on Hardy's work. The melancholy way death impinges on life in "The Last Chrysanthemum" seems Virgilian.

There is a specific image in the poem that suggests Virgil:

It must have felt that fervid call
Although it took no heed,
Waking but now, when leaves like corpses fall,
And saps all retrocede.

These lines are an allusion to a famous passage in the Aeneid. In Book Six, as Aeneas travels through the underworld to see his father, he witnesses the shades hoping to cross the river Cocytus in Charon's boat.

Hither rushed all the throng, streaming to the banks; mothers and men and bodies of high-souled heroes, their life now done,
boys and unwedded girls, and sons placed on the pyre before their father's eyes; thick as the leaves of the forest that at autumn's first frost dropping fall, and thick as the birds that from the seething deep flock shoreward, when the chill of the year drives them overseas and sends them into sunny lands. They stood, pleading to be the first ferried across, and stretched out hands in yearning for the farther shore.10

As with the shades on the banks of the Cocytus, spirits which the poet compares to falling autumn leaves, this last flower has not yet found its rest in burial. The other flowers "are in their tombs." Hardy stresses the feeling of melancholy exile from home and tradition. Paradoxically, burial in the earth is the yearned-for home for these shades in the underworld. The earth is implicitly the place of rest for the chrysanthemum also. The loneliness and desolation of the last flower is the result of its not being where the other flowers are: in their tombs.

After witnessing the sad spectacle on the shores of Cocytus, Aeneas asks the priestess to explain the scene. She does as follows:

All this crowd thou seest is helpless and graveless; yonder warden is Charon; those whom the flood carries are the buried. Nor may he bear them o'er the dreadful banks and hoarse-voiced waters ere their bones have found a resting-place.17

The wandering of these souls who wish to be buried is a figure for the wandering hero in exile, hoping to find a new home. This section of the Aeneid is an apt expression of Hardy's situation as a poet in exile from the home of pastoral. As with the chrysanthemum, Hardy senses that it is "too late" for pastoral.

The melancholy feeling of exile and of being "too late" is bound up with Hardy's use of language in "The Last Chrysanthemum." The poet uses figurative language to represent nature: the sun "called," the chrysanthemum "must have felt that fervid call." Not only does the flower feel as a person does, it even thinks:

Had it reason for delay,
Dreaming in witlessness
That for a bloom so delicately gay
Winter would stay its stress?
Hardy pushes the pathetic fallacy to an extreme degree. In “To Flowers from Italy,” the speaker distanced himself from pathetic fallacy and pastoral elegy by situating the figurative language within conditional and interrogative modes. In “The Last Chrysanthemum,” the speaker distances himself from pathetic fallacy by developing it to an improbable degree. We saw that Tennysonian pathetic fallacy has a way of becoming a very accurate transcription of nature, even as it looks ahead to the discontinuities and fragmentation of symbolism. Hardian pathetic fallacy is much more disembodied.

The speaker in “The Last Chrysanthemum” is alienated from nature and literary tradition. And pathetic fallacy functions as an idea rather than as a vehicle for achieving a concrete description of the world. The development of the poet’s attitude toward pastoral in Tennyson involves an increasing sense of an allegory of the exiled artist. This type of allegory achieves an even more sardonic vision in Hardy’s pastoral poems. Hardy uses figurative language, but it does not work to convey an image of what it attempts to describe. Instead, he foregrounds figurative language and pathetic fallacy as ideas to be questioned. In “The Last Chrysanthemum,” pastoral nature becomes an idea, and Hardy is really addressing the failure of this idea:

-I talk as if the thing were born  
With sense to work its mind;
Yet it is but one mask of many worn  
By the Great Face behind.

In this final stanza, pathetic fallacy as a vehicle of natural description fails. Hardy turns to a larger and more abstract type of allegorical fiction. One critic calls this stanza “an embarrassing bit of gaucherie” that mars an otherwise excellent poem.18 No doubt, the final stanza of “The Last Chrysanthemum” exemplifies Blackmur’s criticism that Hardy is a “sensibility violated by ideas.”19 But we can also understand the stanza as Hardy’s conscious sense of exile from poetic tradition. The poet acknowledges here the failure of his pathetic fallacy and his failure to reground his language in the pastoral mode. As the souls yearn to return home in Book VI of the Aeneid, the poet yearns to return to pastoral innocence but finds himself in a state of poetic exile and disinheritance.
Hardy continues to explore the pastoral topos of flowers and of generative natural life and decay and death in the poem “Transformations,” from the volume *Moments of Vision*, published in 1917:

Portion of this yew  
Is a man my grandsire knew,  
Bosomed here at its foot:  
This branch may be his wife,  
A ruddy human life  
Now turned to a green shoot.  

These grasses must be made  
Of her who often prayed,  
Last century, for repose;  
And the fair girl long ago  
Whom I often tried to know  
May be entering this rose.  

So, they are not underground,  
But as nerves and veins abound  
In the growths of upper air,  
And they feel the sun and rain,  
And the energy again  
That made them what they were!

Hardy said the scene was Stinsford Churchyard. J. O. Bailey comments on the poem as follows:

The concept of the poem is imaginatively a very old one. It appears in Fitzgerald’s “Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám”: “I sometimes think that never blows so red / The rose as where some buried Caesar bled” (Stanza XIX). Besides this imaginative concept, Hardy had read such scientific essays as T. H. Huxley’s “The Physical Basis of Life,” which says that animal life may live in other forms only by feeding upon protoplasm that has lived, but died. In this scientific law, “There is a sort of continuance of life after death in the change of the vital animal principle, where the body feeds the tree or the flower that grows from the mound.”

It is curious that Bailey, after saying the concept is a very old one, then restricts himself to Hardy’s near contemporaries. We find the idea of “transformations” in many of the classical writers, especially
of pastoral. Hardy is as interested in the idea of "transformations" as a literary concept, as he is interested in it as a biological and ecological one.

On one level, the poem is an attempt at a pastoral *locus amoenus* and a figurative language that produce a pastoral scene involving sympathy between man and nature. Unlike "To Flowers from Italy" and "The Last Chrysanthemum," "Transformations" involves an emphasis on the rebirth and generation that emerge from death: the deaths of the people lead to the rebirth of nature. The way the speaker involves death and life with each other in this poem bears comparison with the fields of Enna in Tennyson's "Demeter and Persephone." In that poem, the flowers in the field were, in part, the cause of Persephone's fall from innocence: Dis ravishes her while she is picking flowers. And when the flowers re-emerge, shooting up from the underworld, they are a sign that the world of pastoral innocence has been inalterably bound up with violence, evil, and death.

Hardy's poem is more positive in its attempt to naturalize death as the beginning of new life. But the ultimate sense of the poem is even more somber than Tennyson's "Demeter and Persephone." The positive side to this pastoral scene lies in the emphasis on new organic life: "green shoot," "grasses," "rose." The convoluted pathetic fallacy, in which human beings become plants and then the plants possess the feelings of human beings, affords an affirmative pastoral vision:

So, they are not underground,
But as nerves and veins abound
In the growths of upper air,
And they feel the sun and rain,
And the energy again
That made them what they were!

Here is a positive but ironic sympathy between man and nature. The moment looks back to the beginnings of pastoral elegy in the "Lament for Adonis" and the "Lament for Bion." And the transformation of the "underground" into the pastoral landscape looks back to Virgil's Elysium in Book VI.

But there is also a dark side to the transformations in this poem.
There is an ambivalence in “Transformations” which has its source in Ovid. Hardy emphasizes the grotesque side of this close kinship between man and the pastoral landscape. The metamorphosis in the poem, from human body to plant or tree, is comical but also strange and unpleasant. The ambiguous identity of both man and nature, the lack of definition or articulation between the two is unnerving:

Portion of this yew
Is a man my grandsire knew,
Bosomed here at its foot. . .

Is the yew a tree or a man? Is the subject of “bosomed” man or yew? The corporal punning of “bosomed” and “foot” is comic but also strange. As the passage continues, the phrasing and syntax become even more ambiguous: “This branch may be his wife”, “These grasses must be made / Of her who often prayed.” The tentativeness of the verbal constructions belies the notion of a sympathetic and healthy reciprocity between man and nature; the transformations are not unqualifiably good.

The ambivalence of this kind of Hardian pastoral scene goes back to Ovid. The Ovidian metamorphoses often produce beautiful and lively natural phenomena, such as springs, trees, and flowers, but the conditions which usually bring about these changes are evil and violent. The transformation becomes a necessary means of escape from the threatening situation, but the nonhuman state of the transformation is not to be wished for. A good example is the story of Hyacinthus. Apollo and Hyacinthus were discus-throwing; Hyacinthus is hit in the head by a discus. Here is how Ovid describes Hyacinthus’s dying:

but all the arts were useless,
The wound was past all cure. So, in a garden,
If one breaks off a violet or poppy
Or lilies, bristling with their yellow stamens,
And they droop over, and cannot raise their heads,
But look on earth, so sank the dying features,
The neck, its strength all gone, lolled on the shoulder.

To commemorate his love and sorrow for Hyacinthus, Apollo has him turned into a flower:
"You will be
With me forever, and my songs and music
Will tell of you, and you will be reborn
As a new flower whose markings will spell out
My cries of grief, and there will come a time
When a great hero's name will be the same
As this flower's markings." So Apollo spoke,
And it was truth he told, for on the ground
The blood was blood no longer; in its place
A flower grew, brighter than any crimson,
Like lilies with their silver changed to crimson.
That was not all; Apollo kept the promise
About the markings, and inscribed the flower
With his own grieving words: Ai, Ai
The petals say, Greek for Alas!  

The Ovidian flower becomes, in this instance, a sign for the language of pastoral elegy: as it is made by Apollo, the flower is an emblem of poetic song. Most of the Ovidian metamorphoses turn human beings into natural objects that are, in turn, figures for the processes of artistic transformation. The Ovidian metamorphosis makes a work of art ambiguous in its moral status, and it suggests the poet's ambivalent attitude about the nature of his work. The implicit message is that generative and creative work, both organic and aesthetic, necessarily involves violence, pain, and loss. Hardy's "Transformations" contains a similar message. The grotesque imagery of bodily dismemberment and transformation into "portion" of a yew, or branch, or green shoot, is not a reassuring statement about man's relation to the natural landscape. Nor is it a reassuring statement about the poet's relation to literary tradition. These images of dismemberment signify organic and aesthetic discontinuity: natural process has become violently disruptive. "Transformations" is Hardy's sardonic transformation of the literary idea of pastoral innocence.

The tone that characterizes Hardy's poems of pastoral flowers and landscapes is ironic. But it is also rueful. This tone measures the poet's distance from the pastoral world. Hardy explores this rueful quality in the poem "A Backward Spring" from the volume Moments of Vision.
The trees are afraid to put forth buds,
And there is timidity in the grass;
The plots lie gray where gouged by spuds,
And whither next week will pass.
Free of sly sour winds is the fret of each bush
Of barbary waiting to bloom.

Yet the snowdrop's face betrays no gloom,
And the primrose pants in its heedless push,
Though the myrtle asks if it's worth the fight
This year with frost and rime.
To venture one more time
On delicate leaves and buttons of white
From the selfsame bough as at last year's prime,
And never to ruminate on or remember
What happened to it in mid-December.

J. O. Bailey's comments on the poem are short and to the point:

"A Backward Spring" presents Hardy's observation of trees and flowers. He attributes to some of them emotions like fear and timidity in the face of hostile weather, though the aggressive snowdrops and primrose blossom promptly with no apparent "gloom."

This poem exemplifies the true voice of Hardian pastoral. Here Hardy uses pathetic fallacy in a way that is neither purely descriptive nor purely an abstract idea. He does not use figurative language in this poem to convey concrete sensuous description as do Keats and Tennyson, but neither does he invoke pathetic fallacy just to mock it as an empty figure.

The tone of "A Backward Spring" is sad but accepting and is best described by the word "rueful." A slight hesitancy of tone evokes the backwardness, the hesitancy and reticence, that the spring trees and flowers feel about blooming. The speaker neither judges nor mocks. He accepts the world as it is. The quality of feeling and imagery is different from the grotesque in "Transformations," and from the allegory and self-criticism of the final stanza of "The Last Chrysanthemum." It is different also from the bleak sense of exile from nature and poetic tradition in "To Flowers from Italy." These three earlier poems constitute negative pastoral scenes in Hardy; "A Backward Spring" is a positive pastoral moment in
Hardy. The poem has deep affinities with the Keats of the Odes, especially "To Autumn."

Like Keats, Hardy is one of the great poets of autumnal melancholy. Here follows "The Later Autumn," from the volume _Human Shows_ of 1925. This poem is a good example of Hardy's singular and idiosyncratic transformation of autumn pastoral.

Gone are the lovers, under the bush
Stretched at their ease;
Gone the bees,
Tangling themselves in your hair as they rush
On the line of your track,
Leg-laden, back
With a dip to their hive
In a prepossessed dive.

Toadsmeat is mangy, frosted, and sere;
Apples in grass
Crunch as we pass,
And rot ere the men who make cyder appear.
Couch-fires abound
On fallows around,
And shades far extend
Like lives soon to end.

Spinning leaves join the remains shrunk and brown
Of last year's display
That lie wasting away,
On whose corpses they earlier as scorners gazed down
From their aery green height:
Now in the same plight
They huddle; while yon
A robin looks on.

Like "The Last Chrysanthemum," "The Later Autumn" explores seasonal and poetic lateness. Hardy is highly conscious of the pastoral tradition he is indebted to here: the textual debts begin with William Barnes and can then be traced back to Keats, Thomson, and Virgil. The pastoral meditation on death through the imagery of falling leaves in the first stanza goes back to the _Aeneid_. But the contemporary source is Barnes. Here is stanza two of "Leaves A Vallen" from Hardy's selected edition of Barnes:
There dead ash leaves be a-toss’d
In the wind, a-blow’en stronger,
An’ our life-time, since we lost
Sous we lov’d, is woone year longer,
Woone year longer, woone year wider,
Vrom the friends that death ha’ took,
As the hours do teake the rider
Vrom the hand that last he shook.24

Hardy does not use the heavy Dorset dialect, but the imagery and quality of feeling are similar in the two poems.

J. O. Bailey points out that in stanza two, Hardy draws upon the cider-making of The Woodlanders.25 But Hardy also draws upon stanza two of Keats’s “To Autumn,” with the picture of Autumn beside the cider-press: “The Later Autumn” becomes Hardy’s meditation on that poem. Hardy takes further the melancholy sense of ending and death contained within Keats’s imagery of seasonal plenitude. In Hardy’s poem the bees are gone. The apples rot. In the pastoral grove “shades far extend / Like lives soon to end.” This year’s leaves “join the remains shrunk and brown / Of last year’s.” Last year’s leaves are “corpses” that “lie wasting away.” In “The Later Autumn,” Hardy fulfills the potential organic and poetic decomposition implied in Keats’s “To Autumn.”

We can note the probable influence of James Thomson here also. Hardy’s biographer, Robert Gittings, notes that Hardy owned the complete works of Thomson.26 Thomson’s The Seasons was one of the most influential descriptive poems in English literary history. In terms of imagery and thematics, the following passage from “Autumn” is relevant:

The pale descending year, yet pleasing still,
A gentler Mood inspires; for now the Leaf
Incessant rustles from the mournful Grove,
Oft startling such as, studious, walk below,
And slowly circles through the waving Air.
But should a quicker Breeze amid the Boughs
Sob, o’er the Sky the leafy Deluge streams;
Till choak’d and matted with the dreary Shower,
The Forest-Walks, at every rising Gale,
Roll wide the wither’d Waste, and whistle bleak.27

(“Autumn,” 986–995)
And here is Thomson’s description of man’s disruption of the civic order of bees:

> The happy People, in their waxen Cells,
> Sat tending public Cares, and planning Schemes
> Of Temperance, for Winter poor; rejoiced
> To mark, full-flowing round, their copious Stores.
> Sudden the dark oppressive team ascends;
> And, us’d to milder Scents, the tender Race,
> By Thousands, tumbles from their honey’d Domes,
> Convolv’d, and agonizing in the Dust.

("Autumn," 1174–1181)

These two passages reveal how, in Thomson, the elegiac sadness of season’s end is bound up not only with the descriptive mode of pastoral, but also with the idea of work in nature that is dealt with in the georgic. The image of the falling leaves connotes the mood of pastoral elegy. But the work of the bees and man’s work in collecting the honey derive as much from the georgic as from the pastoral impulse. The bees, the cider-making, and the burning of couch-grass are generically part of the georgic. These images are not only images of work in nature; they serve as figures for the work of the poet. The difference between Thomson’s civic bees and Hardy’s lies in the function of work in nature. Thomson places the pastoral work within a larger philosophical order, an order that derives, in part, from Shaftesbury’s view of a beneficent nature. Thomson suggests the continuity between man, nature, and God when he invokes “Philosophic Melancholy” ("Autumn," 1003). In the passage on the bees, Thomson subsumes and makes affirmative the sadness and even violence (e.g., the disruption of the beehive) in this larger philosophic order. One finds this affirmation of civic and, simultaneously, poetic order in Thomson’s classical model, Virgil’s *Georgics*. In the *Georgics*, the poet makes the potential disorder in nature orderly by human knowledge and work:

> In fear of this, mark the months and signs of heaven; whither Saturn’s cold star withdraws itself and into what circles of the sky strays the Cyllenian fire. Above all, worship the gods, and pay great Ceres her yearly rites, sacrificing on the glad sward, with the setting of winter’s last days, when clear springtime is now come.
The same sense of knowledge and order characterizes the community of bees in Book IV:

[they] hold the dwellings of their city jointly, and pass their life under the majesty of law. They alone know a fatherland and fixed home. . . .

The pastoral/georgic work of "The Later Autumn" is different from this affirmation of peace and order: the sense of spoiled nature conveyed by "mangy," "sere," and "rot" suggests work gone bad. And the images of "shades" and "corpses" imply that death will make all work futile. The closing line of "The Later Autumn"—"A robin looks on"—is the final sign of the futility of man’s work in nature. It signals also the futility of the poet’s work. In poetic tradition one associates birds with song and poetry. Hardy transforms this association. This robin looks but does not sing. It is Hardy’s way of describing his own sense of lateness and his sense of the futility of poetic work, with the breaking down or decomposition of georgic and pastoral conventions. The bird’s silence withholds testimony to nature; the silence seems to be a refusal to affirm a beneficent natural order or community. The final line is a more severe comment on the end of pastoral song than even the final stanza of Keats’s "To Autumn."

Hardy’s pastoral poems of flowers and leaves involve a melancholy sense of poetic disinheritance that is greater than that found in the pastoral of Tennyson and Keats. We find this sense of disinheritance from pastoral conventions also in the Hardian locus amoenus and the larger landscape. One example is "A Spot," from the volume Poems of the Past and the Present of 1901:

In years defaced and lost,
Two sat here, transport-tossed,
Lit by a living love
The wilted world knew nothing of:
Scared momentarily
By gaingivings,
Then hoping things
That could not be.

Of love and us no trace
Abides upon the place;
The sun and shadows wheel,
Season and season sereward steal;
Foul days and fair
Here, too, prevail,
And gust and gale
As everywhere.

But lonely shepherd souls
Who bask amid these knolls
May catch a faery sound
On sleepy noontides from the ground:
'O not again
Till Earth outwears
Shall love like theirs
Suffuse this glen!'

Hardy's poems of pastoral flowers suggest the poet's melancholy exile through the “decomposition” of nature. The disharmony within nature and between man and nature also suggests this melancholy. In “A Spot,” the melancholy of Hardy’s *locus amoenus* is bound up with the death of lovers. In J. O. Bailey’s commentary on the poem, he cites an observation from Ruth Firor’s *Folkways in Thomas Hardy*. Bailey says, “Firor points out that the poem makes use of the folk-belief in the power of shepherds to perceive emanations from a place that was the scene of strong emotional disturbance.” But the folk context in Hardy is not simply contemporary; it is related to Hardy’s use of pastoral. Such is the case in “A Spot.” The Hardian *locus amoenus* involves a strong sense of the passing of time and the absence of people and things that existed in the past.

Hardy conveys this sense of passing time in “A Spot” through such words and phrases as “In years defaced and lost,” “wilted world,” “Season and season sereward steal.” The quality of pathos in Hardy derives from Virgil. One thinks especially of the sense of elegiac ending in the final line of *Eclogue* I: “maioresque cadunt altis de montibus umbrac” (and longer shadows fall from the mountain heights). One thinks, also, of Aeneas’s tears before the picture of Troy on the walls of Carthage. The pathos, finally, is not simply about the passing away of loved people and things; it is about the sense of lonely exile the poet feels toward tradition. Hardy suggests
this idea in the final stanza: he invokes the image of the lonely shepherd resting during the noon peace (a traditional pastoral topos). The shepherd looks back on the dead lovers. He writes their epitaph:

'O not again
Till Earth ourwears
Shall love like theirs
Suffuse this glen!'

The melancholy in this epitaph is two-fold. First, the *locus amoenus* or pleasance no longer contains their affirmative love; the landscape serves as their memorial. Second, the shepherd's song is a love elegy that is also an elegy for the end of pastoral song.

"In Front of the Landscape" also involves Hardy's transformation and development of the *locus amoenus* topos; it is the opening poem in the volume *Satires of Circumstance* of 1914. The poem is central to the argument about the Hardian *locus amoenus* and deserves quotation in full.

Plunging and labouring on in a tide of visions,
Dolorous and dear,
Forward I pushed my way as amid waste waters
Stretching around,
Through whose eddies there glimmered the customed landscape
Yonder and near

Blotted to feeble mist. And the coombs and the upland
Coppice-crowned,
Ancient chalk-pit, milestone, rills in the grass-flat
Stroked by the light,
Seemed but a ghost-like gauze, and no substantial
Meadow or mound.

What were the infinite spectacles featuring foremost
Under my sight,
Hindering me to discern my paced advancement,
Lengthening to miles;
What were the re-creations killing the daytime
As by the night?

O they were speechful faces, gazing insistent,
Some as with smiles,
Some as with slow-born tears that brinily trundled
Over the wrecked
Cheeks that were fair in their flush-time, and now with anguish
Harrowed by wiles.

Yes, I could see them, feel them, hear them, address them—
Halo-bedecked—
And, alas, onwards, shaken by fierce unreason,
Rigid in hate,
Smitten by years-long wryness born of misprision,
Dreaded, suspect.

Then there would breast me shining sights, sweet seasons
Further in date;
Instruments of strings with the tenderest passion
Vibrant, beside
Lamps long extinguished, robes, cheeks, eyes with the earth’s crust
Now corporate.

Also there rose a headland of hoary aspect
Gnawed by the tide,
Frilled by the nimb of the morning as two friends stood there
Guilelessly glad—
Wherefore they knew not—touched by the fringe of an ecstasy
Scantly descried.

Later images too did the day unfurl me,
Shadowed and sad,
Clay cadavers of those who had shared in the dramas,
Laid now at ease,
Passions all spent, chiefest the one of the broad brow
Sepulture-clad.

So did beset me scenes, miscalled of the bygone,
Over the leaze,
Past the clump, and down to where lay the beheld ones;
—Yea, as the rhyme
Sung by the sea-swell, so in their pleading dumbness
Captured me these.

For, their lost revisiting manifestations
In their live time
Much had I slighted, caring not for their purport,
Seeing behind
Things more coveted, reckoned the better worth calling
   Sweet, sad, sublime.
Thus do they now show hourly before the intenser
   Stare of the mind
As they were ghosts avenging their slights by my bypast
   Body-borne eyes,
Show, too, with fuller translation than rested upon them
   As living kind.
Hence wag the tongues of the passing people, saying
   In their surmise,
‘Ah—whose is this dull form that perambulates, seeing nought
   Round him that looms
Whithersoever his footsteps turn in his farings,
   Save a few tombs?’

J. O. Bailey says that “In Front of the Landscape” “presents the
   behaviour of Hardy’s mind in reverie when the senses drowse, but
the memory calls up a train of flashing and dissolving images. They
   seem to stand ‘in front of the landscape’ and to obscure it.” Bailey
points out that the imagery suggests a person walking through a
   fog. And he also tries to pinpoint the actual places around Dorset­
shire that are described here. The actual places are less important
   than the way Hardy situates these places within the pastoral con­
ventions of the locus amoenus.

Donald Davie argues for the importance of Virgil in Hardy, es­
  pecially in the “Poems of 1912–13” sequence in Satires of Circum­
stance. Hardy’s epigraph for that sequence is Veteris vestigia flam­
mae. Dido speaks these words after having seen Aeneas. The phrase
   means “signs of the old flame”; it signifies the new love developing
in Dido for Aeneas. The pathos in Hardy’s poems about love owes
   much to Virgil and the Dido episode.

Hardy is indebted also to Virgil in his placing or situating of his
   landscapes. “In Front of the Landscape” is not simply about past
places and loved ones; it is about the literary past, the conventions,
   here Virgilian, which form the poem. The key passage in Virgil in
terms of the Hardian locus amoenus is the famous description of
Elysium in Book VI:

   devenere locos laetos et amoenae virecta
   Fortunatorum Nemorum sedesque beatas.
largior hic campos aether et lumine vestit
purpureo, solemque suum, sua sidera norunt.\textsuperscript{34}
(VI, 638–641)

They came upon the lands of gladness, glades
of gentleness, the Groves of Blessedness—
a gracious place. The air is generous;
the plains wear dazzling light; they have their very
own sun and their own stars.\textsuperscript{35}

But in “In Front of the Landscape,” Hardy transforms Virgil’s “de­
lightful place.” Hardy changes Virgil’s “purple light” into a “feeble
mist” that “blots” the “customed landscape.” Hardy’s landscape is
not invested with the transforming light of love; it is invested with
a light that connotes the insubstantiality of the landscape and of
love. The various parts of the natural scene, when

\begin{verbatim}
  Stroked by the light,
Seemed but a ghost-like gauze, and no substantial
Meadow or mound.
\end{verbatim}

In “In Front of the Landscape,” the speaker does not emphasize
the blessed state in the Elysium fields; the speaker emphasizes the
darker, unhappier aspects of the Virgilian underworld. As with
much of the leaf-corpse imagery in Hardy, the imagery here sug­
gests the sufferers in the underworld. It is appropriate that the \textit{locus
amoenus} becomes “ghost-like.” Hardy’s landscape is the place where
the speaker sees and remembers people who suffer the pathos of
death and exile:

\begin{verbatim}
O they were speechful faces, gazing insistent,
Some as with smiles,
Some as with slow-born tears that brinily trundled
Over the wrecked
Cheeks that were fair in their flush-time, ash now with anguish,
Harrowed by wiles.
\end{verbatim}

This passage looks back to Virgil’s unburied dead hoping to be fer­
rried across the river to their final home (\textit{Aeneid}, VI, 295–330). Gitt­
ing tells us that Dante’s \textit{Comedy} was Hardy’s mother’s favorite
work of literature.\textsuperscript{36} The passage quoted above could be based on
Dante. Virgil, however, provides a sufficient model.
Hardy envisions not the groves of blessedness, but the underworld as hell. The inhabitants of this landscape are “Harrowed by wiles” and

shaken by fierce unreason,

Rigid in hate,
Smitten by years-long wryness born of misprision,
Dreaded, suspect.

Death transforms the positive scenes in this landscape. In stanza six, the “shining sights, sweet seasons” close with death: “Lamps long extinguished, robes, cheeks, eyes with the earth’s crust / Now corporate.” Here Hardy provides a fine transition to stanza seven: He carries on the image of the buried dead in the earth in the image of the decay of the landscape itself:

Also there rose a headland of hoary aspect
Gnawed by the tide. . . .

The words “hoary” and “gnawed” express age and decay. The images of burial and death continue. In stanza eight the speaker describes “later images”:

Shadowed and sad,
Clay cadavers.

Stanza eight closes with the image of one of the dead “sepulture-clad.”

In the last four stanzas, Hardy shifts from the landscape to the poet/speaker describing it. Here the speaker describes the pathos of exile. The speaker realizes he did not pay enough attention to these people when they were alive. They have come back to haunt him:

Thus do they now show hourly before the intenser
Stare of the mind
As they were ghosts avenging their slights by my bypast
Body-borne eyes,
Show, too, with fuller translation than rested upon them
As living kind.

The melancholy sense of exile here is not simply from the people who are dead; Hardy describes the exile of the poet. The poet feels
that the landscape has become a place of death. Here is how the speaker’s neighbors view the poet figure:

"—whose is this dull form that perambulates, seeing nought
Round him that looms
Whithersoever his footsteps turn in his farings,
Save a few tombs?"

They perceive the speaker as an outsider.

Because the landscape incorporates the *locus amoenus* topos, Hardy’s transformation of it into a place of death is a sign of his sense of the poet as outsider; it is a sign of his disinheritance from tradition. The death landscape implies the death of poetry. As in Tennyson’s “Demeter and Persephone,” the *locus amoenus* in “In Front of the Landscape” is transformed by the emergence of death from the underworld. The pastoral pleasance is no longer a place of escape. Escape into the bower world of innocence is still a possibility in Keats, but the inchoate sense of poetic exile in Keats, and the more troubled sense of exile in Tennyson, is felt to an even greater degree in Hardy. The relation of the speaker to the landscape expresses this sense of exile: the speaker is “in front of” the landscape rather than within it. This configuration suggests also the poet’s sense of poetic disinheritance: speaker and landscape do not exist in close relation. Since the landscape represents a traditional literary topos, there is the suggestion here that the speaker is apart from that tradition. This is similar to the distancing of voice and framing of scene in the classical pastoral idyll. Tennyson’s framing and fragmented imagery carry the idyll toward symbolism. Hardy’s fragmented landscape does not even achieve that kind of unity. The poet’s discontinuity with tradition is more severe.

Not all of Hardy’s “pleasances” are as somber as the one in “In Front of the Landscape.” A more positive poem about remembered love and the pastoral landscape is “Under the Waterfall.” The poem is a dramatic monologue spoken by a woman remembering a spot where she and her lover once had a picnic. She describes a particular incident that occurred there: while rinsing a wine glass in a pool beneath the waterfall, she let the glass slip into the pool. In the poem, the poet frames the incident in several ways. In the opening stanza, the speaker describes the feelings that arise when-
ever she puts her arm into a basin of water. She feels “The sweet sharp sense of a fugitive day / Fetched back from its thickening shroud of gray.” Her listener asks her why this action produces these feelings. Here follows her answer:

“Well, under the fall, in a crease of stone,
Though where precisely none ever has known,
Jammed darkly, nothing to show how prized,
And by now with its smoothness opalized,
   Is a drinking-glass:
   For, down that pass
   My lover and I
   Walked under a sky
Of blue with a leaf-wove awning of green,
In the burn of August, to paint the scene,
And we placed our basket of fruit and wine
By the runlet’s rim, where we sat to dine. . . .”

Then, as the speaker tells how the wine glass fell into the pool, she rapidly shifts from the remembered idyllic scene to the water basin with which she has been comparing it:

“The basin seems the pool, and its edge
   The hard smooth face of the brook-side ledge,
   And the leafy pattern of china-ware
   The hanging plants that were bathing there.”

“Under the Waterfall” is a pastoral idyll. It contains Hardy’s modern use of the classical device of ecphrasis. At the beginning of the passage, the speaker describes a pastoral bower scene, with the blue sky and the “leaf-wove awning of green.” One classical analogue could be the following from Virgil Eclogue VII; Meliboeus remembers the singing match between Corydon and Thyrsis:

Ye mossy springs, and grass softer than sleep, and the green arbutus that shields you with its scant shade, ward the noontide heat from my flock. Now comes the summer’s parching, now the buds swell on the gladsome tendril.”

But what is interesting about Hardy’s treatment of the locus amoenus here is the way he then frames it through an imitated picture of the same scene. The framing occurs in the passage that be-
gin “The basin seems the pool.” The speaker describes the water basin as if it were the pool beneath the waterfall, and the leaf-pattern on the basin as if it were the plants around the water’s edge. This is an example of the classical device of ecphrasis.

One example of ecphrasis from Theocritus is the description of the cup in *Idyll I*. The ivy-fringed cup in *Idyll I* is given to Thyrsis after he sings the elegy for Daphnis. The drinking glass and the ecphrastic imitation of the bower scene in the water basin are modern idyllic counterparts; they express the speaker’s memory of her lover. The ecphrastic moments are the poetic figures for the “rhymed of love / Persistently sung by the fall.” “Under the Waterfall” constitutes a positive type of idyll in which Hardy uses pastoral ecphrasis to maintain through art a remembered bower and the remembered loved person within it.

The poet uses the *locus amoenus* and ecphrasis in “Under the Waterfall” to create an affirmative type of pastoral that has strong roots in traditional pastoral conventions. The Hardian idyll and ecphrasis take on a more ambivalent nature in the poem “The Pedigree” (from the volume *Moments of Vision*). J. O. Bailey says, “‘The Pedigree’ expresses Hardy’s absorbed interest in his ancestry. Consulting parish registers, he worked out several pedigrees, now in the Dorset County Museum. . . . He was interested in the natural laws governing heredity.”

This poem does not contain a landscape from nature. Nor does it contain any of the attributes associated with the traditional *locus amoenus*. But in a curious way, “The Pedigree” is an example of Hardy’s modern idyll.

I bent in the deep of the night
Over a pedigree the chronicler gave
As mine; and as I bent there, half-unrobed,
The uncurtained panes of my window-square let in the watery light
Of the moon in its old age:
And green-rheumed clouds were hurrying past where mute and cold it globed
Like a drifting dolphin’s eye seen through a lapping wave.

This is a moment of pastoral ecphrasis that follows the line back through Tennyson, Keats, Spenser, Virgil, and Theocritus. In the
pastoral convention, the speaker is looking at a picture of something; in this case the picture is the pedigree. The moment exemplifies Hardy’s new pastoral locus amoenus, which tends to be a house rather than a bower. Finally, the stanza contains Hardy’s use of figurative language to describe the natural world. The use of pathetic fallacy may also stem from pastoral conventions. The poet speaks of the “moon in its old age”; the moon is also “mute” and “cold.” Hardy describes the moon with the clouds passing over it as “Like a drifting dolphin’s eye seen through a lapping wave.”

In the second stanza, the speaker represents the pedigree through figurative language.

So, scanning my sire-sown tree,
   And the hieroglyphs of this spouse tied to that,
   With offspring mapped below in lineage,
   Till the tangles troubled me,
   The branches seemed to twist into a seared and cynic face
   Which winked and tokened towards the window like a Mage
   Enchanting me to gaze again thereat.

As he looks at the pedigree and traces his ancestors, the tree of names turns into a “seared and cynic face.” It is an example of a Hardian pathetic fallacy that is forced and ironical. Here the poet uses pathetic fallacy and anthropomorphism to create distance between the speaker and his surroundings. Hardy’s rhetoric suggests that the world is deceptive: the pedigree that turns into the cynical face of the Mage is a type of false guide, like those found in some of Spenser’s negative bowers. The words “winked,” “tokened,” and “enchanting” suggest that the window the Mage points to may contain false and deceptive images.

In stanza three, the speaker gazes at the window, “a mirror now.” He sees the long line of his “begetters.” “Generation and generation of my mien, and build, and brow.” These images in the window-turned-mirror lead to pessimistic thoughts in stanza four.

And then did I divine
   That every heave and coil and move I made
   Within my brain, and in my mood and speech,
   Was in the glass portrayed
   As long forestalled by their so making it;
The first of them, the primest fugleman of my line,
Being fogged in far antiqueness past surmise and reason's reach.

The speaker believes the glass presents a picture of more than his ancestors: the glass presents a picture of himself, a picture that limits and defines him. J. O. Bailey says, "This reasoning leads to the conclusion that . . . he enjoys no freedom of will."

In "The Pedigree," imitation and ecphrasis do not produce a moment of pastoral freedom; they are not ways of standing outside of and inside of tradition at the same time. We saw that pattern in Tennyson. We also saw pastoral ecphrasis as expressing positive memory in "Under the Waterfall." There the ecphrastic image produced by the water basin helped the speaker remember her lover. But in "The Pedigree," the ecphrastic image entangles the speaker in traditions of family (and secondarily of poetry) which he finds oppressive and limiting.

Said I then, sunk in tone,
"I am merest mimicker and counterfeit!—
Though thinking, I am I,
And what I do I do myself alone."
—The cynic twist of the page thereof unknit
Back to its normal figure, having wrought its purport wry,
The Mage's mirror left the window-square,
And the stained moon and drift retook their places there.

Here the classical devices of framing and ecphrasis do not enable the speaker to distance himself from his subject matter; rather, the devices implicate the speaker in his subject matter's falseness and his own unoriginality: "I am merest mimicker and counterfeit."

But even at this moment, the speaker realizes that the idyll is not entirely negative. "I am I, / And what I do I do myself alone."
The poem is not simply about the speaker's interest in his ancestors and heredity; "The Pedigree" is about the poet/speaker's relation to poetic tradition. And the window-mirror and the pedigree are examples of a modern ecphrasis of extreme ambivalence. They are the frames through which the speaker realizes his relationship to tradition.

"The Photograph," also from the volume Moments of Vision, is another example of Hardy's modern idyll.
The flame crept up the portrait line by line
As it lay on the coals in the silence of night's profound,
And over the arm's incline,
And along the marge of the silkwork superfine,
And gnawed at the delicate bosom's defenceless round.

Then I vented a cry of hurt, and averted my eyes;
The spectacle was one that I could not bear,
To my deep and sad surprise;
But, compelled to heed, I again looked furtivewise
Till the flame had eaten her breasts, and mouth, and hair.

'Thank God, she is out of it now!' I said at last,
In a great relief of hurt when the thing was done
That had set my soul aghast,
And nothing was left of the picture unsheathed from the past
But the ashen ghost of the card it had figured on.

She was a woman long hid amid packs of years,
She might have been living or dead; she was lost to my sight,
And the deed that had nigh drawn tears
Was done in a casual clearance of life's arrears;
But I felt as if I had put her to death that night! ...

—Well; she knew nothing thereof did she survive,
And suffered nothing if numbered among the dead;
Yet—yet—if on earth alive
Did she feel a smart, and with vague strange anguish strive?
If in heaven, did she smile at me sadly and shake her head?

"The Photograph" has the typically Hardian elegiac tone about
lost love. R. L. Purdy notes that Hardy said this story actually
took place at Max Gate. J. O. Bailey suggests the photograph may
have been of Tryphena Sparks, the cousin Hardy was in love with
before he married Emma Lavinia Gifford. The biographical ele-
ments of "The Photograph" are important. But the poem has an
aesthetic dimension also. Hardy uses the photograph as a modern
equivalent of the framed world of artistic representation that goes
back to Theocritus *Idyll* I and Homer's description of the shield
of Achilles. Bailey's comments on this poem downplay the impor-
tance of literary tradition. The use of ecphrasis and the elegiac qual-
ity of feeling and thought in "The Photograph" stem from Virgil.
Two moments in *The Aeneid* are especially relevant to this argument. The first is a key moment of ecphrasis. In Book I Aeneas looks at the pictures of the Trojan War on the walls of Carthage:

First in this grove did a strange sight appear to him and allay his fears; here first did Aeneas dare to hope for safety and put surer trust in his shattered fortunes. For while beneath the mighty temple, awaiting the queen, he scans each object, while he marvels at the city's fortune, the handicraft of the several artists and the work of their toil, he sees in due order the battles of Ilium, the warfare now known by fame throughout the world, the sons of Atreus, and Priam, and Achilles, fierce in his wrath against both. He stopped and weeping cried: "What land, Achates, what tract on earth is now not full of our sorrow? Lo, Priam! Here, too, there are tears for misfortune and mortal sorrows touch the heart. Dismiss thy fears; this fame will bring thee some salvation."

So he speaks, and feasts his soul on the unsubstantial picture, sighing oft-times, and his face wet with the flood of tears.42

We saw this passage's bearing on "Tears, Idle Tears." The passage is relevant here because a Virgilian pathos characterizes many of Hardy's poems about the passing love. It is relevant, as well, because of Virgil's use of the imitated world or picture as a way of expressing Aeneas's state of exile. "The Photograph" is in part a poem about the poet's disinheritance, not simply from past love but from past poetry (such as Virgil's). The burning of the photograph is an image of the transience of art and the artist.

The second passage from the *Aeneid* that is important in this context is the description of Dido's suicide. By burning the photograph, the speaker betrays the woman. Dido's suicide is the result of what she perceives as the betrayal of Aeneas. Dido has a sacrificial pyre built and then:

[She] bursts into the inner courts of the house, mounts in madness the high pyre and unsheathes the Dardan sword, a gift he sought for no such end! Then, as she saw the Trojan garb and the familiar bed, pausing awhile in tearful thought, she threw herself on the couch and spoke her latest words:

"O relics once dear, while God and Fate allowed! take my spirit, and release me from my woes! I have lived, I have finished the
course that Fortune gave; and now in majesty, my shade shall pass beneath the earth. A noble city I have built; my own walls I have seen; avenging my husband. I have exacted punishment from my brother and foe—happy, ah! too happy, had but the Dardan keels never touched our shores!” She spoke, and burying her face in the couch, “I shall die unavenged,” she cries, “but let me die! Thus, thus I go gladly into the dark!”

The death of Dido is one of the most moving passages in the *Aeneid*. And it implicates the pious Aeneas in destruction and suffering, even as he heads forth to build the new community in Italy. Hardy’s “The Photograph” is not about such heroic action and its consequences: it is a personal poem. But the artist-creator figure’s implication in destruction and suffering is a part of Hardy’s poem too. Finally, that destructiveness and the elegiac tone redound upon the speaker in “The Photograph.” The ecphrastic picture mocks the speaker, as it did in “The Pedigree.” The envisioned woman looks down on the helpless speaker. He is the one who is sorrowful here; he is in a state of permanent exile. She has found a home: “If in heaven, did she smile at me sadly and shake her head?”

In Tennyson, the ecphrastic frame makes the poet figure an exile but one whose distance gives him power over the scene. The sense of exile and disinherance is only partial. In Hardy’s “The Photograph,” the ecphrastic frame places the poet figure in a position of total exile. The speaker’s sense of guilt—“But I felt as if I had put her to death last night”—involves Hardy’s sense of the way artistic work is implicated in types of destruction and violence. It involves also the theme found in Tennyson: the death of poetry. Hardy’s use of the classical device of ecphrasis produces, then, similar effects to his transformation of the pastoral *locus amoenus*. Hardy emphasizes disharmony, violence, and death both in nature and in poetry.

Let us now look briefly at one more poem by Hardy in terms of a writer of pastoral in the century before Keats. We can read Hardy’s poem “Afterwards” in terms of Gray’s “Elegy.” “Afterwards” is the final poem in *Moments of Vision*. It is one of Hardy’s poems about nature and death; it is also an elegy for the poet. In each of the five stanzas, the speaker describes with precision and detail
certain phenomena in the natural world. These moments occur in an envisioned future. At the close of each stanza, the speaker imagines what his neighbors will say about him. The implicit assumption here is that the speaker imagines himself as dead.

The speaker in "Afterwards" imagines his own pastoral elegy. It is important to note the tone of gentle self-acceptance. The neighbors are not ghostly visions nor are they mockers, as they are in, respectively, "Wessex Heights" and "In Front of the Landscape." And we get the sense that the speaker did lead a life in which he felt bonds with nature and the landscape. Here, for example, is the first stanza:

When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,
And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the neighbours say,
'He was a man who used to notice such things?'

This is a poem that builds a picture of the natural world and of a community of people within it.

There is a sense of melancholy in the poem, but this sense derives from the pastoral themes of the passing of time and the cycles of life. As J. O. Bailey says, "In structure the poem touches upon each of the seasons."44 And another critic notes, "A sense of time runs through the poem."45 The sense of melancholy is not the result of the poet's feelings of exile from nature or from poetry.

One of Hardy's models here is Gray's "Elegy." The "Elegy" is a poem that provides a melancholy sense of the cycles of natural and human life. It is also an elegy for the poet's self. Toward the poem's close, Gray imagines the pastoral elegy for his own death. The elegy begins like this:

Haply some hoary-headed Swain may say,
'Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.'46

Gray goes even further: he writes his own epitaph. But reading the "Elegy" alongside of "Afterwards" gives us a good sense of the extent to which Hardy was indebted to pastoral tradition. The epi-
taph poem goes back to the classical pastoral tradition as found in Theocritus’s *Epigrams* and the *Greek Anthology*. Here is *Epigram XV* from Theocritus:

Now, wayfarer, I shall learn whether thou honourest good men and true, or whether one who is base has like measure too from thee. Thou wilt say, “A blessing on this tomb for light it lies over the hallowed head of Eurymedon.”

Gray’s “Elegy” and Hardy’s “Afterwards” look back to this tradition, but Hardy’s poem is a modern elegy for the death of the poet and the death of poetry. In this regard, “Afterwards” has affinities also with Keats’s “To Autumn.” As does “To Autumn,” Hardy’s poem moves through the various senses and various aspects of the natural world; and again, as does “To Autumn,” the poem achieves its closure with the fading of pastoral sound. This is the opposite structure from Gray’s “Elegy,” which begins with the fading of sounds and day.

The Curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o’er the lea,
The plouman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

The “Elegy” opens with the fading of sound and sight; it closes with the emphasis on the visual scene. The speaker urges the reader to “look” at the epitaph. “To Autumn” moves from the tactile to the visual and then to the aural; the sequence of scenes is not identical in “Afterwards,” but it is similar. The first stanza describes foliage with a kind of tactile precision: “glad green leaves like wings, / Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk.” Stanzas two, three, and four emphasize sight: the speaker describes a hawk crossing the sky, a hedgehog traveling across a lawn, and his neighbors “Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees.” In stanza five, the poet emphasizes sound or its absence. The speaker describes the bell tolling his own death:

And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in the gloom,
And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings,
Till they rise again, as they were a new bell’s boom,
‘He hears it not now, but used to notice such things?’
The close is in keeping with the tone of “Afterwards” as a whole. The poem’s affirmations of bonds between the speaker and nature and the community are posed as questions or conditional states: “will thy neighbours say,” “a gazer may think,” “One may say,” “Will this thought rise,” “will any say.” Despite the sense of community, textual and social, in the poem, the tentative voice and the fading sounds give a melancholy quality to that sense of affirmation. It is a fitting close to Moments of Vision. And it is a paradigmatic moment in Hardy’s Victorian pastoral.