

Desperate Faith: A Study of Selected Poems by Thomas Hardy

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الايمن اليانس: دراسة في مختارات شعرية لتوماس هاردي

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مدرسة اللغات- قسم اللغة الانكليزية

ABSTRACT

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) is considered by literary historians to be the most important late Victorian / early Edwardian poet. This paper stems from the hypothesis that even desperate men like Hardy can not avoid the influence of religion on their personal thought and literary career. Hence the purpose of this paper is to present a new reading of some of Hardy's poetry in regard to faith and religion. It also offers some speculation about the nature of Hardy's own personal religious ideology. The Victorian belief in Christian dogma is based on certain principles; Hardy's interpretation of these principles determines his own philosophy of life. These principles are so important to the extent that they assert the profound pessimism which underlines Hardy's own philosophy. Therefore, this paper discusses Hardy's

treatment of faith as reflected in some of his famous and notable poems. The research focuses on some Christian elements which form a considerable part of Hardy's poetical works. The aim behind this investigation is to prove a point that, in the poetry of Thomas Hardy, there is an inevitable allusion to faith but that faith sounds desperate. Thus, it is not the lack of faith that contaminates Hardy's poetry; it is rather, the dominance of desperate faith.

Desperate Faith: A Study of Selected Poems by Thomas Hardy

No one can deny the influence of Christianity and the Bible on the psyche of the Victorian literary minds. It is so present and noticeable in every part of life to the extent that even when reason rejects and undermines their miraculous belief in God, it remains so dynamic and influential. The doubters were unable to separate themselves from the faith that had played such a central role in their lives. The Christian doctrine plays an important role in the writer's perception of the world and is reflected in their art. The importance of religion in the daily lives of the Victorians can be seen as an overestimated and significant one.

Religion is the fundamental core of Victorian society; it determines a person's social existence and behavior as Thomas Carlyle puts it: "a man's Religion is the chief fact with regard to him"¹. Religion, for Carlyle, is civilization; it is the central element in forming the character and the mind of the individual. Therefore, the loss of faith is a shattered experience which seriously affects the lives of agnostics. It causes them a kind of mental agony when their faith fails them. As far as an agnostic is concerned, it is a product of the vast changes that swept over Victorian England as a result of the advances of science and increasing industrialization. In addition to that,

the enormous impact of the writings of prominent men of science such as Charles Darwin (1809-1882), Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), Sir Charles Lyell (1797-1875 and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) whose overturned beliefs that had comfortably been accepted for centuries.

Hardy's relationship with God was part of his daily life, his waking and his sleep, and the lack of it had a profound impact on his existence. To have a look at Hardy's religious history would enable us to see the influence of religion on his early life and the importance he attached to religion on personal level. Thomas Hardy was born into a Christian family and he was baptized few days after birth. His family's involvement in the church and parish affairs as well as his regular attendance to the church enabled him to know the morning and afternoon services by heart. From his early childhood he responded to religion in various ways. His former dream was to be a parson and he attended church services regularly. Hardy loved the church music and he played a violin in the church when he was young. He read a considerable number of theological books and one of his best friends was a member of the brotherhood of the Bible commentator. Hardy read the Bible in both Latin and Greek and he taught at Sunday school. As a young man, he had a habit of marking his Bible as well as his prayer book with passages that were significant to his life which indicate that he personalize the scripture by applying it to his own circumstances. As an apprentice, Hardy frequently worked in churches which were a source of inspiration to some of his major works.

This religious foundation remained with Hardy all his life and his continual use of biblical language and symbolism in his works demonstrate his vast knowledge of the Bible and his intense preoccupation with biblical themes. Statistically speaking, there are approximately more than (2000)

references to the Bible in his works, some of them are direct and others are indirect.² There are, nowadays, Christian books which deal with religious subjects in which one can not find as many references to the Scripture as one can find in the works of Hardy, the so-called agnostic.

Hardy's poetry raises series of questions about the nature of God and offers a verity of possible answers without committing himself to anyone in particular. We can say that Hardy's poetry opens the door to his soul and allows an insight into his personal religious conflict. Some of the poems which deal with faith and doubt reveal a poignant personal emotional side to Hardy's loss of faith. Robert Schweik claims that "Hardy's representations of religion were most profoundly influenced by his loss of faith in Christian dogma"³. His unbelief in Christian doctrine of salvation is present in most of his works. Hardy's search for an understanding of the nature and identity of God is a prominent theme in his poetry. He gives a variety of names to the power that governs the universe such as: Immanent Will, First Cause, Supreme Power, Intangible Cause, Prime Mover, etc. Hardy's poetry offers an exposition of the various ideas he explored in his attempt to make sense of the traditional Christian God of his youth in the context of the rapidly changing world he lived in. These ideas are greatly disparate and sometimes even contradictory. Hardy himself was aware of the varied and ambivalent nature of the ideas he expressed as he specifically indicated in the introduction to "Winter Words" where he stated "no harmonious philosophy is attempted in these pages or in any bygone pages of mine, for that matter"⁴. Hardy's poetry does not always offer a clear distinction between the forces which govern the universe, Nature and the first Cause or God. They seem to have an individual identity in some poems and yet in others they tend to merge and become indistinguishable from one another.

In terms of religion, there is an irreconcilable conflict between Hardy's emotional side and his intellect. His poetry and biography suggest that emotionally he clings to the hope that God is positive force but intellectually he can not support this idea with evidence of any kind. Accordingly, his art and in particular his poetry, as Mary Ann Stotko states: "oscillates between hope and doubt while at its heart lays the everlasting and unanswered question about the nature of God"⁵. As an agnostic he is in a continuous quest to seek signs that would verify his youthful conception of God. His poetry concerning religious themes is largely a testimony of his hard and serious search for that power which governs the whole universe. It follows the pattern of asking unanswerable questions; questions are asked but sometimes no definite answers come for them. This silence on the part of the omniscient God fills the poet with grief and frustration. It becomes an effective verification of the doubt in the existence of God caused by Hardy's intellect and the profound readings of nineteenth century science and philosophy.

The conflict between emotion and reason in Hardy's quest for faith was perhaps the controlling force behind Hardy's art in religious terms. One can notice the pervasive influence of these doctrines that shaped Hardy's thinking and framed the hopelessness and woe that characterize his world view. Hardy's works do not provide a clear picture of his religious views as those of his contemporaries, nor can one detect a noticeable influence of any specific philosophy. It is somehow a combination of a variety of contradictory belief system. In his works he did not state or name a particular belief, his purpose is to explore reality. He insists that his art expresses impressions not convictions and therefore cannot be interpreted as a personal statement or belief. Therefore, his pessimism and his world of

unhope can be seen as a direct result of the influence that religion exerted on his perception of reality.⁶

Hardy consistently denied that he was a pessimist, preferring to call himself a "meliorist," that is, one who was neither an optimist nor a pessimist, but believed the world could be made better if we all worked at it. Or in other words Hardy professes a belief in "evolutionary meliorism" which he explains as "loving-kindness, operating through scientific knowledge and actuated by the modicum of free will conjecturally possessed by organic life when the mighty necessitating forces happen to be in equilibrium"⁷. In an interview with William Archer in 1901, Hardy stated that: "my practical philosophy is distinctly meliorist. What are my books but one plea against man's inhumanity to man, to woman, and to the lower animals?"⁸ Hardy does not believe that the devil is always winning the battle of good and evil.

The poems which are discussed below all start with doubt that reaches a climax then end with holding a strong belief in God Who seems to be away or outside the universe but in reality he is present in the middle of every part of it. Though the poems seem blasphemous blended with a tone of irony, yet as readers we learn from them true facts about the predicament of a world that has forsaken the true God. In these poems Hardy appears to be so sensitive; he is a man with healthy mind who keeps thinking deeply over such issues like: life, death, creation and religion. The idea that the world goes without God has filled him with devastating sadness and sorrow.

The first poem to be discussed in this selection is "*God-forgotten*". This poem appeared in a collection of poems entitled "*Poems of Past and Present*" published in (1902). The poem starts with an ironic picture about

God who is presented as old and completely indifferent to human suffering. Accordingly, the human race sent a messenger for God to find an answer for their misery. The messenger “towered far” and stood in the presence of “Lord Most High” and they had a snappy dialogue. It is a very interesting poem in which Hardy reveals Christian beliefs but in a pessimistic way. It is not the lack of faith which motivates him to write this poem, it is, to some extent, the desperate faith. The poem does not discuss the absence of God as some critics believe, but examines the question why God does not intervene to stop the human’s “Cry”. Hardy portrays God as the immanent doer that does not intervene to alleviate the sufferings of man. This idea is developed further to investigate the cause of pain and sorrow. The poem discusses the notion that suffering may possibly not be attributed to the fault of God. Humans do suffer not because of external cause, it is rather a result of their own wrong doings, and it is possibly attributed to the fault of man.

It seems to be so important for Hardy that God does not willfully inflict sorrow on humanity. This idea is gradually developed and supported with direct and indirect allusions to the Scripture. The poem contains some biblical stories and allusions the fact that shows Hardy’s deep knowledge of the Bible. According to the Scripture; man’s disobedience causes his separation from God and the curse of the earth which brings about suffering. The suffering happened because there was guilt involved; Hardy asserts that man’s wickedness caused that suffering. The speaker here could not be someone agnostic or unbeliever, the speech is of a person knows really the true nature of God. Hardy presents God in a state of defending himself and denies the responsibility of earth’s suffering. Hardy exposes, may be unconsciously, his true religious belief and his speech is of a true Christian believer. According to Christianity God is benevolent and merciful with all

his creatures and anything comes from him must be good. Consequently, the speech of God hints to a generally accepted idea that since human forsake their evangelical roots they are condemned to suffer a chronic melancholy. In the light of this justification, man has brought upon himself his own destruction the very moment he turned his back to God. As a result man lost God's favour which accelerated his tragic down fall:

*"It lost my interest from the first,
My aims therefore succeeding ill;
Haply it died of doing as it durst?"-*

(L.17-19)

In *"God-Forgotten"*, Hardy voices the human's eternal question; if there really was a God, then why would there be such horrors in society and nature? Why would there be so much suffering in the world? These questions led some people to believe that God was either uncaring or irresponsible or simply did not exist. But unexpectedly, Hardy provides an answer for these questions by referring to the Bible. Hardy had a considerable biblical background as Marlene Springer describes him: "as an author, Hardy out-alluded virtually every allusionist.... he was virtually a walking Bible"⁹ This poem provides another biblical allusion that alludes to the story of the creation. The persona truly believes in the Bible and accepts its teachings. Through the conversation between the messenger of "the sons of earth" and God, Hardy hints to the biblical fact that God made the world perfect but man corrupted it with his misdeeds. That is why God could not

remember such a world so corrupt and full of miseries and afflictions simply because he did not fashion it:

*“The Earth, say’st thou? The human race?
By Me created? Sad its lot?
Nay: I have no remembrance of such place:
Such world I fashioned not.” (L.4-8)*

.....
*Some tiny sphere I built long time back
(Mid millions of such shapes of mine)
So named...It perished, surely—not a wrack
Remaining, or a sign? (L.13-16)*

These lines show that, implicitly, God does not remember he created such world, because his works, from a biblical point of view, are always perfect and divine. The Bible teaches that when God first made the universe he looked at it and smiled when he saw how perfect it was. Hardy uses this biblical story to place the blame on the human not God; he frees God from that guilt. Reading Hardy’s poetry would make the hearts of believers bleed regretfully due to the deplorable conditions of those unbelievers who yield excessively to over reasoning and empiricism. In this poem Hardy speaks about “the ache of modernism”, it is a loud cry against the decline of a belief in the beneficent God, or better to say it is a parable of the tragedy of life without God. The poem concludes that Hardy, as Pamela Dalziel argues provides convincing evidence of his sympathy to Evangelicalism. Dalziel

states that “however far Hardy moved from his Evangelical sermon, he remained profoundly Christian in many ways.”¹⁰

Hardy, in this poem, is not a controversialist in religion or anything else, but sometimes, as Florence Emily Hardy puts it: “his ideas take a more nebulous view, which may be called transmutative.”¹¹ Hardy attacked Christianity as a system of dogmatic ecclesiasticism but not the moral which was called by him true religion. He rebuked the darkness and rudeness of the obsolete Christian dogmas and patriarchal church system, whereas he held in his bosom the emotional nostalgia for the true spirit of religion; the “Christianity humanitarianism”. For Hardy religion is not a set of void sermons and rituals, it is a noble and great feeling as well as an emotional goodness toward humanity. Therefore, Hardy expresses his hopes for a reformed and rational Christianity based on empiricism rather than a belief in a superstition like doctrine or myths. His message represents the other phase of Victorian milieu, which ranges from life-embracing faith to doubt and despair.

“*The Imprecipient*” first published in “*Wessex Poems*” in 1898 is a subjective poem in the first person that expresses distress at being excluded from the community of those who are faithful to God. The poem records Hardy’s doubts about the Christian faith, but these doubts are registered with a tone of regret. His belief in the Church’s doctrines had been gradually undermined by his innate skepticism supported by the influence of the scientific climate of the age. Generally, this climate represented not only by the great advances in science and technology, but also by the influential writings of notable figures such as Sir Charles Lyell, Charles Darwin, John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer.¹² Hardy attempted to create an agreement

between his own strong views as a realist and the views of religion. He searched for meaning in his life, but ended up pessimistically. The poem reverberates with whys which reveal Hardy's absorption in finding answers to unanswerable questions:

Why thus my soul should be consigned

To infelicity

Why always I must feel as blind

To sight my brethren see,

Why joys they 've found I cannot find

Abides a mystery (L.7-12)

The poem presents Hardy looking in at the "bright band of believers" from the outside. He sees their faith and feels miserable because God seems to have placed himself out of reach. This situation has brought him a dreadful thought that his soul is controlled by a greater power that condemns him with unhappiness. This shows that Hardy believes that there is a great power that rules over us, but he is unable to identify that power. His torment continues in regard to religion as he cannot ignore God's existence in daily life. Hardy's poetic mind does not allow him to escape spiritual contemplation because God is always evident in nature. He admits in this poem that he can be surrounded in a Cathedral Service with hundreds of strong Christians and be unable to relate to their joy because he cannot find it. Instead, the faith seems "fantasies to [him]". At the same time, Hardy feels he is close to seeing and believing the truth, he is attempting to find it but he is held back from grasping it¹³:

Since heart of mine knows not that ease

*Which they know; since it be
That he who breathes All's well to these
Breathes no All's well to me" (L.13-16)*

It seems reasonable to assume that his lack of faith can be attributed to God who remains aloof. Therefore, his reference to being a “gazer who should mark / An inland company” is Hardy’s confession that he sees faith and is staring at it but his unanswered questions form a wide ocean of deep water that he is unable to fathom to reach faith. Thomas Hardy's struggle is interesting in that he attempts to find God and answers to his Biblical questions in order to include spirituality in his life. However, he is unable to find logical answers to numerous questions as he is not on a plane of equality with God. He finds that his intelligence obstructs his ability to see and discover God personally because he assumes God’s relation to the world must be more complex than it appears. His misery is accentuated by the comparison of his mental state with that of the believers. When they see “the glorious distant sea” the poet sees “yon dark and wind-swept pine”¹⁴ The contrast between the believers’ “felicity” and the poet’s “infelicity” and misery suggests the possibility that Hardy associates his inability to find happiness with his loss of faith. Some critics agree that Hardy’s loss of faith in the supernatural, specifically salvation and eternal life, gave rise to a depressive and gloomy perception of life, what Lance calls Hardy’s “Negative Metaphysics”¹⁵:

*I am like a gazer who should mark
An inland company
Standing upfingered, with, "Hark! hark!
The glorious distant sea!"*

And feel, "Alas, 'tis but yon dark

And wind-swept pine to me!"

(L.19-24)

According to the poet, his soul is handed over to unhappiness by a greater power. He wants to know why he is condemned to faithlessness which leaves him in the darkness of despair. *"The Impercipient"* suggests that Hardy, despite his doubts, appears to retain an acceptance of the New Testament teaching that faith exists and is imparted by God. The New Testament specifies that faith is not something a person can achieve through his own effort. It is a gift from the benevolent God as it is mentioned in the Bible. (Ephesians 2.8), "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God". Therefore, it is so clear to notice, here, that the concept of faith is not rejected as humbug. Finally, one can say that the speaker (Hardy) is the eponymous not-perceiver, who stands with churchgoers, the bright believing band. Utterly and admittedly he is blind, he admits that he is the impercipient. He is not grappling with God; he only states his inability to understand God relationship to the world which would enable him to reap the fruit of faith. He blames his lack of perception to feel the existence of God, so God is not the blamable. Implicitly, Hardy hits to the conclusion that God does exist but as human we fail to realize his existence. For Hardy, God is omnipresent, but he is unable to develop a relationship with him. Moreover, the speaker is, emotionally and spiritually, crippled to understand God's relationship with the universe. This matter has impeded and hampered him from reaping the benefits of simple faith.

"A Sign-seeker", also published in *"Wessex Poems"*, is one of Hardy's most successful poems in which he fuses poetry with metaphysics. The

poem as described by Robert McCarthy “incorporates Hardy’s deliberate inversion and condensation of the romantic quest..., it is about the self’s recovery of the sense of identity with God and nature which is the total human heritage.”¹⁶ Moreover, McCarthy sees the poem as a dramatization of man’s search to discover reality; it is about modern human consciousness and its increased knowledge and rationality to provoke vindication of the reality of life beyond the flesh. The speaker of the poem is seeking signs of God or supernatural in this world, and how he responds and reads these signs. He observes the natural occurrences and phenomena with acuity and intensity. He is an avid perceiver who is looking for a connection between this world and its maker¹⁷:

*I MARK the months in liveries dank and dry,
The day-tides many-shaped and hued;
I see the nightfall shades subtrude,
And hear the monotonous hours clang negligently by.*

(L.1-4)

*I view the evening bonfires of the sun
The eyeless countenance of the mist*

(L.5, 7)

.....
*I have seen the lightning-blade, the leaping star,
The caldrons of the sea in storm,
Have felt the earthquake’s lifting arm,
And trodden where abysmal fires and snowcones are.*

(L.9-12)

The speaker perceives nature's vitality but cannot determine what are all these about? Are they evidences about the relationship between the human and the Divine? The seeker of the signs tries his best to catch connections as he beholds the natural supernaturalism of these signs. The sign-seeker's dilemma is purely religious; he cannot make out how these signs are answering his own questions. In this poem, the seeker experiences a state of numinous meditation which aims at not to exhibit the phenomenal world only, but to transcend beyond that border to include questions regarding the nature of the greater power behind these signs. The poem raises philosophical questions about man's search for signs of existence. Those signs are imbedded that is why Hardy cannot see what he "fain would wot of". The speaker feels he is not part of that all existence or, in other words, he cannot fully understand or commune with it. Is this a fault of perception, a failure of imagination, a consequence of man's fall and death? Or this could be attributed to the disappearance of God, or the absence of God:

*But that I fain would wot of shuns my sense—
Those sights of which old prophets tell,
Those signs the general word so well,
Vouchsafed to their unheed, denied my watchings tense.*

(L.21-24)

"A Sign Seeker" personalizes the theme of questions asked but not answered. The poem offers subjective view, the speaker possesses a great deal of knowledge about Nature and science, therefore he seeks an answer for it, but his knowledge of spiritual nature eludes him. The issues he seeks signs are recurring themes in Hardy's works specifically poetry. These

issues particularly relate to life after death and suffering in general. It would be “blest enlightenment” to be assured that death is “not the end” and suffering is not recorded in Heaven. It seems important to Hardy that suffering is not futile. If Heaven takes note of suffering, it is to be assured that Hardy imagines it would result in a position outcome such intervention or recompense.¹⁸ The poem moves on to concede that “there are who / these tokens claim to feel and see”. There are people who are unlike Hardy, experience supernatural “evidence” in answer to the existential questions Hardy poses. But the poet’s desire remains unfulfilled: “such scope is granted not to lives like mine”. He recalls and indeed “pants” for a response. “but none replies” the crucial point here is that the poet is “not granted” or “denied” these signs:

*I have lain in dead men’s beds, have walked
The tombs of those with whom I’d talked,
Called many a gone and goodly one to shape a sign,*

(L.42-44)

This implies that it is not so much a question of whether the proof exists in reality or not. But the question here is much more philosophical than it seems; it is about whether God, in whose hands the all power lies, allows Hardy to access this proof or not. The speaker hints to his failure to do so, but it is not the fault of God that he could not access the proof. Hardy believes that the signs are the property of the believers and he is not one of them. He perceives himself to be on the outside of the community of believers who through their faith are open to spiritual experience. In this poem Hardy presents a notion that the lack of knowledge is a handicap especially in spiritual matters.¹⁹ Sign-seeking is an act produced by Hardy’s

wide knowledge and consciousness. He sees nature as alive with a meaningful presence and influence of unearthly power; he seeks it because he knows it is somewhere there in the natural world. Hardy depicts man's response to the old, ancient and alive world. He looks for signs that will aid his spiritual knowledge and asserts that he:

Panted for response. But none replies;

No warnings loom, nor whisperings

To open out my limitings,

And Nescience mutely muses: when a man falls he lies.

(L.45-48)

Finally one can easily notice that the absence of a response that would furnish the necessary knowledge that the poet seeks in a sign leaves him to conclude that there is no life after death. Yet as is usual with Hardy, this assertion is subverted by the statement that it is "Nescience" or lack of knowledge which makes the statement: "when a man falls he lies". There is underlying hint that true knowledge may have led him to a different conclusion. The failure of sign-seeking, is not overtly linked to loss or lack of faith, it is rather attributed to the inability of the seeker to establish a communion with God. Hardy comes to the conclusion that his analytical and intellectual abilities are keeping him away from beholding and accepting God.

In conclusion we can say that Hardy has a finger in every pie. As far as religion and faith are concerned, Hardy's poetry contains many references to religious books such as the Bible, Genesis, the Epistle and Gospels.

His works also reflect the doubt and agnosticism which are the result of his vast readings and leanings. He finds little comfort in Christianity, yet he is unable to reject Biblical theology or to reinvent Christianity to suit the modern framework. Hardy's spiritual dilemma is a critical one; he cannot ignore God's existence because God is always evident in nature. And he cannot accept the Christian doctrine in its present shape. But this does not mean that there are no Christian elements in his poetry. One can feel the tendency in Hardy to judge his thoughts and beliefs according to Christian principles. Therefore, through his poetry, Hardy tries to understand his relationship with God in intellectual way. His research in regard to this relation, being based on raising unanswerable questions, makes him deem the spiritual experiences with which people communicate with God. The result is that he realizes that hope is far beyond his reach. His deep pessimism is probably the result of his own interpretation of the biblical stories and issues. All in all, Hardy does not deny the existence of God and religion as well, but he believes that religion alone is not enough. Thus, we can say that in regard to Hardy's poetry, faith exists but that faith takes different shapes the most prevailing one is the desperate.

Notes

- ¹ L. Collins, *Hardy and his God: A Liturgy of Unbelief* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p.4.
- ² James Townsend, "Thomas Hardy: The Tragedy of a Life without Christ" Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society, Spring 1997 -- Volume 10:18. www.faithalone.org . Retrieved September 23,2011, page 4 of 13.
- ³ Dale Kramer, ed. *The Cambridge companion to Thomas Hardy* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), p.55.
- ⁴ James Gibson, ed. *Thomas Hardy: The Complete Poems* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 834.
- ⁵ Mary Ann Stotko, "Victorian agnosticism: Thomas Hardy's doomed universe" (MA Thesis, University of South Africa), p. 47.
- ⁶ Ibid, pp. 4-8.
- ⁷ James Townsend, p. 6.
- ⁸ James Gibson, p. 147 .
- ⁹ Marlene Springer, *Hardy's Use of Allusion* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1983), 1.
- ¹⁰ Dalziel, Pamela. "Strange Sermon: The Gospel According to Thomas Hardy." *Times Literary Supplement*. (17 March 2006): 12-23. www.the-tls.co.uk . Retrieved November 19, 2011. page 1of 11.
- ¹¹ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy 1892-1928* (New York: Macmillan company, 1930), p.122.
- ¹² Geoffrey Harvey, *The Complete Critical Guide to Thomas Hardy* (London: Routledge, 2003), p, 16.
- ¹³ "Thomas Hardy's Intellectual Distance from God" www.students.ed.uiuc.edu. Retrieved December 23, 2011. page 3 of 4.

¹⁴ Ibid, p.4.

¹⁵ St. John Butler Lance, *Thomas Hardy* (Cambridge: University press, 1978), p. 175.

¹⁶ Robert McCarthy, "Hardy's Baffled Visionary: A Reading of 'A Sign-seeker'". www.jstor.org . Retrieved December 19, 2011, page 1 of 6.

¹⁷ Meaghan Byrne. "The Natural World and Percipience in the writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Thomas Hardy"
www.gerardmanleyhopkins.org. Retrieved January 5, 2012. page 2 of 12.

¹⁸ Mary Ann Stotko, p.47.

¹⁹ Ibid, p.57.

المستخلص

يعد توماس هاردي (1840-1928) من اهم الشعراء الانكليز وابرزهم الذين برزوا في نهاية الحقبة الفكتورية وبداية الحقبة الادوردية. تنبثق هذه الدراسة من الفرضية التي مفادها انه حتى الاشخاص اليائسين امثال توماس هاردي ليس بمقدورهم ان يتجنبوا تاثير الدين على فكرهم الشخصي ونتاجهم الأدبي. ان الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو تقديم قراءة جديدة لبعض اشعار توماس هاردي خصوصا فيما يتعلق بمفهومى الدين والايمان. كما تعرض الدراسة بعضا من تأملات هاردي بخصوص طبيعة مفاهيمه الدينية الشخصية. ان الفكر الديني المسيحي للفرد الفكتوري يقوم على اساس معينة, لذلك فان فهم وشروحات هاردي لتلك المفاهيم تحدد ملامح فلسفته الشخصية للحياة. تلك الاسس هي من الاهمية بمكان الى درجة انها تسهم بشكل عميق في تعزيز التشائم الذي يكتنف فلسفة هاردي للحياة. وعليه- فان هذه الدراسة تناقش معالجة هاردي لمفهوم الايمان كما هو مبين في بعض من اهم قصائده. تركز الدراسة على بعض تلك الاسس الدينية في اشعار هاردي. لذا فان الهدف من هذا البحث والتمحيص هو لاثبات نقطة جوهرية ومهمة وهي ان اشعار توماس هاردي تنطوي على اشارات لايمكن تجاهلها لفكرة الايمان الذي يكتنف اليأس. لذلك تخلص الدراسة الى ان شعر توماس هاردي لا يتحدث عن انعدام وغياب الايمان بل عن سيادة الايمان اليأس.

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