

## Hardy's View of Life and Death in "Life and Death at Sunrise" and Other Poems

Tomoko TACHIBANA

*Department of Medical Social Work  
Faculty of Medical Welfare  
Kawasaki University of Medical Welfare  
Kurashiki, 701-01, Japan  
(Accepted Oct. 21, 1992)*

**Key words :** Thomas Hardy, life and death, immortality, eternity

### Abstract

Thomas Hardy wrote about a thousand poems over a period of thirty years. The themes of his poetry are full of variety, but no other poet has written as many poems on life and death, graveyards and ghosts as Hardy. Hardy, influenced in his youth by Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, could not sing of 'resurrection' or 'the immortality of the soul' after death, even in his elegies for the dead. However, he was eager in his search for immortality because he could not endure the thought that the dead are obliterated and forgotten. Therefore, he tried to keep the dead immortal by means of his own devices : for instance, in the law of 'the cycle of life' ; in the memories of the living ; in the plants of nature ; in the stars of the universe.

Swinging between deep pessimism and infinite hope for immortality, he continued to compose many poems on life and death. By and by, Hardy freed himself from the paradox of life and death. For Hardy, death is finally seen as the beginning of a new life, which may be called immortality.

### I

Thomas Hardy (1840—1928) was a writer who had two careers in two centuries ; that is, he was a novelist in the nineteenth century and a pioneer of the modern poetry in the twentieth century. Hardy may be called unique among the great Victorian novelists and poets, such as Tennyson, Dickens, Swinburne, Rossetti, Morris, Browning and Meredith, in that he excelled in both fields.

Hardy started his second life as a poet at the age of fifty-eight after winning a great reputation as a novelist, and he wrote about a thousand poems during thirty years. He published 918 of these poems distributed in eight volumes.<sup>1)</sup> Some critics have estimated him to be the greatest novelist and poet in English literature since Shakespeare. He wrote various kinds of verses : lyrics, ballads, narratives, philosophical fantasies, and so on. And the themes of his poetry are also full of

variety, such as life, death, war, love, women, his wife, and all things in nature. Paul Zietlow points out the characteristics of Hardy's poetry as follows :

The power of Hardy's poetry as a whole lies in its variety of form, tone, and idea, in its boldness of style and dramatic conception, in the artistic cunning and complexity underlying its sometimes crude, sometimes graceful, surface simplicity, and in its direct revelation of a compassionate, human vision.<sup>2)</sup>

In particular, Hardy wrote more poems on life and death, the world after death, graveyards and ghosts than any other English poet. However, he never expressed eternal life or immortality after death like Browning, Wordsworth or Shakespeare ; he as a non-Christian could not believe in the Heaven or Hell of Christianity, where the dead could get their eternal life. Nor did he believe in the transmigration of souls as in Buddhism, where human beings' souls after death are imagined to be reborn as human beings or animals again and again according to their conduct, good or bad, in their life time. Hardy sings, however, in many poems of his eager desire for immortality after death, in spite of the fact that he never believes in it. In this paper, through some poems of his I would like to analyze Hardy's view of life and death, which reveals a subtle change as he grew older.

## II

### LIFE AND DEATH AT SUNRISE<sup>3)</sup> (NEAR DOGBURY GATE, 1867)

THE hills uncap their tops  
Of woodland, pasture, copse,  
And look on the layers of mist

At their foot that still persist :  
They are like awakened sleepers on one  
elbow lifted,  
Who gaze around to learn if things during  
night have shifted.

A waggon creaks up from the fog  
With a laboured leisurely jog ;  
Then a horseman from off the hill-tip  
Comes clapping down into the dip ;  
While woodlarks, finches, sparrows, try to  
entune at one time.  
And cocks and hens and cows and bulls take  
up the chime.

With a shouldered basket and flagon  
A man meets the one with the waggon,  
And both the men halt of long use.  
"Well," the waggoner says, "what's the  
news?"  
"—'Tis a boy this time. You've just met the  
doctor trotting back.  
She's doing very well. And we think we  
shall call him 'Jack.'

"And what have you got covered there?"  
He nods to the waggon and mare.  
"Oh, a coffin for old John Thinn :  
We are just going to put him in."  
"—So he's gone at last. He always had a  
good constitution."  
"—He was ninety-odd. He could call up the  
French Revolution."

Hardy wrote this poem at the age of twenty-seven. Influenced by Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, he accepts life and death from the viewpoint of 'the cycle of life'. In the first stanza, Hardy personifies the hills as "awakened sleepers" who look around to know "if things during night have shifted", and in the second stanza, as a metaphor of the joyful chorus which implies the resurrection of life,

various kinds of birds and animals chime in together. It is the beginning of the day's activity which hints that night (death) has passed, and day (life) has come ; the cycle of day and night. In the third stanza, two villagers appear against the background of nature which has just awakened, and exchange a daily conversation : "What's the news?", "A boy this time", "We shall call him 'Jack'", "a coffin for old John Thinn", or "he's gone at last". In their conversation they don't express too much congratulations on the birth of a boy, or too many condolences on the death of an old man, either. Here Hardy suggests in the coincidence that the boy's name Jack may have been the nickname of old John who could call up the French Revolution, that a human being is mortal as individual, but is immortal as a species and continues the history of mankind forever. He takes life and death as the cycle of life under the cosmic conception. In the end we can understand that the "things" the hills desired to learn were the birth of a life and the death which happened at the same time during the night.

Next, in the poem "Saying Good-Bye",<sup>4)</sup> Hardy takes death as the last good-bye to life :

#### Saying Good-Bye

We are always saying  
 "Good-bye, good-bye!"  
 In work, in playing,  
 In gloom, in gaying :  
 At many a stage  
 Of pilgrimage  
 From youth to age  
 We say, "Good-bye,  
 Good-bye!" (st. 1)

So, with this saying,

Good-bye, good-bye,  
 We speed their waying  
 Without betraying  
 Our grief, our fear  
 No more to hear  
 From them, close, clear,  
 Again : "Good-bye  
 Good-bye!" (st. 4)

Hardy produces indirectly the images of life and death in the "Good-bye" repeated here. According to his view, human life is nothing but a series of good-byes from morning till night throughout the year, just as everything has beginning and ending, or meeting and departure. He is aware of the fleeting and transcendent life of this world, and of death that comes to human beings sooner or later, with the last good-bye to life ; he regards death as the last of many good-byes. Therefore, Hardy seems to accept death calmly and naturally, and tells us not to grieve over it. J. O. Bailey comments on this poem as follows : Saying Good-Bye expresses a common human sentiment concerning friends who go away to unforeseen destinies.<sup>5)</sup> That is, Hardy consoles himself by thinking that death is only one of many good-byes at many a stage in human life. As Southworth explains :

His (Hardy's) attitude for death is one neither of negation nor affirmation ; it is essentially an attitude of indifference except as he feels the loneliness experienced by the survivor.<sup>6)</sup>

Hardy doesn't express any gloom and grief except for his loneliness in the face of death here.

A similar idea is also described in "Regret not me".<sup>7)</sup>

"Regret Not Me"

Regret not me ;  
 Beneath the sunny tree  
 I lie uncaring, slumbering peacefully.  
 (st. 1)

I did not know  
 That heydays fade and go,  
 But deemed that what was would be always so.  
 (st. 3)

The speaker in the poem appeals to someone, maybe her lover, and says that she has been liberated from earthly sufferings and is sleeping peacefully beneath the tree. And she perceives that everything in this world has an end, and takes it as her destiny, saying, "That heydays fade and go," and it is impossible that "what was would be always so". Besides she adds in a later stanza that the living should enjoy themselves during their lifetime : "Yet sing/... And lightly dance... forget mischance". Here Hardy implies the constant possibility of misfortune in human life, and he is quite concerned about human beings' destiny to live on under the burden of uncertain life. Therefore, longing for a comfort beyond death, he describes the image of death vividly and pleasantly. Perhaps the light rhythm flowing through this poem helps to preclude a gloomy image of death.

### III

In the following poems Hardy has come to regard death as an absolute being that frees human beings from worldly agonies and sorrows. "After the Last Breath"<sup>8)</sup> and "Why do I?"<sup>9)</sup> are good examples :

#### AFTER THE LAST BREATH

There's no more to be done,  
 or feared, or hoped ;  
 None now need watch, speak low,  
 and list, and tire ;

No irksome crease outsmoothed,  
 no pillow sloped  
 Does she require. (st. 1)

And yet we feel that something savours well  
 We note a numb relief withheld before ;  
 Our well-beloved is prisoner in the cell  
 Of Time no more. (st. 4)

We see by littles now the deft achievement  
 Whereby she has escaped the Wrongers all,  
 In view of which  
 our momentary bereavement  
 Outshapes but small. (st. 5)

This poem is an elegy for his mother Jemima who died in 1904. In the first stanza Hardy expresses his joy for her liberation from earthly troubles rather than his sorrow at his mother's death. Probably he must have felt deep pity at the sight of her living in hardship throughout her life, or suffering from disease in old age. We can find his feeling for her in "Our well-beloved (mother) is prisoner in the cell/Of Time no more", and "she has escaped the Wrongers all/In view of which our momentary bereavement/outshapes but small". He pronounces that bereaved needn't lose themselves in sorrow, because she has been freed from "the cell of Time". and has got her comfort and peace by death. That is, Hardy considers it is after all only death that can free human beings from Time which confines them in the prison of earthly agonies and sorrows. In "Why Do I?," he wants to escape from this world to another world where there is no pain :

#### "Why Do I?"

Why do I go on doing these things?  
 Why not cease?  
 Is it that you are yet in this world

of welterings  
And unease,  
And that, while so,  
mechanic repetitions please? (st. 1)

When shall I leave off doing these things?-  
When I hear  
You have dropped your dusty cloak  
and taken you wondrous wings  
To another sphere,  
Where no pain is :  
Then shall I hush this dinning gear.  
(st. 2)

Here Hardy says that death liberates human beings from worldly distresses, and he desires to escape to a peaceful world beyond death, as, expressed in the lines "in this world of welterings/And unease", and "wondrous wings/To another sphere/Where no pain is". He dares to consider death not a cause of regret or sorrow, but a liberator that frees human beings from Time, age and worldly sufferings. This view may come out of his affection and pity in compensation for his not being able to sing of human immortality.

#### IV

Now I will analyze Hardy's view of life and death more in detail in the poems "His Immortality",<sup>10)</sup> "Her Immortality",<sup>11)</sup> and "The To-Be-Forgotten".<sup>12)</sup> They are all similar poems, in which Hardy expresses his view that the immortality of the dead remains in the memories of the living, but it is less and less just because some of those who remembered him have died, an idea to which Hardy sticks considerably. Let's examine these three poems one by one.

##### His Immortality

I saw a dead man's finer part

Shining within each faithful heart  
Of those bereft. Then said I : "This must be  
His immortality." (st. 1)

I looked there as the seasons wore,  
And still his soul continuously bore  
A life in theirs. But less its shine excelled  
Than when I first beheld. (st. 2)

This poem is sung from the viewpoint of a living woman, who realizes that his immortality is something "Shining within each faithful heart/Of those bereft". However, she can't help feeling the dead man's shining is destined to come less and less and dwindle to nothing, as expressed in the lines "less its shine excelled/Than when I first beheld" or "shrunk, alas! into a thin/And spectral mannikin." (st. 3) Here Hardy hints that the living's remembrance for the dead is very evanescent, and fades by degrees as time goes by and eventually vanishes, and then the dead are doomed to die completely. In the last stanza the speaker wonders to herself "If aught of him remain unperished still", and answers her own question : she only finds "a feeble spark,/Dying amid the dark" in her mind. Hardy seems to sing the vanity of a faithful heart changing to faithlessness with the passage of time. This idea is expressed more clearly in "Her Immortality".

##### Her Immortality

Seven years have circled since I died :  
Few now remember me ;  
My husband clasps another bride  
My children's love has she. (st. 5)

A Shade but in its mindful ones  
Has immortality ;  
By living, me you keep alive,  
By dying you slay me. (st. 9)

In the fifth stanza, the speaker complains of the insincerity of her husband and her children who forgot her. Hearing her lament, her lover consoles her, saying that he will “join thee ere the day” by killing himself. But she persuades him to give up his suicide, saying “A shade” can get immortality only in the loving memory of “mindful ones”, so if he kills himself, her immortality will vanish with him. The lover promises her to live on with her as long as he can, but his grief grows because he knows when he dies, “Her spirit ends its living lease/ Never again to be!”. (st. 14) Hardy calls this fact “the second death”<sup>13)</sup> different from the first physical death in the poem “The To-Be-Forgotten”.

#### The To-Be-Forgotten

—“O not at being here ;  
But that our future second death is near ;  
When, with the living, memory of us numbs,  
And blank oblivion comes! (st. 2)

“They count as quite forgot ;  
They are as men who have existed not ;  
Theirs is a loss past loss of fitful breath ;  
It is the second death. (st.4)

The chief characteristic of his view of death here is the second death. After the first death, the dead can keep their life in the memories of the living, but his or her immortality fades as time passes from the remembrance of the living, and finally vanishes, which Hardy calls the second death. He suggests that human beings' immortality can be kept alive in the memories of the living at most for a few generations after their death. He seems to wish that the dead be not obliterated and forgotten forever—in vain, for his realistic attitude will not let him sing of immortality. Hardy so far had treated death objectly and

calmly, but his attitude to death changed when his first wife Emma died in 1912. Immediately after her death, Hardy revived her in his loving memory and wrote about fifty elegiacs for Emma subjectively, emotionally, and mournfully : for instance, in “The Going”<sup>14)</sup> Hardy calls to his wife “Why did you give no hint that night/ That quickly after the morrow's dawn,/... You would close your term here, up and be gone/ Where I could not follow.../ To gain one glimpse of you ever anon!”.

#### V

By and by Hardy came to think that human souls after death are absorbed into universal life, and kept alive in trees, grasses or flowers. This may be a sort of Hardian eternity ; he is eager to search for human immortality inwardly, though he pretends to deny it outwardly. Let's look at this idea through “Transformations”<sup>15)</sup> “Voices from Things Growing in a Churchyard”<sup>16)</sup> “Paradox”<sup>17)</sup> and “Rain on a Grave”.<sup>18)</sup>

#### Transformations

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!  
(st. 3)

In the first and second stanzas, “A man” has been transformed into “a yew” ; “his wife” into “its branch” ; “A ruddy human life” into “a green shoot” ; “a woman” into “grasses” and “a fair girl” may turn to “a rose”. Hardy suggests that they are all reborn in trees and plants by absorbing universal life, such as the sun and rain and energy. Of course we can

explain that all organic and inorganic things return to dust, fertilize the earth, and are transformed into new life in the natural cycle of life from the viewpoint of natural science, but beyond this realistic view we can feel Hardy's tenderness and compassion for the dead, and at the same time, his infinite hope that they may keep alive much longer in nature than in the memories of the living.

#### Voices from Things Growing in a Chuchyard

These flowers are I, poor Fanny Hurd,  
                     Sir or Madam,  
     A little girl here sepultured.  
     Once I flit-fluttered like a bird  
     Above the grass, as now I wave  
     In daisy shapes above my grave,  
                     All day cheerily,  
                     All night eerily!                      (st. 1)

In this poem also, Hardy expresses his feeling that the dead live again not only in the memories of the living, but also in such transformed shapes as trees, grasses, flowers, though he knows they can not keep their immortality steadily in nature; in spring trees bud, grasses grow, and flowers bloom, but in fall they all die. Hardy wishes, however, that human souls may continue to revive again and again in plants repeating life and death in the cycle of the seasons. The voices are those of six persons buried in the grave, and each is symbolized by a plant that grows out of their bodies according to the character of each: for example, Fanny Hurd turns to "daisy", Bachelor Bowring to "oak", Thomas Voss to "yew", Lady Gertrude to "laurel", Eve Greensleeves to "innocent with-wind", Squire Audeley to "ivy-green". We can guess Hardy's sympathy shown to the dead in refrain of "All day cheerily/All night eerily" repeated in every stanza.

"Paradox" is one of the poems Hardy wrote, thinking of his dead sister Mary whom he loved very much. He imagines that she is "Lost to each meadow, each hill-top, each tree around/Yet the whole truth may her largened sight see around?". Basically Hardy can't believe in human immortality after death, but he never fails to hold a strong hope of having the dead live on not only in people's memories, but in meadows, hills or any plant in nature.

In "Rain on a Grave" Hardy refers to the daisies his dead wife Emma loved, and wishes her to be reborn in them when they are full bloom in spring around her grave "Like stars on the ground,/...the sweet heart of them,/...All her life's round". Though he knows well enough that the daisies that grow in spring will die in the fall, he can't but wish her to continue to revive in the daisies sprouting newly every year.

#### VI

Thus Hardy was eager in his search for immortality, but he could not lay hold of a firm enough view of it, so he swung between the two extremes of deep pessimism and infinite hope for life and death. As Zietlow says: "To live is to suffer: to avoid suffering is to thwart life",<sup>19)</sup> Hardy recognizes life and death as two mutually contradictory things which are never blended together into one. "Yell'ham-Wood's Story"<sup>20)</sup> is a good example.

#### Yell'ham-Wood's Story

Coomb-Firtrees say that Life is a moan,  
     And Clyffe-hill Clump says "Yea!"  
     But Yell' ham says a thing of its own:  
         It's not "Gray, gray  
         Is life away!"  
     That Yell' ham says,

Nor that life is for ends unknown.

It says that life would signify  
 A thwarted purposing :  
 That we come to live, and called to die  
     Yes, that's the thing  
     In fall, in spring,  
 That Yell' ham says : -  
     "Life offers—to deny!"

This is not a landscape poem but a meditative one, in which three personified forests are conversing with each other on life and death : "Coomb-Firtrees" and "Clyffe-hill" observe that "Life is a moan", while "Yell' ham" says "It's not Gray, gray/Is life alway!". There seems to be a hope for life, but Yell' ham says further, "life would signify/A thwarted purposing : /That we come to live, and are called to die/... "Life offers—to deny!" In these lines, Hardy catches life as a thwarted purposing, and points out the paradox of life and death. At this step he could not free himself from a sense of being a victim of life's denials. But in the end he reached the thought that life is only a perpetual process toward death ; death is not an end of life, but another name for life itself. Let's examine this idea further in "Waiting Both"<sup>21)</sup>

#### Waiting Both

A star looks down at me,  
 And says : "Here I and you  
 Stand, each in our degree :  
 What do you mean to do,—  
     Mean to do?"

I say : "For all I know,  
 Wait, and let Time go by,  
 Till my change come. "—"Just so,"  
 The star says : "So mean I ; —  
     So mean I."

Zietlow comments : For Hardy, the quiet waiting for death merges with affirmation of life. To understand death in its broadest context is to be aware of the community of existence.<sup>22)</sup>

In this poem, Hardy at the age of eighty-six seems to understand life and death affirmatively. Here in a dialogue concerning life and death between a mortal human being and a seemingly immortal star, he insists that even the most seemingly eternal thing is also destined to extinction. For the two, death is only a process of change and inevitable destiny, as expressed in the words "Wait and let Time go by,/Till my change come". Though there is a great difference in the life span of a human being and star, both are sure to die ; Hardy seems to grasp the belief that even seeming eternity leads to extinction. In "I am the One",<sup>23)</sup> we can find the same idea.

#### "I Am the One"

I hear above : "We stars must lend  
 No fierce regard  
 To his gaze, so hard  
 Bent on us thus,—  
 Must scathe him not. He is one with us  
     Beginning and end,"

The stars say "He (a human being) is one with us (stars)/Beginning and end". Here Hardy suggests the kinship between human beings and the stars, both of which have beginning and end ; that is, all things that begin and end are one. In the line "No fierce regard/To his gaze, so hard/Bent on us thus,— /Must scathe him not", the stars show their sympathy for a human being with whom they feel the community of existence. We can realize Hardy's quest for immortality in the figure eagerly praying to the stars. He



desires to connect human life after death with cosmic eternity which seems to offer a promise of immortality to mankind. Here I would like to quote Zietlow's comment again :

Hardy sees connections between death and things that are understandable—the stars and seasons, the trees and flowers. At the deepest level, his living consciousness at work within the context of an awareness of death is quiet testimony to the goodness of life.<sup>24)</sup>

Lastly I would like to look at "Six Boards"<sup>25)</sup>

#### Six Boards

Those boards and I—how much  
In common we, of feel and touch  
Shall share thence on, —earth's  
far core-quakings,  
Hill-shocks, tide-shakings— (st. 4)

Yea, hid where none will note,  
The once live tree and man, remote  
From mundane hurt as if on Venus, Mars,  
Or furthest stars. (st. 5)

It is said that Hardy wrote this poem imagining his own death. Six boards, of course, mean a coffin. we can see him waiting for death calmly in the expression "To bring to me those boards I need/With thoughtful speed" when "Some morning I shall claim them,". And in the fourth stanza, he regards the coffin as a companion that shares its life after death with ; "—earth's far core-quakings,/ Hill-shocks, tide-shakings" in the grave. In the final stanza, however, Hardy imagines the six coffin boards not in the earth but in the heavens "as if (they lived) on Venus, Mars,/Or furthest stars". This poem presents his infinite hope for immortality and shows us

images of life rather than of death.

#### VII

From a general survey of Hardy's view of life and death through some poems of his , we can realize that his view changed with his age. Hardy is often called a pessimistic poet ; and it is true that he sings throughout not of the dawn but of the twilight of life. However, I think he is a poet of hope rather than a pessimistic poet, because in one of his poems "Song of Hope"<sup>26)</sup> he sings dreams and hopes for future :

#### Song of Hope

O sweet To-morrow!—  
After today  
There will away  
This sense of sorrow  
Then let us borrow  
Hope, for a gleaming  
Soon will be streaming  
Dimmed by no gray—  
No gray! (st. 1)

. . .  
Nearer to dawn  
Minute-beats bring us :  
. . . . (st. 2)

. . .  
The night cloud is hueing,  
To-morrow shines soon—  
Shines soon! (st. 3)

Here, though he mixes agonies and hopes, he expresses much more his hope for the future in the repeated word "To-morrow".

In Hardy's view of life and death, though he can not sing of life after death directly, he tries to sing of it indirectly. Hardy lost faith in Christianity in youth, but he is a Christian

at heart, in that he quotes a lot of Biblical passages in his novels and poetry. He is eager to regain a religious view of things which will give him faith in life after death. Hardy chooses nature or the cosmos as his world after death, though at first he had sought to revive the dead in the evanescent memory-

world of the living. Hardy's mature view of life and death is basically that the life of mankind has continued unbroken in the cycle of life throughout the generations of men and women. That is, death is not an end of life, but the beginning of a new life, which may be called immortality for Hardy.

### Notes

- 1) Eight volumes : 1 *Wessex Poems and Other Verses* (1898)  
                           2 *Poems of the Past and the Present* (1901)  
                           3 *Time's Laughingstocks and Other Verses* (1909)  
                           4 *Satires of Circumstance. Lyrics and Reveries with Miscellaneous Pieces* (1914)  
                           5 *Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses* (1917)  
                           6 *Late Lyrics and Earlier* (1922)  
                           7 *Human Shows. Far Phantasies, Songs and Trifles* (1925)  
                           8 *Winter Words in Various Moods and Meters* (1928)
- 2) Zietlow P (1974) *Moments of Vision*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, pp x.
- 3) Hardy T (1965) *The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy*. Macmillan, London, pp 692.
- 4) Ibid., pp 586.
- 5) Bailey JO (1970) *The Poetry of Thomas Hardy*. The University of North Carolina Press, pp 460.
- 6) Southworth J (1966) *The Poetry of Thomas Hardy*. Russel & Russel, pp 83—84.
- 7) Hardy T (1965) *The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy*, pp 365.
- 8) Ibid., pp 253.
- 9) Ibid., pp 791.
- 10) Ibid., pp 130.
- 11) Ibid., pp 48.
- 12) Ibid., pp 131.
- 13) The Holy Bible (1611) Revelation, 11, 10—11 :  
     ...be thou faithful unto death, and I will hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches :  
     He that overcometh shall not be hurt of *the second death*. And xx, 6 : Blessed and holy is he that hath  
     part in the first resurrection : on such *the second death* hath no power, but they shall reign with him  
     a thousand years. (The second death here means that the dead are kept away from God forever. Or  
     in the last Judgment the dead are given the eternal death as a punishment of guilt.—Hardy may have  
     quoted the image of the second death from The Revelation).
- 14) Hardy T (1965) *The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy*, pp 318.
- 15) Ibid., pp 443.
- 16) Ibid., pp 590.
- 17) Ibid., pp 766.
- 18) Ibid., pp 321.
- 19) Zietlow P (1974) *Moments of Vision*, pp 13.
- 20) Hardy T (1965) *The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy*, pp 280.

- 21) Ibid., pp 665.
- 22) Zietlow P (1974) *Moments of Vision*, pp 235.
- 23) Hardy T (1965) *The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy*, pp 799.
- 24) Zietlow P (1974) *Moments of Vision*, pp 236.
- 25) Hardy T (1965) *The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy*, pp 781.
- 26) Ibid., pp 120.

## 「夜明けの生と死」他数篇の詩にみる ハーディの生死観

橘 智 子

川崎医療福祉大学 医療福祉学部 医療福祉学科

(平成4年10月21日受理)

### 要 約

トマス・ハーディ (Thomas Hardy) は19世紀末英国文壇の偉大な小説家として名声を得た後、詩作に情熱を傾注した。およそ1000篇の詩を世に問い、現代詩人の萌芽を内包する個性的で特異な詩人として高い評価を受けている。

詩のテーマは多種多様であるが、とりわけ生と死、死後の世界、墓地、幽霊をテーマに近代から現代に即した内容で多くの詩を書いている。ハーディは若い頃、キリスト教の信仰を喪失し、加えて、ダーウィンの『種の起源』やショーペンハウアーの『無神論』、『内在性』に感化され、世紀末から20世紀初頭へのペシミズムに傾倒する。従って死者にキリスト教的死後の生命を与える希望が持てず、シェイクスピアやブラウニングのように死後の不滅を楽観的にうたい上げることができなかった。そして不滅を求めて深いペシミズムと限りない回生の希望の狭間で揺れ動き、その揺曳の果てに死後の魂の行方を希求して彼独自の工夫と観想をこらし作詩する。

やがてハーディは、死は生の否定であるとする生と死のパラドックスから脱却し、それを矛盾しない一体のもので不可分と考えるようになる。つまり生は死に向かって間断なく移行するプロセスに過ぎないと止観する。老齢と共に微妙に変化するハーディの生死観は一層次元の高いものとなり、相矛盾する概念を止揚して、幽明の間に詩的效果を出している。しかしハーディの生死観の根底をなすものは、全て生あるものは個としては滅びるが、種としては不滅であるという「生の循環」論であり、宇宙観であると言えよう。