



## Nietzschean Reverberations in Thomas Hardy’s “Hap” and “A Complaint to Man”

Thomas Hardy’nin “Hap” ve “A Complaint to Man” Şiirlerinde Nietzsche Yankılanmaları

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### Abstract

The perpetual affinity between philosophy and poetry in terms of providing an apt site for contemplation upon humane concerns is known to have been at the heart of a considerable number of academic researches. Given that there has been a revival of interest in delving into the nature of the referred affinity since modern period, Friedrich Nietzsche as one of the most influential philosophers of the period in the Western tradition can be said to have added a novel dimension to the dyad between philosophy and literature or philosophy and poetry. The tenets of his philosophy have been transposed into a variety of literary genres, particularly into poetry, and his ideas have been compared with certain literary figures. At this point, it must be highlighted that there exists limited number of studies about the bond between Nietzsche and one of his English contemporaries, novelist and poet Thomas Hardy notwithstanding the conformities in their outlook on life. Therefore, this study aims to elucidate the adaptability of the distinctive features of Nietzschean philosophy into Hardy’s two poems, “Hap” and “A Complaint to Man” and to impel contemporary readers to reoccupy their notions about poetry as a means to philosophising things in the world.

**Keywords:** Friedrich Nietzsche, Thomas Hardy, philosophy and poetry, modern poetry.

### Öz

İnsana özgü kaygılara yönelik derin düşünme alanı oluşturabilen felsefe ve şiir arasındaki daimî yakınlığın birçok akademik araştırmanın merkezinde yer aldığı bilinmektedir. Atfedilen yakınlığın doğası üzerine daha kapsamlı incelemeler yapma arzusunda modern dönem itibarıyla bir artış olduğu düşünüldüğünde, Batı geleneği içerisinde dönemin en etkili filozoflarından biri olan Friedrich Nietzsche’nin felsefe ve edebiyat ya da felsefe ve şiir arasındaki etkileşime yeni bir boyut kazandırdığı söylenebilir. Felsefesinin ilkeleri, özellikle şiir başta olmak üzere birçok edebi tür içerisine aktarılmış ve fikirleri edebiyatçıların fikirleri ile kıyaslanmıştır. Bu noktada, yaşama bakış açılarındaki benzerliklere rağmen Nietzsche ve kendisinin çağdaşlarından biri olan, İngiliz roman yazarı ve şair Thomas Hardy arasındaki bağ odaklı kısıtlı sayıda çalışmanın var olduğu vurgulanmalıdır. Dolayısıyla, bu çalışma Nietzsche felsefesinin öne çıkan özelliklerinin Hardy’nin “Hap” ve “A Complaint to Man” şiirlerine uyarlanabilirliğini açıklığa kavuşturmayı hedeflemekte ve çağdaş okuyucuları, şiirin dünyevi olgulara filozofça yaklaşmak için sunduğu imkânı yeniden gözden geçirmeye davet etmektedir.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Friedrich Nietzsche, Thomas Hardy, felsefe ve şiir, modern şiir.

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## Introduction

Modern European philosophy in the nineteenth century is known to have gained a different dimension with Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) whose influence upon humanity entails a proper understanding of what lies at the heart of his central thoughts. The difference of the philosophy of Nietzsche largely originates from his repudiation of metaphysical beliefs such as the existence of an omnipotent creator and the immortality of the soul with his concentration upon human aspirations which he believes are the root causes of the need to depend upon these beliefs. In line with this issue, Bailey notes that “[b]y combining a psychological delving into the drives which are most likely giving rise to the surface layer of meanings and ideas with a history of ethical and religious sensations, Nietzsche thus targets not primarily the intellect, but rather the drives and desires which gives rise to the beliefs, notably the metaphysical need” (2024, p.147). The starting point of Nietzschean philosophy could, therefore, be said to be closely tied to his seeking doggedly to resist any expectations which come alongside compelled behaviour and metaphysical thinking. In other words, the philosopher envisions a human existence which is predominantly characterised by the determination to extricate oneself from dogmatism and normativity. Belliotti likewise points out that “[t]he structures of dogmatism- a transcendent world, things-in-themselves, objective truth that must be discovered, universal valuations, and the quest for certainty- strike Nietzsche as limiting and suffocating” (2017, p. 16). It implies that the philosopher regards such notions as creations of human mind and dismisses them. The defiant nature of the philosopher can be claimed to have culminated in his being referred to as one of the first thinkers to bring the issue of Western man’s declining faith in God and religion to the fore as well. In his popular work, *The Gay Science*, first published in 1882, the philosopher cherishes the idea of infiltrating effects of a godless world into daily lives of his readers in that he familiarises them with “God is dead” declaration for the very first time. Incorporating the ground-breaking notion of the death of “God” into the work, Nietzsche raises numerous questions as follows:

Are we not straying, as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space?  
Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light  
lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are  
burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose.  
God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. (1882/1974, p. 181)

It is self-evident that Nietzschean philosophy is geared towards elucidating essential concepts which embody atoms of human thought in relation to Christian morality. It would be fitting to contend that the philosopher asks such abstruse questions since understanding his philosophy may mean searching for oneself and require familiarity with one’s own being without feeling obliged to define oneself based upon a divine order. Pearson draws attention to the similar point and states that “Nietzsche does not think philosophy exists to make us better human beings- but it can make us more profound ones. Nietzsche asks whether we are serious enough about acquiring self-knowledge and whether we can find enough time for the task” (2005, p. 6). Hence, an individual who can acquire self-knowledge by being able to provide answers to Nietzschean questions in *The Gay Science* conjures up the image of the individual who benefits from the acquired knowledge to reoccupy notions pertaining to the well-established assumptions about Christian faith.

Nietzsche questions things which have been left fallow from the foundations upwards in his later works. In *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883), *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) and *The Antichrist* (1888), the philosopher promulgates the idea that human mind must be sundered from allegiance to doctrines and dogmas because he views this allegiance as impediment to self-actualisation and knowledge. As Pearson also stresses, “this set of texts is devoted to what Nietzsche called his nay-saying task, involving a revaluation of all values and a fatal reckoning with Christian morality” (2005, p. 4). To illustrate, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* introduces one of the most distinctive themes of Nietzschean canon which is named as the Superman with the lines “I teach you the Superman. Man is something that is to be surpassed. What have ye done to surpass men?” (Nietzsche, 1883/2011, p. 17). When Nietzsche attempts to develop the

Superman theme, he anticipates the existence of a man who is assumed to be leading his life in line with his own values and assertion of will. His understanding of an idealised man figure of the modern period points to a life journey of a man with free spirit, more pointedly, the idea of an unrepressed man by divinity. All these become more manifest when the passage from *Thus Spake Zarathustra* is read which is as follows:

These masters of today- surpass them, O my brethren- these petty people: THEY are the Superman's greatest danger! Surpass, ye higher men, the petty virtues, the petty policy, the sand-grain considerateness, the ant-hill trumpery, the pitiable comfortableness, "the happiness of the greatest number"! And rather despair than submit yourselves. And verily I love you, because ye know not today how to live, ye higher men! For thus do Ye live-best! (Nietzsche, 1883/2011, p. 233).

As a kind of continuation of Nietzschean thought which is expressed in *The Gay Science* with the idea of absent God, the idea of the Superman presented in the given passage can be said to represent a violent rejection of any adherence to well-seated values of the world of the senses. As Bronk underlines, "Nietzsche did not shy away from the implications of the untrammelled assertion of will and self-creation that he advocates" (2009, p. 98). This being said, the notion of the Superman also stands for a growing scepticism about the old theistic premises which can be considered to be referred as petty virtues and the opposite of man who lives in pitiable comfortableness. Nietzsche goes on to fulfil the colossal task of re-evaluating the veracity of Christian doctrines in *Beyond Good and Evil* by formulating "master-morality" and "slave-morality" concepts. He argues that master morality is solely applicable to people from higher strata of the society such as aristocrats or elites whereas slave morality is largely applicable to all individuals, particularly to the ones who can be identified as the weak, poor and needy. Nietzsche alludes to these points by highlighting that

[t]here is master morality and slave morality. The noble man separates his own nature from that of people in whom the opposite of such exalted and proud states expresses itself. He despises them. The despised one is the coward, the anxious, the small, the man who thinks about narrow utility, also the suspicious man with his inhibited look, the self-abasing man. (1886/2009, pp. 180-181)

For the slave-morality, the philosopher adds that it perpetuates the interests of the targeted group by making them believe that there exists a common standard of value of what is benevolent and what is malevolent as Nietzsche remarks that "The gaze of a slave is not well disposed towards the virtues of the powerful; he possesses scepticism and mistrust; he has a subtlety of mistrust against everything good which is honoured in it" (1886/2009, p. 183). That is to say, the slave-morality indoctrinates individuals to take all values for granted and be dragged into passivity and inaction rather than actively collaborating with each other to be able to create their own values. In *A History of Philosophy*, Frederick Charles Copleston summarises the distinction to be made between the master-morality and the slave-morality from Nietzschean perspective as follows:

In the master-morality or aristocratic morality "good" and "bad" are equivalent to "noble" and "despicable", and the epithets are applied to men rather than to actions. In the slave-morality the standard is that which is useful or beneficial to the society of the weak and powerless. By the standards of the slave-morality the "good" man of the master-morality tends to be accounted as "evil". Slave-morality is thus herd-morality. Its moral valuations are expressions of the needs of a herd. (1994, p. 401)

Copleston's allusion to the slave-morality as the herd-morality brings to mind the fact that Nietzsche puts Christianity and democracy into this category. What Nietzsche does is not a kind of denigration of unquestionable values of the religion on the grounds that the philosopher encourages believers not to be

victimised by their own abnegation of personal responsibilities. By zeroing in on the futility of the struggle to prove the existence of a transcendental world, the philosopher persistently argues that individuals must take the full responsibility of fostering a firm belief in their own righteousness. For him, people must bear in mind that they do certainly possess the strength and potential to create their values from within themselves instead of looking for the validation of their beliefs elsewhere. Viewed from this angle, his philosophy serves as a means of developing strategies to allow individuals to detach themselves from the inertia, the indoctrination, and the reality of their situation.

Nietzsche's willingness to embrace the notion that individuals could be the sole decision-makers of their own lives becomes clear in *The Antichrist* which is akin to a thorough investigation of the ways of emancipation from the norms. As the title of the work is suggestive of the stance of the philosopher, namely, his rejection of the image of man as subservient to God, Nietzsche in this work articulates the need to deconstruct the premise that individuals must succumb to the religiously and socially approved pattern of conventional lifestyle. When people are conditioned to comply with regulations of a life which is predicated upon unquestionable theistic premises, Nietzsche alleges that they lose their sense of selves, personalities and freedom. In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche notes that "[i]n God a declaration of war against life, nature, and the will to life! God the formula for every slander of this world, for every lie about that world! In God nothingness deified, the will to nothingness sanctified!" (1888/2004, p. 116). It is noticeable that *The Antichrist* lays bare the philosopher's emphasis upon getting rid of the feeling of belonging to a certain religious group whose freedom is constrained by biases and assumptions as it may inhibit self-assertion. As Copleston likewise argues that "Nietzsche's hatred of Christianity proceeds principally from his view of its supposed effect on man, whom it renders weak, submissive, resigned, humble or tortured in conscience and unable to develop himself freely" (1994, p. 404). Furthermore, by moving away from the theological discourse to make sense of the world, he rushes headlong into an existential vacuum and challenges the self-understanding of Christianity. In Nietzschean sense, the inward struggle of the self which is marked by the dedication to explore the meaning of life in conjunction with one's own choices and wishes is of paramount importance to the attainment of valid position in the world. His philosophy foregrounds the significance of autonomous decisions by refuting the idea of organising one's life in tandem with religious regulations. Nietzsche views it as "a violation of selfhood and a misconception of moral commitment and this situation also results in the increasing population of individuals who do not know how to fend for themselves" (1888/2004, pp. 114-115). Nietzschean philosophy is an overall antipathy toward the notion of a man repressed by precepts of a religion.

Nietzsche's attempts to get to the bottom of the things in his canonical works are believed to have been a source of inspiration for literary figures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century all across the globe. To exemplify, William Butler Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, D. H. Lawrence, A. E. Housman and Thomas Hardy can be considered some of the most prolific poets, dramatists or authors whose literary voices resonate with Nietzschean philosophy to a noteworthy extent. Thomas Hardy straddles the worlds of both Victorian and Modern periods as a bridging figure as Bhatnagar points out that "[t]wentieth century British poetry begins chronologically as well as quintessentially with Thomas Hardy whose creative endeavours bridge the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (2000, p. 4). Poetry during the period between 1890 and 1914 is characterised by personal impulses, a sense of declining faith in Christianity and a sense of doubtfulness about the future as Corcoran suggests that "Poems become the scenes of anxieties, tensions, distresses, uncertainties, contentions and mobilities. The twentieth-century English poem is the place where urgencies of desire, moral choice and witness are brought into focus or relief" (2007, pp. 4-5). As a well-known representative of Modern English poem, Hardy rails against the decadence and entropic nature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and challenges his readers with philosophical questions as Smith states that "to anyone who would understand the philosophy of Thomas Hardy in its maturity, the poetry is indispensable. In his poems, Hardy puts forth sometimes to himself or sometimes to the Almighty various philosophical queries, and then propounds tentative answers to these riddles of man's destiny" (1924, p. 331). As for the correlation between his poetry and Nietzschean train of thought, it can be said that the correlation has its origin in both men's harbouring a deep sense of doubt about Christianity, especially in terms of its affects upon individuals. Both Hardy and Nietzsche accentuate their anticipation of nihilism dawning on people through

their works. They both seem to have opposed to the idea of applying what Christianity instructs them to do in order that they can live happily, instead, they raise their voices against the compulsion to do so and show that they resent this idea. From among the poems of Hardy, “Hap” (written in 1866 but published in 1898), and “A Plaint to Man” (written from 1909 to 1910) are demonstrative of this resentment and conducive to despair in Nietzschean philosophical work. It means that these poems, as a whole, can be regarded as a reflection of the philosophical concerns of the time, which points at the affinity between Hardy’s and Nietzsche’s expressions of the circumstances of human existence in the modern century. Relevantly, this study aims to present distinctive features of Nietzschean philosophy which can be tracked down in Hardy’s poems, especially in terms of their ways of responding to the social and cultural milieu of the time. Considering the scant amount of research on the affinities between Hardy and Nietzsche as two rebels of mores of society, this study will contribute to the existing literature by providing a chance to ponder over the problems of postmodern society on the side of contemporary readers with a renewed interest and through the lenses of Hardy and Nietzsche. More pointedly, in order to substantiate the claim of the research in this paper, specific stanzas from the chosen poems of Hardy will be examined in which one can detect certain key aspects of Nietzschean philosophy. Putting together “Hap” and “Plaint to Man” as two poems which are brooding meditations over an unresolved quarrel with universe, the study distinguishes itself from prior studies with a similar argument in terms of its rendering analogies between Hardy’s and Nietzsche’s protest against the traditional values of the modern world more cogent. By choosing the most relevant lines from the referred poems, the study brings them to light as poetic equivalents to what Nietzsche postulates in his ground-breaking publications such as *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Antichrist* and hopes to fill a void in literature for the stated argument. In this way, the suggestions of the study may also open up novel possibilities for further investigation into lurking aspects of Nietzschean tones in Hardy’s works.

### **The Resounding Voice of Nietzsche in Hap**

Written in 1866 but published in 1898, “Hap” by Thomas Hardy is a short poem in the form of a sonnet in which the poet’s disdain towards the social, cultural and religious structures of the modern universe becomes manifest. Hardy is vocal about the vanity of life projects of individuals who assume that they follow the right path and he holds a mirror to their tangled world. To begin with, lingering over the title of the poem, basically the word “hap,” suggests that Hardy sets out to decipher the code of the unfathomable, unintelligible, or the dual nature of an order. The most frequently cited meaning(s) of this word draws attention to its twofoldness for hap not only means “chance” or “to enjoy luck” but also something which happens “circumstantially” (Collins, n.d.). Whereas the former one implies that the word can invariably be associated with positive connotations, the latter one implies that if something happens circumstantially, it can be either an accentuation of a positive thing or a bad event experienced by someone, as Bloom points out that “[i]ndeed, the title of the poem itself provides an important key to our understanding the speaker’s struggle to find an answer to the inexplicable. The word hap itself contains a dual meaning, referring to a chance or accidental occurrence which be either an expression of good luck or misfortune” (2004, p. 25). As can be understood from Bloom’s emphasis upon the issue, Hardy seems to ponder the conundrum and tenuousness of human existence by giving such a title to his poem. More than that, the same word connotes the name of an ancient God, Hapi, and Hapi is believed to have been an androgynous figure who possessed both male and female attributes as Starsheen clarifies as follows: “Hapi is an interesting God, in that he is depicted with both male and female characteristics. He is an ancient God, associated with the God, Nu, who was the waters of embryonic chaos out of which the Earth rose at the beginning of Time” (2018, p. 74). The title’s evocation of the referred God, when it is considered in line with the aforementioned deep-down meanings it constitutes, adumbrates the possibility that Hardy is concerned with diagnosing the negative influence which he believes the dilemma of the order of the universe exerts upon all individuals. The reading of the poem with these ideas in mind, therefore, brings forth a study which revolves around the argument that Thomas Hardy’s interpretation of the world can be aligned with that of Friedrich Nietzsche, particularly with respect to Nietzsche’s urge to challenge the monotheistic



worldview by dispensing with the rationale behind it and insinuating that the world is run by mere chance rather than the omnipotence of a single creator.

The seeds of the affinity between Hardy and Nietzsche are sown with the title and it becomes more conspicuous with the introduction of the first stanza which vents the speaker's frustration with a vindictive god whom he imagines is deriving pleasure from the suffering of human beings. He begins the poem with harsh remarks and gives the impression that he inveighs vigorously against the benevolence of god. The lines which can be said to illustrate the speaker's anguish at the cruelty of divinity is as follows:

If but some vengeful god would call to me  
From up the sky, and laugh: 'Thou suffering thing  
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy  
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!' (Hardy, 1866, p. 8)

The speaker's urge to struggle against the divinity and to make sense of how the world is run by a superior being can be observed from the outset of the poem. The speaker alludes to the arbitrariness of the existence of the superior being by using "if" for the first line and renders it possible to believe that the poem is marked by its theological concerns. As Steinberg explains,

"Hap" is one of Hardy's earliest theological poems and it uses its sonnet form to present a debate between two theological positions, emphasizing the speaker's pain in considering either possibility. This speaker relies entirely on his worldly observations to help him determine absolute truth: people suffer meaninglessly and with no hope for future solace. Therefore, the debate in this poem focuses on the only two possibilities that seem feasible: God loves human suffering, or the world is controlled by mere chance. (2013, p. 74)

Based on the interpretation of the opening lines of the poem by the critic, it could be argued that the speaker contemplates people's situatedness in the world thereby concomitantly casting doubt upon the presence of some divine power. Despite the fact that the persona in the poem does not explicitly refer to the Christian God, the focus upon the relationship between some vengeful god and its subjects can be said to be in dialogue with Nietzsche's study of the relationship between God and human beings. More pointedly, similar to Nietzsche, the speaker in Hardy's poem implies that the god whom they revere may treat his subjects contemptuously and they tend to become resigned to what is imposed upon them. Namely, this perpetual state of subservience to a superior being is invalidated through Hardy's lines which evoke what Nietzsche says about human existence in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* underlining that "Strange indeed is human existence and I teach you the Superman. Even the wisest among you is only a disharmony and hybrid of plant and phantom. But do I bid you become phantoms or plants? Lo, I teach you the Superman. Once blasphemy against God was the greatest blasphemy; but God died, and therewith also those blasphemers (Nietzsche, 1883/2011, p. 17). For the rest of the discussion in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Nietzsche articulates the need to raise one's voice against the injunction to bow to the demands of the monotheistic worldview and inculcates his readers with their self efficacy and virtue. To demonstrate, Nietzsche says that "I love him who loveth his virtue: for virtue is the will to down-going, and an arrow of longing. I love him who liveth in order to know, and seeketh to know in order that the Superman may hereafter live" (1883/2011, p. 19). This very similar project of motivating people to detach themselves from their circumscribed space with the desire to know the truth is instilled into Hardy's "Hap" which is ostensibly a study of the anguished state of individuals in the modern century.

The second stanza is about the evils of god whom the speaker sees as ruthless and cynical. The language used in the stanza obviously jars against the ideas implanted into the minds of believers about the providential order. The new consciousness about the world which the poet instantiates with his lines is as follows:

Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,  
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;  
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I  
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed (Hardy, 1866, p. 8)

The speaker of the poem expostulates with some god about his cruelty towards the human beings and vigorously opposes the view that people must feel obliged to surrender themselves to its authority. In spite of the fact that this cannot be directly seen as a vituperative assault of the speaker on the meaning associated with Christian God, Hardy's critical approach to God as the poet in the writing process of "Hap" should be kept in mind as Pratt notes that "As early as 1866, when his poem "Hap" appeared, Hardy was thinking hard about God and wishing that some vengeful god might be in charge of the universe, rather than impersonal forces the natural determinists were telling him about" (1996, p. 103). In line with the point made by the critic, the speaker's doubts over the existence of a god can be regarded as redolent of Hardy's his own questioning of Christian belief. To add, according to Steinberg, the second stanza is also about the speaker's inability to foster faith in Christian doctrines which can be said to manifest itself in Hardy's preference of capitalization of the word "god" as Steinberg states that

The speaker's suffering lies in randomness and this realization brings greater pain than the suffering itself. The failure here is a failure of the speaker's Christian belief, in suffering for the sake of heaven. That point is highlighted by Hardy's choices in capitalization in this poem. Notice that "god," a word generally capitalized both for respect and for specificity, is here consciously lower case, to emphasize that this is not "the God" but merely "some god."

The stress upon the aleatory in "Hap" with the provocative tone of the speaker aligns him with Nietzsche inasmuch as Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil*, identifies people who are ensnared in this state of submission to God with slave morality and explicates that slave morality "reduces everyone to a common level, favours mediocrity and prevents the development of a higher type of man" (1886/1996, p. 111). With his concept of slave morality, Nietzsche criticizes herd mentality and people who wrench their existences into communion with other adherent supporters of this morality. For Nietzsche, these people must let their desires play free and prefer to stand on their own feet without recourse to precepts of faith in God. Thus, the second stanza of "Hap" can be said to demonstrate that Hardy is on the same wavelength with Nietzsche as there is this description of the psychic and physical pain inflicted upon the speaker when he yields to god's power and there is a lack of complacency in the exaltation of such a supreme being. Monk refers to the affinity between Hardy and Nietzsche in relation to "Hap" and remarks that

[t]he first two stanzas of Hap express Hardy's usual way of considering chance with their invocation of a malicious divinity who wills its victims' pain. But this version of Hardy's inverted Providence is in the conditional form. Out of this Nietzschean double negation emerges the only suggestion in Hardy's mordant *oeuvre* that chance might offer pleasure as well as pain, that it might create possibilities as well as thwart aspirations. (1994, p. 164)

When it thwarts aspirations as expressed by the critic Monk, the randomness in the world is accompanied by people who worship a cruel deity and it requires Nietzschean revolt against the order of life in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Hence, Hardy, in "Hap", can be said to confront such chaos to make meaning out of life. The indulgence in the malign senses which Nietzsche believes emanates from the divine order becomes a garbled imperative in Hardy's account too.

Hardy's quest for God in "Hap" instigated by the title and first stanza culminates in his expression of his self-assuredness for an absent god in the last stanza. The last stanza which is comprised of six lines with its didactic tone is as follows:

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,  
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?  
-Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,  
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan...  
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown  
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain (Hardy, 1866, p. 8)

The personification of joy as being “slain” coupled with the hope that “unblooms” tell us how desolate the speaker feels when he comes to the ending of the meditation on the world. If the hope does not bloom, it means that his irrevocable decision is to stop dreaming about a more liveable world. The usage of extended metaphors such as “Crass Casualty” and “dicing Time” as capitalised within the stanza harkens us back to his strong emphasis upon the platitude of everyday life and the idea that we are flung into a universe run by chance. In these lines, he might also be brooding over the willingness of human beings to evade the reality of their alienation and lack of collaboration to better the things in the world. Instead, they choose to bury themselves in their social roles and turn a blind eye to the gravity of matter. In other words, as he groans about the indifference of a creator to human suffering, he finalises the poem by groaning about the flippant attitude of people. The allusion to “purblind Doomsters” towards the end of the stanza could have to do with manipulative external forces in human life with their adverse effects to magnify Hardy’s hopelessness as Kumral expresses that

Purblind doomsters, half-blind judges, refer to either natural forces controlling everything, as they are all non-anthromorphic, hostile to man’s existence on the earth or to some people holding the absolute power in their hands. He tries hard to cherish hope in his heart to be happy, but he believes that he cannot lead a happy life, as bliss is strewn around his hard life as pain. There is nothing he can do to change the course of events the other way around. (2015, p. 26)

In order for the things to change, Hardy suggests that people must change their attitude. More precisely, akin to Nietzsche, the poet seems to advocate an emancipation from a world order in which people try hard to adapt to insentient forces as this leads to a societal decadence and increase in the number of spiritually and psychically inhibited people.

### **The Resounding Voice of Nietzsche in A Complaint to Man**

“A Complaint to Man” which Hardy wrote between 1909 and 1910 is another potent example of Nietzschean vision, particularly with respect to its wrestling with a sort of a perpetual conflict between God and human beings. As Jedrzejewski likewise advocates that “the word “God” tends to function in discussions of Hardy’s philosophy and theology, as it does in poems such as A Complaint to Man and The God-Forgotten” (1996, p. 2). By adopting a different approach to the discussion of God in this poem, Hardy makes God speak with a phantasmagoric existence. In his rendition of the conflict between God and people, the poet, this time, presents God as a fabric of human imagination and hardens it into a facile complacency attributed to God. With that being said, he begins to offer readers the main threads of his view of God which functions as a clarion battle against the existing order of life. The part of the poem which is permeated by a sense of condescension towards the conventional view of God as the sole creator of the universe is as follows:

When you slowly emerged from the den of Time,  
And gained percipience as you grew,  
And fleshed you fair out of shapeless slime,  
Wherefore, O Man, did there come to you  
The unhappy need of creating me –  
A form like your own – for praying to?



My virtue, power, utility,  
Within my maker must all abide,  
Since none in myself can ever be,  
One thin as a phasm on a lantern-slide  
Shown forth in the dark upon some dim sheet,  
And by none but its showman vivified (Hardy, 1909-10, p. 260)

The given lines imply that Hardy presents God as giving consent to his diminishing authority. To add, the lines echo the sentiment of loss of faith in God as Williamson stresses that

[t]his time the dying God himself is the speaker. As he dwindles beneath deicide eyes of seers, God speaks to man, his maker, expressing wonderment at human need which would invest a figment with powers that are man's own. Now with the imminent disappearance of God must come recognition of the long unfaced truth: dependence must be placed on the human heart's resource alone. (1978, p. 403)

Williamson's insight into the issue with his emphasis upon people who cease to take shelter behind God's mightiness and scurry away from that direction comes back to haunt readers with a fundamental question in mind: Doesn't it bear striking resemblance to Nietzschean view of God? The answer to this question would be "yes" on the grounds that the idea of God as the product of human imagination can be found deeply congenial from the perspective of Nietzsche too. "A Plaint to Man," particularly with its opening lines, can be said to evince that people avert their eyes from the stark reality of their independent existence from God and participate in the self-constructed realities of existence. These are admonishing remarks by Hardy for people whom he believes knuckle down very submissively to theistic regulations without being aware of the fact they get hamstrung by them. This aspect of Hardy's argument almost entirely parallels Nietzschean philosophy in that the philosopher also sees people as utterly encased in the human framework of things including their relationship to God and Christian belief. Nietzsche writes that "Christianity has taken the side of all the weak, the base, the failures, it has made an ideal out of opposition to the preservative instincts of the strong life; it has ruined even the reason of the mentally strongest natures by teaching men to feel the highest values of the mind to be sinful, to be misleading, to be temptations" (1888/2004, p. 105). It means that, for Nietzsche, people should not remain stalwart on their own values if they think that those values are God-given or granted to them by a divine power. Instead of hurling themselves into this choice, they must learn of their own capabilities to create values from within themselves. In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche additionally states in the clearest of fashions his disregard for people who fit their values into a religious frame as follows:

Whoever has theological blood in his veins is from the start crooked and dishonorable toward all things. The pathos which develops out of this calls itself faith: closing one's eyes to oneself once and for all so as not to suffer at the sight of an incurable falsehood. One creates for oneself a moral, a virtue, a holiness out of the faulty perspective toward all things, one connects a good conscience with false seeing — one demands that no other kind of perspective shall have value anymore once one's own has been made sacrosanct with the names "God," "salvation," "eternity. (1888/2004, p. 108)

When Hardy's lines are read with the above-stated Nietzschean perspective, Hardy can be said to rejuvenate the concept of man-made God of the philosopher and reinforce the link between his ideas and those of Nietzsche. Both seem to think that faith in God must be elbowed aside by a scathing criticism of traditional religion. For them, if people break the habit of validating their values in accordance with what is ordered to them by divinity, they can carve out better places for themselves in the world.

"A Plaint to Man" exposes the gradual process through which God has been transmogrified into a man-made being and God's espousal of this situation for the rest of the poem. God as the speaker of the

poem comes to terms with the fact that the logic behind the justification of his existence can be overlooked and the circumstances in which people find themselves can be ameliorated when they declare their self-dependence. Through the lenses of Hardy, the lines in which the poet expresses the feasibility of that project of finding certain foundations in life in tandem with one's own choices are as the following:

And to-morrow the whole of me disappears,  
The truth should be told, and the fact be faced  
That had best been faced in earlier years:  
The fact of life with dependence placed  
On the human heart's resource alone,  
In brotherhood bonded close and graced  
With loving-kindness fully blown,  
And visioned help unsought, unknown. (Hardy, 1909-10, p. 261)

When Hardy makes God confess that he realises the truth, Hardy seems to dispense with the need for adhering to convictions which are assumed to be granted by God to people. There exists a sense of estrangement between the poet and God as Asquith underscores that “[i]n *A Plaint to Man*, Hardy explores a Feuerbachian God who was created by man as a phasm on a lantern slide. As the creation of need, he acknowledges that his power to comfort man is dwindling, and he therefore encourages him to come to terms with his isolation” (2005,34). Read in the light of Nietzsche's *The Antichrist*, Hardy's voice reverberates with that of Nietzsche again since belief system comes in for heavy criticism when Nietzsche underlines that

The man of faith, the “believer” of any sort, is necessarily a dependent man — one who cannot posit himself as an end, one who cannot posit any ends at all by himself. The “believer” does not belong to himself, he can only be a means, he has to be used, he needs someone to use him up. His instinct accords a morality of self-abnegation the highest honor: everything persuades him to it, his intelligence, his experience, his vanity. (1888/2004, p. 160)

As can be understood, Nietzsche identifies believers as individuals who flounder under sordid circumstances by blurring the boundaries of what it means to be a human. A similar disturbance is heard in Hardy's lines, because his poetic space becomes a site which accentuates his anxiety over the precarious state of all human beings in the face of the ruler of the universe. Pinion draws attention to the poet's feeling of indignation at the order of the world which can be associated with his feelings expressed in “*A Plaint to Man*” as Pinion points out that, for Hardy, “[t]he universe spelt indifference to man, and reduced him to a level of significance little higher than that of other species. Cruelty, disease, and suffering were the consequence of the general struggle for survival” (1968, p. 179). This statement shared by the critic can be seen as a verbatim recitation of Hardy's account of the effects of destabilising system. In that regard, his active stand against God originates from his repudiation of the rigid hierarchy he believes God imposes upon his subjects and his poetic voice becomes a symbol of his defiance of religious concepts or commitments.

## Conclusion

The idea that philosophy is connected to literature can be endorsed with a close scrutiny of Nietzschean and Hardyan work since the philosopher's assumptions about the modern world with its extant problems are largely coterminous with those of Thomas Hardy which are evident in “*Hap*” and “*A Plaint to Man*.” The referred works by Nietzsche include *The Gay Science*, *The Antichrist*, *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Thus Spake Zarathustra* which are all characterised by a propensity towards a revisionist and subversive view of the relationship between God and human beings. The principles and ideals discussed in these canonical works of the philosopher serve to question the rationale behind believers' choices for fostering a firm belief in certain theological precepts. Rather than envisaging a world in which people get rewarded in

return for their inscrutable allegiance to the creator of the universe, the philosopher accentuates his existential angst and it begins to creep in and he is armoured to coax Christian people to contravene the regulations of Christianity. From the standpoint of Nietzsche, when individuals consent to this being implemented in their daily lives, it could be harbinger of good things to come about as they will automatically leave behind the state of being conditioned to live in the world begotten by fate and bigoted opinions. In other words, Nietzsche resentfully declares that the vast majority of believers do not fully know why they hold on to certain foundational teachings about the way things in the world operate and live in the clutches of self-imposed constraints. Having been robbed of their freedom to determine what counts the most in their own lives, in Nietzschean rendition of the matter, they are enslaved by the religious system and order of the universe as a whole. With all these points in mind, when Thomas Hardy's two aforementioned poems are read and analysed, there are striking similarities between Hardy and Nietzsche as two influential figures of Western tradition, especially in terms of their burning desires of making valid inferences about foundational commitments of Christianity. Redolent of what Nietzsche attempts to get across through his postulations in the referred set of condensed books about the origin and function of Christian doctrines, Hardy's poetic realm manifests itself as an apt site of expressing the psychic pain which he believes is not only inflicted upon himself but also upon large number of people. In his selected poems for this study, it is seen that the poet is governed by a kind of intrinsic motivation to transgress the boundaries set by the theological system and is appalled by the existence of God underscoring that people are forced to take a deformed version of reality as reality itself. The road to spiritual nourishment and sophistication of the mind, Hardy asserts, is blocked by the intrusion of extrinsic forces into private lives of individuals, which the poet firmly believes can be regarded as ample evidence of their individuality and liberation being stripped from them significantly. In "Hap," the poet mourns over the loss of personal freedom and depicts chance as the ultimate reason of the suffering of people so as to encourage his readers to reoccupy a series of inarguable beliefs about the sovereignty of a creator. In "A Plaint to Man," the poet projects God with a ghastly presence and makes God speak with tones of self-retribution which implies that people believe in the existence of God in their own constructed reality. The poet draws attention to the stratified tension between God and human beings and creates a forum of discussion about the veracity of prescribed rules and regulations of Christian society through his arresting verses. All in all, the interpretation of Hardy's poetry within the context of Nietzschean philosophy this way not only demonstrates similar aspects of their outlook on life but also demonstrates that philosophy overlaps literature and vice versa. Given the limited amount of academic inquiry into the question of how Thomas Hardy's poems can be studied in the light of philosophical assumptions held to be utterly enlightening by Friedrich Nietzsche, this study may become a source of inspiration for a revival of interest in appreciating the value of indispensable cooperation between philosophy and poetry, which can also be claimed to be a means to achieving success for better understanding or investigating the very foundational elements of Christian beliefs and thoughts through transgressive works.

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