HSÜ CHIH-MO'S DEBT TO THOMAS HARDY

Cyril Birch

"Before Exeter Cathedral" (在哀克剎脫教堂前)[1] comes from the year 1925, just about the mid-point of Hsü Chih-mo's (徐志摩) brief, brilliant poetic career. It is a good poem, all the more impressive if we reflect that there lies behind it no more than one mere decade of experimentation in the poetic use of the modern Chinese language:

This shadow is my own cast here tonight
  Across a churchyard in an alien land.
Solemn and sheer the cold cathedral looms,
  Slender and still the lonely shadow lies.

A statue stands before the church; I ask,
  "Who authored these, the vagaries of our life?"
The crumbling image answers with vacant stare
  As though the vagary lay in my demand.

I shift my question to the mournful star
  Which rose just now from the cathedral's shoulder,
But the star offers only a mocking wink
  And gleams on us face to face, my riddle and I.

Now from the ancient tree here at my side
  Shading the war memorial's guiltless dead
There comes a secret, long-drawn sigh, as chill
  Autumnal rain chills garden's solitude.

For him a hundred years at least have passed
  With all their changing show of human life;
He has had time to spot the tricks of fate,
  The surge of spring and summer, winter's drag.

He knows the oldest of the city's elders,
  Saw them baptized, babies with long blond curls,
Watched as their weddings entered the churchyard-gate,
  Watches at last as their tombstones take their names.

Long-surfeited by tragi-comedy
  Caring still less for his own goitered remains,
He draws from me a sympathetic sigh —
  And see! My shadow joined by a scattering of leaves!

這是我自己的身影今晚間，
　倒映在異鄉教宇的前庭，
一座冷峭峭森嚴的大殿，
　一個峭陰陰孤聳的身影。

我對着寺前的雕像發問：
　「是誰負責這離奇的人生？」
老朽的雕像瞅着我發楞，
　彷彿怪嫌這離奇的疑問。

我又轉問那冷鬱鬱的大星，
　它正升起在這教堂的後背，
但它答我以嘲諷似的迷瞬，
　在星光下相對，我與我的迷謎！

這時間我身邊的那顆老樹，
　他蔭蔽着戰蹟碑下的無辜，
幽幽的歎一聲長氣，像是
　凄凉的空院裏凄凉的秋雨。

他至少有百餘年的經驗，
　人間的變幻他什麽都見過；
生命的項皮他也曾計數：
　春夏間洶洶，冬季裏婆婆。

他認識這鎮上最老的前輩，
　看他們受洗，長黃毛的嬰孩；
看他們配偶，也在這教門內，——
　最後看他們的名字上墓碑！

這半悲慘的趣劇他早經看厭，
　他自身癃腫的殘餘更不沾戀；
因此他與我同心，發一陣歎息——
　啊！我身影邊平添了班班的落葉！

The movement of the poem is controlled, the metre appropriate, the stanzaic division well-handled. The first stanza locates the poet before the immensity of the cathedral. A question forms, which he puts in stanza two to the statue, in stanza three to the star. The tree now intrudes on the poet's consciousness and develops its symbolic force of inscrutable wisdom until, in the image of the final line, his shadow achieves a kind of fusion with the tree's own mortality, its fallen leaves. This splendid image, and that of the first stanza, the juxtaposition of cathedral's bulk with tenuous human shadow, together dominate the poem. With these images Chih-mo achieves dramatic force; the poet, inevitably in the case of Hsü Chih-mo, is ever-present, he starts off not by interpreting the cathedral for us but by remarking his own shadow; but by the use of these images he *qualifies* as a poet, his observations on life are to be heard with respect, his expression of its brief enigma has the power to heighten our awareness.

The diction of "Exeter Cathedral" is most natural, yet heightened by various devices. Chih-mo uses reduplications of an original sort, sometimes daringly as with *chiaw-in-in* (峭陰陰) for shadow following *leeng-chiaw-chiaw* (冷峭峭) for church. The parallelism of the lines containing these phrases (first stanza) skilfully reinforces the contrast of images. The last line of stanza four is also note-worthy for the effective reiteration of *chi-liang* (凄凉, lonely-

chill) and for the music of the counterposed *yuann* (院 , garden) and *yeu* (雨 , rain).

All this is immediately obvious. But to say that the gnarled, shedding old tree of the fourth through the last stanza is actually Thomas Hardy may require a little explanation. If the explanation stands, it will also suggest that the leaves of the last line represent Hsü's symbolic recognition of Hardy's influence on his own poetry.

The poem was probably written down very soon after its inception in Chih-mo's mind: and the inception took place, obviously, during a brief visit to Exeter Cathedral. The time of this visit was July 1925, and not five hours previously Chih-mo had been in Hardy's company. The Grand Old Man of English letters was in his eighty-sixth year, and Chih-mo leaves us a prose image of him as striking as (and more Chinese than) the tree-image of the "Exeter" poem:

> Alas for this aged silkworm, so utterly weary, his body quite translucent, there on the heap of cocoons in a darkened room. His head, the skin fissured with wrinkles, weaves back and forth in longing for the sleep that will not come; meanwhile the pure silk spins out from his body, on and on of its own accord – when will it ever stop? . . . . . Truly a jest of fate, that Hardy does not die! I believe he has another twenty years at least.[2]

> 可憐這條倦極了通體透明的老蠶，在暗屋子內繭山麥柴的空縫裏，昂着他的縐襞的腦袋前仰後翻的想睡偏不得睡，同時一肚子的純絲不自主的儘往外吐——得知它到那時候才吐得完！……運命眞惡作劇，哈代他且不死哪！我看他至少還有二十年活。

What drew Chih-mo all the way to Dorset during his short stay in England that year was a long-nurtured admiration, or even adulation, of the great novelist and poet. He spoke of *Hamlet* and *Jude* as "two brilliant beacons," supreme poles of achievement in English literature.[3] (And here we might note a corroboration from no less a figure than C.M. Bowra, who writes, "He [Hardy] is often called gloomy and pessimistic, and it is true that in some ways and at some times he is the most tragic English poet since Shakespeare.")[4] Chih-mo characterized Hardy's work in these words:

> The act of imagination is the starting-point for the creation of a universe. But only a select few, possessed of "complete imagination" or "absolute imagination," have the capacity to create a complete universe: Shakespeare, for example, or Goethe or Dante. Hardy's universe also is a whole. If some should suggest that in that universe the climatic variation was altogether too monotonous, the aspect always that of autumnal or wintry gloom, that no gay blaze of the sun ever came bursting through the clouds and mists, then Hardy's answer would be that the age he represented was not, unfortunately, that of Elizabeth I, but that era of the fullest development of self-consciousness which began with the closing years of the nineteenth century: a most stern season in the history of man . . . .
>
> Even in the moments of the greatest distress, the blackest darkness, Hardy never abandoned his determination to find a way out for his thinking, to find a way out for the future of mankind. His realism, his so-called pessimism, are names for nothing but the honesty and courage of his thought.[5]

Chih-mo's prose tribute on the death of Hardy, in the introductory issue of the *Crescent Moon* monthly (新月月刊), was followed by a valedictory poem.[6] The tone of this poem is absolutely appropriate, a kind of rallying of the old grumbler to begin with, "Well, he's gone now, no use his complaining, he won't show his face again." Then, from his awkwardness,

> He would carve up the world to see how it was made,
> Tear even a rose to shreds;
> Not his the oriole's delicate trill
> But the screech of the midnight owl!
> 他就愛把世界剖看瞧，
> 是玫瑰也給拆壞；
> 他沒有那畫眉的纖巧，
> 他有夜梟的古怪！

– through a kind of grudging admiration of his unflinching honesty, to a statement of the positive strength of Hardy's "misanthropic" or "world-weary" position:

> This is not completely to abandon hope:
> The universe must go on;
> But if life is to function in the time ahead,
> Then, first, set our thinking straight:
>
> To sustain the reverence for thought

The poet must never flag,
But open-eyed raise high his ideals
And scourge the errors of men.

這不是完全放棄希冀，　　爲維護這思想的尊嚴，
宇宙還得往下延，　　詩人他不敢怠惰，
但如果前途還有生機，　　高擎着理想，睜大着眼，
思想先不能隨便，　　抉剔人生的錯誤。

We can see, then, that it was no casual whim that planted a symbol of Hardy in the cathedral close at Exeter – and incidentally, the aptness of the symbol is enhanced if we recall Hardy's own fondness for the tree as an image of time's passage, as in the lines from "At Day-close in November":[7]

I set every tree in my June-time,
And now they obscure the sky

and in many other instances. The "Exeter" poem is an exercise, as it were, in Hardyism. Chih-mo's question of the statue and the star closely echoes Hardy's question in the poem "To the Moon" (對月),[8] which Chih-mo himself very skilfully translated:[9]

What do you think of it, Moon,
As you go?
Is Life much, or no?
"Oh, I think of it, often think of it
As a show
God surely ought to shut up soon,
As I go.

The thinking of "Exeter" owes as much to Hardy as the form owes to Gray (the "Elegy in a Country Churchyard" provided Chih-mo with physical setting, with the metrical pattern of iambic pentameter quatrains and, probably, with the "annals of the poor" topos of stanza six). But the "Exeter" poem is not only a conglomeration of influences: it is an original and, I think, very poignant expression by Chih-mo of an obsession he shared with modern poets both Chinese and Western: who am I? I am a shadow, transient before the enduring stone. I may merge myself with the wisdom of an antique observer of life, the tree which is Thomas Hardy, as the leaves from its branches touch the shadow of myself; but by the same token, I share the tree's,

and Hardy's, mortality.

When we have examined some further poems which owe a greater or lesser debt to Thomas Hardy we shall have some notion of Chih-mo's excitement as he knocked on the door of Max Gate that July afternoon, armed with his letter of introduction from Lowes Dickinson. Unfortunately the visit itself did little to enhance his regard for the sage. Chih-mo ends his account of it with a paragraph beginning "Old skinflint! Not even a cup of tea for a visitor!" Asked by this eager young admirer from the other side of the world for some small memento, Hardy refused his autograph, and when he saw the camera in Chih-mo's hand explained that he had ceased to permit photographs when some Americans made a nuisance of themselves. The limit of his regard for the young Chinese poet, in fact, was expressed by a couple of blooms plucked from the nearest flowerbed. But what really shocked Chih-mo was Hardy's incredibly fatuous comment on the problems of the Chinese language: "If it's that difficult, why don't you scrap it and use English or French instead?" [10]

Two poets could scarcely have differed more. Hardy was eighty when Chih-mo, in his middle twenties, first came into his orbit. And Hardy was not merely a poet who had aged, but a poet *of* age: some of his finest work comes from his seventies and laments the bygone years. His sardonic, world-weary, "pessimistic" attitudes were not the result of disillusionment late in life: he had always been that way, the poems of decades previously are similarly pitched. Hardy, moreover, was a little contemptuous of the minor poet, which he himself so clearly was not and which Chih-mo surely was. In *The Trumpet-Major,* one of the Wessex novels, conversational embarrassment occurs when Matilda Johnson finds herself in the company of her rival Anne Garland:

> conversation, as such, was naturally at first of a nervous, tentative kind, in which, as in the works of some minor poets, the sense was considerably led by the sound.[11]

Hsü Chih-mo was only thirty-six when he was killed in an airplane crash in 1931. He sang the ecstasies of youth, the fever and the fret, and the sweet delight, of physical love, the liberation of the spirit to be found in nature. His poetry and his prose writings alike abound in bright clouds, birdsong, gorgeous colour and light; he could never have seen the moon through Hardy's morose-coloured spectacles:

The uncurtained panes of my window-square let in the watery light
Of the moon in its old age;
And green-rheumed clouds were hurrying past where mute and cold it globed
Like a drifting dolphin's eye seen through a lapping wave.
(from "The Pedigree")[12]

What Chih-mo could see, on the other hand, he could also sing in the sweetest cadences of verse. His best poems have a wonderfully light, springing melodic line. Hardy in contrast was certainly no singer, as an early reviewer pointed out: "So far as it is possible to be a poet without having a singing voice, Mr. Hardy is a poet, and a profoundly interesting one."[13] Often Hardy's metres are clumsily handled or unsuitable to begin with. For rhymes he uses "ordinances" with "acquiesce" and "look at us" with "unconscious" (both in "Intra Sepulchrum").[14] Where Chih-mo vastly enriches the vocabulary of modern Chinese verse by incorporating, with the greatest naturalness, elements from the classical language with daring colloquialisms, Hardy "writes poetry not with a special vocabulary but almost with the words that he uses in prose . . . (he) supplements a body of simple, direct English with resonant and unusual Latin words, and with Anglo-Saxon words which have passed out of common currency and have an archaic air. Thus on the one hand he introduces into quite simple surroundings words like 'fulgid,' 'subtrude,' 'interlune,' 'flexure,' 'frustrance,' and 'lucency'; on the other hand 'thrid,' 'scrabble,' 'prink,' 'wanze,' 'fresh' as a verb, 'vamp' in the sense of 'walk.' "[15]

Why then did the young Chinese poet take so much notice of Hardy — more than of Bridges, say, or Housman or other contemporaries nearer to his own poetic mould? The beginning of an answer would hinge on circumstance. Hardy's *Collected Poems* were published in 1919, one year before Chih-mo's first arrival in England.[16] Although Hardy had made his first bow as a poet twenty-one years earlier with the *Wessex Poems,* still these *Collected Poems* made a stir, as everything he published made a stir. The "village atheist brooding and blaspheming over the village idiot" (Chesterton's cruel caricature) was indisputably at the height of his repute, the great novels decades behind. Chih-mo was an inveterate and self-confessed lion-hunter, and here was the fiercest lion of them all rampaging once again through the London literary jungle.

Then, despite the discrepancies of temperament, Hardy's response to his situation in the English poetic tradition offered Hsü Chih-mo an impressive model. In quoting Samuel Hynes' comments on Hardy the technician, I should

like to draw attention to the perfect aptness with which these remarks could be applied to Hsü:

> Of the best of Hardy's poems, scarcely two are in the same metrical form; Hardy went on to the end of his life trying again. Part of this failure to find himself metrically was no doubt the result of his education, which was erratic and incomplete, and left him technically naive and a little timid. . . . But the failure was surely due more to the disintegration of tradition which took place during his life, a process which he felt acutely as an Englishman and as a poet. Like other poets of his time, Hardy was left without a poetic vehicle adequate to his needs. He spent his life trying to build another out of old parts, and his *Collected Poems* is a scrapyard of ideas that did not work.[17]

On the point of education: Chih-mo received a good classical upbringing – at the very least, he developed a generally-admired classical prose style; but it was an education into which cruel inroads had been made by English, mathematics and chemistry, and it was seriously disrupted by the events following 1911. Nor could any conceivable education have carried him easily through the total breakdown of the Chinese poetic tradition. Chih-mo's response to the demands of the Literary Revolution – and here he drew great strength from Hardy's example – was endless experimentation with metres and stanzaic forms. His poems include sonnets, ballads, blank verse quatrains; he used iambics, anapaests, folk-rhythms and subtle new metres of his own fashioning; he constructed impressive modern parallelisms and made great play with strongly-stressed monosyllables, and he was guilty of blatant Anglicisms. Though his life was very much shorter, like Hardy he "went on to the end of it trying again."

The actual loans Chih-mo took from Hardy were sometimes productive, sometimes squandered. One of Chih-mo's very worst poems – which still for some reason gets into all the *Selections* – is "Longings in Two Places" (兩地相思).[18] The forty-eight lines are evenly shared by two speakers, "he" for the first half, "she" for the second. "He" remembers "her" beauty, the joy she brought him, he pities himself now absent from her, visualizes her as pining for his own presence and longs to spur on the time towards reunion. "She," in ironic contrast, recalls with regret her past indiscretion which she blames partly on wine, partly on boredom. She reflects that he was after all true-hearted and is even now scurrying about for her sake. But she lacks the courage to tell him her affections have wandered, and ends with these words

to her new love:

I'm afraid, my love, I'm really in a mess,
I wish the earth would cave in;
But you, my dear, will always have my heart
Whether I sink or swim.
If he wants, when he comes, he may take me in his arms
(Better let sleeping dogs lie);
But every time I let him kiss my lips
It's your mouth that will kiss mine!

我怕，我愛，這來我眞是難，　　他來時要抱，我說讓他抱，
恨不能往地底鑽：　　（這葫蘆不破的好，）
可是你，愛，永遠有我的心，　　但每回我讓他親——我的唇，
聽憑我是浮是沈：　　愛，親的是你的吻！

I have translated these lines into doggerel because that is how they read in the original. But in any case, no amount of decoration could conceal the puerility and thinness of the idea here. Worst of all is the tone, a kind of irony quite foreign to Hsü Chih-mo's cast of mind. The whole poem, in matter, tone and form is of course a borrowing from Hardy. Of several possibilities, "The Moon Looks In"[19] is the most likely direct source:

I

I have risen again,
And awhile survey
By my chilly ray
Through your window-pane
Your upturned face,
As you think, "Ah – she
Now dreams of me
In her distant place!"

II

I pierce her blind
In her far-off home:
She fixes a comb
And says in her mind,
"I start in an hour;
Whom shall I meet?
Won't the men be sweet,
And the women sour!"

Here is the construction in two equal parts, the first devoted to the young man's self-deception, the second to the girl's fickleness.[20] The conception is trivial, the writing inept (she "says in her mind"), the whole thing smacks of the master-mind at play. Chih-mo, however, accepted the mould and turned out an even worse casting.

That Chih-mo had a weakness for some of Hardy's frivolities is apparent also from some of the poems he chose to translate, which include the charming but really quite inane "Faintheart in a Railway Train"(在火車中一次心軟).[21]

It may be that, quite simply, the quality of Chih-mo's poems of *literary* (rather than personal) inspiration varied with the quality of his source. The following poem is one of Hardy's finest. Chih-mo made no mere imitation of it, but rather, struck by the central concept, proceeded to build one of his own finest love-lyrics about the same image. Hardy's poem is "A Night in November,"[22] one of the splendid sequence in memory of his first wife – the poet himself gives a tentative 1913 as the date:

I marked when the weather changed
And the panes began to quake,
And the winds rose up and ranged,
That night, lying half-awake.

Dead leaves blew into my room,
And alighted upon my bed,
And a tree declared to the gloom
Its sorrow that they were shed.

One leaf of them touched my hand,
And I thought that it was you
There stood as you used to stand
And saying at last you knew!

The "you" in the poem is the first Mrs. Hardy, Emma, who died in 1912 when Hardy was seventy-two and after years of some measure of estrangement from him – a failure of love which Hardy laments in a whole series of tender and touching poems. The strength of "A Night in November" is the swift clarity of illumination of the sorrowing mind which the leaf-touch brings. The poet transcends any need to verbalize his own grief by his evocation of a night of autumn wind and of the sorrow of a tree; then, into this "gloom," there comes as a revelation an understatement charged by the context with extra-

ordinary power, "And I thought that it was you . . . ."[23]

Now here is Hsü Chih-mo's report of the same experience:

"A Song of Dead Leaves"[24]

A rustling against the balustrade
(As I drift ever nearer the realm of dreams)
I tell myself, these are her footsteps at last –
In this still night.

The sound of tapping here at my window
(I press ever closer the frontier of sleep)
She must be here to plague me again – and see,
I remain calm!

The sound of breathing draws near my bed
And (half-dreaming, half in a daze) I cry,
"You will never understand me – what good then
To hurt me more!"

The sound of a sigh falls by my pillow
(I cling now to the dream I am dreaming)
"I wronged you" you say – now your hot tears
Scalding my cheek!

These noises trouble my dream-locked spirit
(In the garden the dead leaves dance, flurries before the breeze)
My dream ends, sleep clears, I find my tormentor
Is only the voice of Autumn!

落 葉 小 唱

一陣聲響轉上了階沿
（我正挨近着夢鄉邊；）
這回準是她的脚步了我想——
在這深夜。

一聲剝啄在我的窗上
（我正靠緊着睡鄉旁；）
這準是她來鬧着玩——你看，
我偏不張皇！

一個聲息貼近我的床，
我說（一半是睡夢，一半是迷惘：）——
「你總不能明白我，你又何苦
多叫我心傷！」

一聲喟息落在我的枕邊
（我已在夢鄉裏留戀；）
「我負了你」你說——你的熱淚
燙着我的臉！

這音響惱着我的夢魂
（落葉在庭前舞，一陣，又一陣；）
夢完了，阿，回復清醒；惱人的——
却只是秋聲！

We should note several significant changes. Hsü sets his poem in the immediate present rather than the recollected past. His language is in

consequence much more elaborate as he attempts, and achieves, reiterative, lulling cadences to convey the sense of approaching sleep. The sudden change to the choppy rhythms of the last stanza accompanies the poet's waking and climaxes the poem's prosodic structure.

Though each poem follows a crescendo of movement towards the poet, Chih-mo's is more schematic. Hardy moves stanza by stanza from "panes" to "bed" to his own "hand"; Chih-mo moves in four stanzas from "balustrade" to "window" to "bed" to "pillow" (each of these placed at the end of the opening line of its stanza), and at last at the end of stanza four to his own "cheek."

Whereas Hardy makes a plain statement of the leaf's fall before declaring his response, Chih-mo reverses the process for the sake of suspense or drama. Not until the final fifth stanza do we discover the true identify of the poet's "tormentor."

The device of the leaf-touch mistaken for the touch of the beloved is used by Dante Gabriel Rossetti in "The Blessed Damozel,"[25] stanzas three and four:

> Herseemed she scarce had been a day
> One of God's choristers;
> The wonder was not yet quite gone
> From that still look of hers;
> Albeit, to them she left, her day
> Had counted as ten years.
> (To one, it is ten years of years.
> . . . . Yet now, and in this place,
> Surely she leaned o'er me – her hair
> Fell all about my face . . . .
> Nothing: the autumn-fall of leaves.
> The whole year sets apace.)

This would certainly have impressed itself on Chih-mo's memory and probably contributed to the "Song of Dead Leaves." Chih-mo's order of events, touch first, mistaken supposition, and only then identification of autumn leaves, is Rossetti's and not Hardy's. Yet the more direct influence seems likely to have been exerted by Hardy's complete lyric on the theme rather than by Rossetti's detail, and this preference would be supported by the important distinction in tone.

Chih-mo's emphasis, then, is all on his emotional progress, as lines two

through four of each stanza from one to four describe his falling into dream and the substance of his dream. He sacrifices the impact which Hardy's last stanza gains from the very detachment of the poem's opening. But he gains dramatic tension, he offers immediate passion in place of cool recollection, he images with his own kind of delicacy a young man's present involvement in love's torment rather than an old man's wistful thought of what might have been.[26]

In the earliest of Hsü Chih-mo's collections, *Poems of Chih-mo*, there appears an unusual poem which the reviewer of that collection, the fellow-poet Chu Hsiang, lists under the heading "Kiplingesque ballads."[27] The poem, "Calvary" (卡爾佛里)[28], is not quite a ballad, and "Hardyesque" would surely be a more appropriate styling. The poem records, in blank verse dialogue, the comments of bystanders at the Crucifixion:

"Let's go see the fun!"
喂！看熱鬧去，朋友！
. . . .
Look, that's him, there he is."
看，那就是，他來了！
. . . .
"Listen, he's saying something!"
聽着，他說話了！
. . . .
"Look at those women!"
再看那婦女們！
. . . .
"Yes, I know him, swarthy fellow with a squashed face,
不錯，我認得，黑黑的，臉矮矮的，
It's him they ought to be killing off, that one's Judas!
就是他該死，他就是猶大斯！
. . . . "that dogdirt" . . . .
眞是狗尿！
"Imagine, that big fellow with the swarthy face, before
誰知那大個兒的黑臉他，沒等
He'd wiped the grease from his lips, sold his master for money" . . . .
擦乾嘴，就拏他主人去換錢
"They say
我聽說
When they've finished the job, heaven and earth will darken.
公道一完事，天地都得昏黑
Yes , heaven and earth will darken – let's go home!"
我眞信，天地都得昏黑——回家罷！

Chih-mo was no Christian convert, and in fact poked fun on occasion at missionaries; but he responded to the drama of the Crucifixion, which he recreates here through the eyes of idle bystanders, just as he responded to the beauty of the Buddhist mass in the evocative poem "On Hearing the Chant of Intercession at the Temple of Heaven's Peace at Ch'angchou" (常州天寧寺聞禮懺聲).[29] However, in "Calvary" there is no such transcendent flight: the dimensions of the drama are purely human, what Chih-mo brings out so vividly is the slyness of the Pharisees, the treachery of Judas, the inhumanity of the cross.

Hardy's "shocker," "Panthera,"[30] the story of the centurion who by an ancient legend was the lover of Mary and fathered Jesus, contains a Crucifixion scene; but the event is deliberately toned down and so divested of its miraculous quality:

> "The usual dooms were duly meted out;
> Some three or four were stript, transfixed, and nailed,
> And no great stir occurred."

Another poem of Hardy's, "The Wood Fire (A Fragment),"[31] would have offered Chih-mo more. It is all dialogue, the explanation by a man tending a "brightsome blaze" of the source of his fuel: it is the wood of Christ's cross:

> "I buy them bargain-cheap of the executioners
> . . . . This piece is the one he was on:
> Yes, it blazes up well if lit with a few dry chips and shroff;
> And it's worthless for much else, what with cuts and stains thereon."

Hardy's intention is to stress the everyday nature of the event; but even so he fails entirely to suppress its drama, as witness the last line with its "cuts and stains."

So far we have been considering fairly casual borrowings, of particular images or incidents or moods. But Chih-mo's real debt to Thomas Hardy is at once much greater than the sum of these details and more difficult to pinpoint. After the appearance of *Poems of Chih-mo* in 1925 the epithet "philosopher-poet" was bestowed upon the author by the critics, and he accepted it like an accolade and strove mightily to merit the new dignity. Now, Hsü was really no philosopher at all, but a singer of love-songs, at his best in the sweet lyrical tone of "Dead Leaves" or "Joy of the Snowflake" (雪花的快樂).[32] At

times, however, he was able to sustain a *tone* of the "philosophic," an air of wry wisdom tinged with melancholy; and this tone is the tribute of his personal growth as a poet to the peculiar genius of Thomas Hardy.

Hardy expressed his own concept of his own role in two lines of "Night in the Old Home":[33]

> A thinker of crooked thoughts upon Life in the sere,
> And on That which consigns men to night after showing the day to them.

He objected to the label "pessimist," but preferred to speak of his "obstinate questionings," and quoted his own memorable line:

> "If way to the better there be, it exacts a full look at the worst."[34]

Chih-mo was far from being such a "thinker of crooked thoughts;" he was not really a thinker at all so much as a feeler. But he *felt* Hardy's philosophy very deeply, and in "Exeter Cathedral" and some other poems transposed it brilliantly into Chinese.

One major problem of Hsü Chih-mo's poetic career cannot be solved, I believe, without reference to his admiration and occasional imitation of Thomas Hardy. This is the problem of Chih-mo's melancholy. In any of his four volumes of collected verse we will find, in among the gay flights of fancy and the passionate invocations of his mistresses, poems of a surprising depth of gloom; and I would merely mention without further discussion here the introspective essays of the type of "Self Dissection"(自剖).[35] Now, Chih-mo was anything but a gloomy person. He lived surrounded by friends, all of whom testify to his boundless gaiety (Yü Ta-fu [郁達夫]records that through the years of their acquaintance he only once remarked an expression of grief on Chih-mo's face, and that was pity for the sick, ageing Tagore who after a triumphal tour of China in 1923 was almost ignored on his return five years later).[36] Although Chih-mo had to teach for a living, and disliked teaching, he had always family resources to fall back on both for funds and for a retreat in the quiet Chekiang hills. His love-life was stormy, but it was ample enough and it seems to have been only in the last year or two of his life that he began to despair of attaining the happiness of his ideal.

The solution proposed by the critics who in the early thirties rallied to the left-wing literary dominance has to recommend it no merit other than simplicity. Chih-mo's poetry, in their account, merely mirrors the inevitable decline of the whole bourgeois literary movement:

> Hsü's poetic consciousness, sadly aware of the class Hsü himself belonged to, burst through into his verse in moods of failure and pessimism; at the same time, growing ever more timid, it would start in alarm at the slightest mention of revolution.[37]

Here Mao Tun at once credits Hsü Chih-mo with a Marxist-type recognition of the class-structure of society and of the fate of his own class, and deplores his failure to take the action which would be the implied consequence of such recognition: to join the forces of the Marxist revolution. This is inconsistent. It is also untrue: Chih-mo did not see men as "bourgeois," "proletarian" and so on, but as men. Finally it is irrelevant, for although Chih-mo was indeed genuinely distressed by the state of his country and spoke of the "bankruptcy" of its civilization, he was simply not interested in politics and his poetry cannot be interpreted in Mao Tun's narrow political terms. Yet there are in Chih-mo's poetry shades varying from a lively grey to dullest black. Some poems, early ones especially, exhibit what we might term a purely literary melancholy. The impression we receive is that the poet recognizes the reality of pain and death in the mortal world, and plumbs them with the long fine line of his fancy; but he does not personally grieve. A good poem is not necessarily autobiographical. *"P'i-p'a* in Midnight Alley" (半夜深巷琵琶) (1926)[38] is inspired, I think, by nothing in Chih-mo's own life, but by a memory of Po Chü-yi (白居易), (*P'i-p'a-hsing,* 琵琶行), perhaps a touch of Thomas Lovell Beddoes,[39] and of course the ghost-poems of Thomas Hardy (I have already mentioned the excellent *Poems of 1912 and 1923,* several of which record visits from the spectre of Emma Hardy):

> Startled again from dreams by this *p'i-p'a* in depth of night!
> Whose is the sorrowing
> Whose the fingers
> That like a chill breeze, a dismal rain, an eddy of falling petals
> Through the stillness of night
> Through the shades of slumber
> Quiver the taut strings, plucking at random note after note
> To blend into still night, empty street,
> Willow hung with waning moon?
> – Ah, dying moon's half-circle, image of fading hope – while he
> Of the cap bursting its seams
> Of the body iron-chained
> Leaps and laughs like a maniac along the path of time,
> It's over, he says, blow out your lamp

She waits beyond the grave
Waits for your kiss, waits for your kiss, waits for your kiss.
又被它從睡夢中驚醒，深夜裏的琵琶！
是誰的悲思，
是誰的手指，
像一陣凄風，像一陣慘雨，像一陣落花，
在這夜深深時，
在這睡昏昏時，
挑動着緊促的絃索，亂彈着宮商角徵，
和着這深夜，荒街，
柳梢頭有殘月掛，
啊，半輪的殘月，像是破碎的希望他，他
頭戴一頂開花帽，
身上帶着鐵鏈條，
在光陰的道上瘋了似的跳，瘋了似的笑，
完了，他說，吹糊你的燈，
她在墳墓的那一邊等，
等你去親吻，等你去親吻，等你去親吻！

This poem is remarkable in at least two respects. The first is the inconspicuousness of the poet himself. No single "I" appears in the text: the poet is "startled again from dreams" in line one, then completely retires (the "you" of the last three lines being, presumably, the *p'i-p'a* player). Secondly, Chih-mo's images are unmixed, consistently indigenous despite the English-style experimental metrical pattern and the borrowed mood of, as I suggest, Beddoes-Hardy: *p'i-p'a,* falling petals, the notes of the Chinese scale named in line seven – and the ghost-lackey of the King of Hell, the folklore devil in the tattered hat who shakes in his hand perpetually a section of clanking chain. This demon makes a most effective entrance and prepares the reader's spine for the final cold shudder of the kiss byond the grave.

By "a purely literary melancholy" I mean a sort of consciousness on the poet's part of the need now and then to vary his singing by the use of the minor key. Chih-mo's *allegro* voice was his own; his *penseroso,* I suggest, he took from Hardy. The preoccupation with graves shows itself again in "Whose the Blame?"(問誰).[40] Here, the poet in a night of deepest winter gloom guards the grave of his beloved; dawn will come, spring will come, but for him is only endless winter night. This is a good poem, but a long one, and perhaps it will be enough to quote just a stanza or two before referring to the Hardy model. Here are stanzas eight and nine (of the total thirteen), which set the Egdon-like scene:

There is no bourne to this dismal barren waste,
Sparse are the gleams of far lamps,

From deep in forest comes a screech of daws –
A place of lonely grief.

Black depth of night envelops all the earth
And shrouds now you and me –
You, sleeping in the silence of the grave,
Myself to grope my lost way!

這慘人的曠野無有邊沿，
遠處有村火星星，
叢林中有鴟鴞在悍辯——
此地有傷心，隻影！

這黑夜，深沈的，環包着大地：
籠罩着你與我——
你，靜悽愔的安眠在墓底，
我在迷醉裏摩挲！

Beginning with stanza ten the poet expresses his determined resistance to the bright and hopeful:

O that the light would never more from the east
Flood at due hour,
Then I eternally beside this grave
Might keep a silent spell.

正願天光更不從東方，
按時的泛濫：
我便永遠依偎着這墓旁——
在沈寂裏消幻！

There is a strong echo here of one of the classic instances of Hardy's "pessimism," "A Meeting with Despair":[41]

As evening shaped I found me on a moor
Sight shunned to entertain:
The black lean land, of featureless contour,
Was like a tract in pain.

"This scene, like my own life," I said, "is one
Where many glooms abide;
Toned by its fortune to a deadly dun –
Lightless on every side."

(In the four succeeding stanzas, the poet sees a sunset-gleam of hope, which he points out to a "hideous, hopeless" Thing that now confronts him. But the Thing responds as follows in the final stanza:)

"Yea – but wait awhile!" he cried. "Ho-ho! –
Now look aloft and see!"
I looked. There, too, sat night: Heaven's radiant show
Had gone that heartened me.

"Whose the Blame?" is a sombre enough poem. But it is again "literary" rather than literal: it is an imaginary grave whose vigil the poet keeps. For the rock-bottom of Chih-mo's melancholy we must turn to the eight brief lines of "Living" (生活) a poem dated May 21, 1929:[42]

Shade-sunk, lightless, twisting like poisonous snake,
Life compressed to a narrow corridor
Through which, once trapped, you can move only forward,
Hands groping the slime of icy walls.

You kick and struggle in the devil's belly,
Above your head no single thread of light;
And for the soul, crushed by its weight of terror,
What but extinction is there to desire?

陰沈，黑暗，毒蛇似的蜿蜒，
生活遍成了一條甬道：
一度陷入，你祇可向前，
手摒索着冷壁的黏潮，

在妖魔的臟腑內掙扎，
頭頂不見一線的天光，
這魂魄，在恐怖的壓迫下，
除了消滅更有什麽願望？

Here is no feigned or fancied despair. Nor is Chih-mo simply mirroring the failure of the bourgeois revolution or even of his own bourgeois ideals. I do not believe we can list the ingredients of Hsü's distress as in some kind of a pudding-recipe. But the reality of the black mood is beyond question. Chih-mo began by borrowing an appropriate poetic melancholy from the grey old master Thomas Hardy. In "Living" we find yet another Hardy image – compare "A Wasted Illness,"[43] which begins:

Through vaults of pain
Enribbed and wrought with groins of ghastliness
I passed, and garish spectres moved my brain
To dire distress?" . . . . .

"Where lies the end
To this foul way?" I asked with weakening breath.
Thereon I saw a door extend –
The door to Death.

It loomed more clear:
"At last!" I cried. "The all-delivering door!"
And then, I know not how, it grew less clear
Than theretofore.

And back slid I
Along the galleries by which I came,

And tediously the day returned, and sky,
And life – the same . . . .

(The "illness" of this sardonic poem is "wasted" because, having promised death, it allows the poet to recover – he must go on living.)

So, to the end Hsü is still borrowing. But in "Living" he is no longer point simply permitting his fancy to play about borrowed themes. By this he has grown up as a poet, he needs no longer to fancy forth stage-sets of life's darker side: his own life, rich and full as it has been, has known its moments of utter hopelessness, and these he embodies in what is now his own language.

To conclude: every student of the intellectual history of modern China is aware of the force exercised in this domain by the ideas of the great Victorian iconoclasts. I am not at all confident that Hsü Chih-mo ever read a whole book by Darwin, or Mill, or Spencer. But he read Hardy, and for him only a poet of Hardy's stature could have served to give full depth and shape to his understanding. We may recall that Hardy was nineteen when the *Origin of Species* was published; the writings of Mill, Huxley and Spencer appeared when Hardy was in his twenties and thirties. For Hsü Chih-mo, Hardy was the interpreter of the modern consciousness:

> No one else could gauge as closely as Hardy the pulse-beat of his age; under his fingers the slightest movement was made to divulge its inner secret.[44]
>
> 再沒有人除了哈代能把他這時代的脈搏按得這樣的切實，
> 在他的手指下最微細的跳動都得吐露它內涵的消息。

Or, More explicitly:

> The death of Thomas Hardy properly concludes an important historical era. The era opens with the thinking and the character of Rousseau, in whose words and deeds there was realized the formal birth of the "liberation of the self" and the "consciousness of the self" of the modern age. From the *Confessions* to the French Revolution, from the French Revolution to the Romantic movement, from the Romantic movement to Nietzsche (and Dostoievsky), from Nietzsche to Hardy – through this hundred-and-seventy-year span we watch the struggles of human feeling as it emerges from the grip of Reason, bursting forth like flame, and in the bright blaze shooting out its various movements and doctrines, meanwhile in the embers nourishing the "modern consciousness," pathological, self-analytical, questioning, weary; and even as the flying sparks diminish, so does the heap of ashes beneath broaden out until a sense of disillusionment tones down all the throbbings of energy, crushes feeling, paralyzes intellect, and mankind

suddenly discovers that its footsteps have strayed to the brink of despair, that if it does not hold back then the future offers only death and silence. When Hardy began the writing of his novels the days of Victoria were at their most flourishing, the indications of evolutionay theory and the achievements of the doctrine of *laissez-faire* had thrown up a high tide of optimism which within a short time blotted out all inequalities and mysteries. By the time he ceased writing fiction a *fin-de-siècle* melancholy had replaced the hollow hopes of the early years. When Hardy first published a volume of his verse the forces of destruction, gathering for a century past, had formed a hidden current which might at any moment burst its banks. As he was publishing his later volumes this current broke out in the Great War and the Russian Revolution.[45]

哈代的死應分結束歷史上一個重要的時期。這時期的起點是盧騷的思想與他的人格，在他的言行裏現代「自我解放」與「自我意識」實現了它們正式的誕生。從懺悔錄到法國革命，從法國革命到浪漫運動，從浪漫運動到尼采（與道施滔奄夫斯基），從尼采到哈代——在這一百七十年間我們看到人類衝動性的情感，脫離了理性的挾制，火燄似的迸竄着，在這光炎裏激射出種種的運動與主義，同時在灰燼的底裏孕育着「現代意識」，病態的，自剖的，懷疑的，厭倦的，上浮的，熾燄愈消沈，底裏的死灰愈擴大，直到一種幻滅的感覺軟化了一切生動的努力，壓死了情感，麻痺了理智，人類忽然發見他們的腳步已經誤走到絕望的邊沿，再不留步時前途只是死與沈默。哈代初起寫小說時，正當維多利亞最昌盛的日子，進化論的暗示與放任主義的成效激起了樂觀的高潮，在短時間內蓋沒了一切的不平與蹊蹺。哈代停止寫小說時世紀末尾的悲哀，代替了早年虛幻的希冀。哈代初起印行詩集時一世紀來摧殘的勢力，已經積聚成旦夕可以潰發的潛流。哈代印行他後期的詩集時這潛流潰發成歐戰與俄國革命。

This aspect of Hardy's meaning is again confirmed by C.M. Bowra, who calls him "the most representative English poet between Tennyson and Yeats . . . he speaks with authority for the generation which reached manhood in the 'sixties, when industrialism was destroying the old structure of society and

Darwinism its system of beliefs."[46]

It is always chancy at best, foolish at worst to measure the "sincerity" of a literary man: one is mindful of the suspicion of "John Shade": ". . . and when I hear a critic speaking of an author's sincerity I know that either the critic or the author is a fool."[47] The question that Hsü Chih-mo will raise most frequently in his critic's mind is not, "Does this poem show sincerity of feeling? " but "Does this poem show discipline? " Some of the poems straight from his own experience are extraordinarily callow: there is no "recollection in tranquillity" but a direct transcription of raw emotion in, for example, "A Night in Florence" (翡冷翠的一夜).[48] Whether his inspiration is literary, as in "Dead Leaves" or "Whose the Blame? " or purely personal as in "Living," he gains great strength from the borrowed discipline of his model. To stress the point again: the poetic tradition of his own culture had broken down utterly; to write at all he had to borrow forms, images, even moods; and in Hardy, despite immense circumstantial and temperamental disparities, he found an inexhaustible Motherlode.

Notes

1. *Tsai Ai-k'o-sha-t'o chiao-t'ang ch'ien*(在哀克剎脫教堂前), collected in *A Night in Florence* (*Fei-leng-ts'ui-ti yi-yeh,* 翡冷翠的一夜 1927) pp. 80-83; reprinted in *Collected Works of Hsü Chih-mo* (*Hsü* Chih-mo *ch'üan-chi,* 徐志摩全集,6 volumes, hereafter HCMCC, Taipei: Chuan-chi wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan-she [傳記文學出版社] , 1969) vol. II, pp. 270-273.
2. "Thomas Hardy" (*T'ang-mai-shih Ha-tai,*湯麥士哈代),*Hsin-yüeh yüeh-k'an* (新月月刊), vol. I, no. 1, March 1928; HCMCC, vol. VI, pp. 291-292. The "silkworm" image has an interesting precedent in a poem written by Yüan Mei in 1974:

   > Writing poems is like the blossoming of flowers;
   > If there is too much blossom the flowers are generally small;
   > And all the more, with a man nearing eighty,
   > Whose powers of invention have long withered away.
   > Yet all the same, people wanting poems
   > Continue to clamour for them all day long.
   > They know that the silkworm, till the moment of its death
   > Never ceases to put out fresh threads.

   (Arthur Waley: *Yuan Mei,* p. 188).
3. "The Poetry of Thomas Hardy" (*T'ang-mai-ssu Ha-tai-ti shih,* 湯麥士哈代的詩), *Tung-fang tsa-chih* (東方雜誌), vol. XXI, no. 2, January 1924; HCMCC, vol. VI, p. 179.

4. C. M. Bowra, *The Lyrical Poetry of Thomas Hardy* (Nottingham: University College, Byron Foundation Lecture, 1942), p. 8.
5. "Thomas Hardy," HCMCC, vol. VI, pp. 294, 298.
6. "Hardy" (*Ha-tai,* 哈代), collected in *Tiger, Tiger* (*Meng-hu chi,* 猛虎集 , *1931*) pp. 107-112; HCMCC, vol. II, pp. 465-470.
7. *Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy,* (New York: MacMillan, 1926), p. 314. All references in the present article are to this edition.
8. *Op. cit.,* pp. 410-411.
9. *Tui yüeh* (對月), *Tiger,* pp. 116-119; HCMCC, vol. II, pp. 474-477.
10. "An Afternoon with Thomas Hardy" (*Yeh-chien Ha-tai-ti yi-ko hsia-wu,* 謁見哈代的一個下午), *Hsin-yüeh yüeh-k'an,* vol. I, no. 1, March, 1928; HCMCC, vol. VI, p. 310.
11. Thomas Hardy, *The Trumpet-Major* (London: MacMillan, 1912), p. 152.
12. "The Pedigree," *Collected Poems,* p. 431.
13. *Saturday Review,* no. XCIII, January 11, 1902, p. 49, quoted Samuel Hynes, *The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 57.
14. *Collected Poems,* p. 648.
15. Bowra, op. cit., p. 6. Bowra ends his paragraph, however, with a positive evaluation: "Hardy's style is always original, always his own, and though it is often surprising, it secures its special ends in a way that no other style could." And after a more detailed analysis, Southworth concludes that "the outstanding quality of Hardy's diction . . . is its economy and accuracy" (James Granville Southworth, *The Poetry of Thomas Hardy,* New York: Columbia University Press, 1947, p. 135).
16. *Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy,* London: MacMillan, 1919, reprinted 1920. The 1926 edition added *Late Lyrics and Earlier,* first published 1922, and a final set of poems entitled *Human Shows — Far Phantasies.* Of the poems referred to in the present article, "A Night in November," "Faintheart in a Railway Train" and "The Wood Fire" are all from *Late Lyrics and Earlier,* a copy of which was in Hsü Chih-mo's possession in 1923 (HCMCC, vol. VI, p. 186).
17. Hynes, *op. cit.,* p. 88.
18. *Liang-ti hsiang-ssu* (兩地相思), *Florence,* pp. 125-130; HCMCC, vol. II, pp. 315-320.
19. *Collected Poems,* p. 367.
20. Hynes (*op. cit.,* p. 46) calls this type of structure "antinomial" and regards it as Hardy's basic form. Kenneth Marsden, quoting Hynes, adds the comment that "many poems in which (this) pattern is most obvious . . . are not very good" (*The Poems of Thomas Hardy,* University of London: Athlone Press, 1969, p. 108).
21. *Collected Poems,* p. 536. For Hsü's translation, *Tsai huo-ch'e-chung yi-tz'u hsin juan* (在火車中一次心軟), see *Florence,* pp. 85-86; HCMCC, vol. II, pp. 275-276.
22. *Collected Poems,* p. 555.
23. See Hynes' discussion of this poem, *op, cit,* pp. 8-10.
24. *Lo-yeh hsiao-ch'ang* (落葉小唱), *Poems of Chih-mo* (志摩的詩) (first published 1925), Shanghai, Hsin-yüeh shu-tien (新月書店), second edition 1928, sixth printing 1933, pp. 5-7; HCMCC, vol. II, pp. 27-29.
25. Helen Gardner, ed., *New Oxford Book of English Verse,* Oxford: University Press, 1972, p. 710.
26. Part of the mystery of poetic creation is the metrical pattern of "Song of Dead Leaves," which is not to be found anywhere in Hardy but is a borrowing from Keats, "La Belle Dame Sans Merci." See my article "English and Chinese Metres in Hsü

Chih-mo," *Asia Major,* New Series, vol. VIII, part 2, 1961, p. 262.

27. Chu Hsiang (朱湘), "Critique of 'Poems of Chih-mo' "(*P'ing Hsü-chün "Chih-mo-ti shih"*, 評徐君「 志摩的詩 」), *Hsiao-shuo yüeh-pao* (小說月報), vol. XVII, no. 1, January 1926, p. 11.
28. *K'a-erh-fo-li* (卡爾佛里), *Poems of Chih-mo,* pp. 111-118; HCMCC, vol. II, pp. 133-140.
29. *Ch'ang-chou T'ien-ning-ssu wen li-ch'an sheng* (常州天寧寺聞禮懺聲), *Poems of Chih-mo,* pp. 133-137; HCMCC, vol. II, pp. 155-159. English translation in my *Anthology of Chinese Literature,* vol. II (New York: Grove Press, 1972), pp. 353-355.
30. *Collected Poems,* pp. 262-268.
31. *Collected Poems,* pp. 585-586.
32. *Hsüeh-hua-ti k'uai-lo* (雪花的快樂), the first poem in *Poems of Chih-mo* (pp. 1-3); HCMCC, vol. II, pp. 23-25. English translation in my *Anthology of Chinese Literature,* vol. II, pp. 349-350.
33. *Collected Poems,* p. 253.
34. See Hardy's "Apology" prefaced to *Late Lyrics and Earlier, Collected Poems,* p. 526. The line in question is from "In Tenebris, II," *Collected Poems,* p. 154.
35. *Tzu-p'ou* (自剖), in *Tzu-p'ou wen-chi* (自剖文集), 1928, pp. 3-15; HCMCC, vol. III, pp. 391-403.
36. Yu Ta-fu (郁達夫), "Memories of Chih-mo" (*Chih-mo tsai hui-yi-li,* 志摩在回憶裏), *Hsin-yüeh yüeh-k'an,* vol. IV, no. 1, 1932; HCMCC, vol. I, p. 381.
37. Mao Tun (茅 盾), "On Hsü Chih-mo" (*T'an Hsü Chih-mo,* 談徐志摩), *Hsien-tai* 現代, vol. II, no. 4, February 1933, pp. 518-531.
38. *Pan-yeh shen-hsiang p'i-p'a* (半夜深巷琵琶), *Florence,* pp. 29-30; HCMCC, vol. II, pp, 217-218.
39. *Death's Jest-Book,* 1850.
40. *Wen shui* (問誰), *Poems of Chih-mo,* pp. 11-17; HCMCC, vol. II, pp. 33-39.
41. *Collected Poems,* p. 51.
42. *Sheng-huo* (生活), *Tiger,* pp. 90-91; HCMCC, vol. II, pp. 448-449.
43. *Collected Poems,* p. 139.
44. "Thomas Hardy," HCMCC, vol. VI, p. 295.
45. *Loc. cit.*
46. Bowra, *op. cit.,* p. 3.
47. Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire,* p. 156.
48. *Fei-leng-ts'ui-ti yi-yeh* (翡冷翠的一夜), *Florence,* pp. 1-8; HCMCC, vol. II, pp. 189-196.