

Thomas hardy notes on hap

Profession, Writer



- Author: Thomas Hardy
- First Published: 1898
- Type of Poem: Sonnet
- Genres: Poetry, Sonnet
- Subjects: Suffering, Despair, God, Pain, Good and evil, Gods or goddesses, Fate or fatalism, Life, philosophy of, Life and death, Time, Joy or sorrow, Luck or misfortune

The Poem Thomas Hardy has structured “ Hap” to meet all the requirements of the form of an English sonnet: Its fourteen lines are written in iambic pentameter, the rhyme scheme abab, cdcd, efef, gg is complied with, and the three quatrains are followed by a rhymed couplet to conclude the poem.

Thomas Hardy *If you need to find something quickly, I suggest you hit CTRL + F and type in what you are looking for. * Hap(1) 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! " Then would I bear it, clench myself and die, Steeled by the sense of the ire(2) unmerited; Half eased in that a Powerfuller than I Had willed and meted(3) me the tears I shed. 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(4) had as readily strown Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

His works usually show the struggle between nature of man, inside and out, to shape human destiny. only through endurance, heroism or simple act of

good can his characters overcome the adversity of unknown forces guiding them through life blindly.

Explanation: (My professor once said, " To truly enjoy what we have before us, we must not be gluttons. We must be mannered beings who adhere to the rules of society and take in, what we have before us, a morsel at a time. ") {Essentially what he meant was, " Don't try to understand the entire thing at first. Take it in by sentences, then stanzas and then you will have arrived at the entire idea. But for this poem, we need to look at it semi-collectively}

Let us begin with the first 2 stanzas: 1st STANZA 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! " 2nd STANZA Then would I bear it, clench myself and die, Steeled by the sense of the ire⁽²⁾ unmerited; Half eased in that a Powerfuller than I Had willed and meted⁽³⁾ me the tears I shed. So... what did we just read? A lot of mumbo jumbo at first glance. But I promise that there is a meaning here. Our friend Thomas wishes for an angry god to peer down at him and laugh. Because god is such a powerful being that rains down misfortunes on humans, Hardy would have someone to target his anger towards.

Hardy would know that God made him suffer and so Hardy would be completely alright dying hating god. 3rd Stanza 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⁽⁴⁾ had as readily strown Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain. Hardy finishes off this poem by hinting that his anger towards god would be unjustified. God does not bring forth only sadness, he

also brings forth happiness and hope. If god gives us both, then why does Hardy need to be so depressed?

Why can not he be extremely happy? Hardy's answer to his own philosophical question is: It is not some supreme being giving me happiness and then giving me sadness based on my actions. It is just random chance. It is random chance that I have been extremely happy and extremely depressed. Summary: Hardy wishes that god exist but sadly, he doesn't. Because all the good things and bad things that happen to us aren't based, created or assigned by a powerful being at all. It all depends on luck, chance or Hap. My Opinion: Not particularly my favorite poem aesthetically. The idea however is quite challenging.

It reminds me of a young philosopher who is questioning why bad things happen to good people. Surely it is chance, but what Hardy is hinting towards is what if it is a bad thing only because we THINK it is a bad thing? It is almost circular. I do not know much about Hardy but what I do know is that he tried really hard to believe in god but in the end, he came out completely agnostic. This poem shows that struggle. "Hap" is a poem by Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) that he wrote in 1866, while working as a trainee architect, and for which he could not find a publisher.

It did not reach the general public until 1898 when Hardy included it in his first collection, which was entitled "Wessex Poems", which only appeared after he had concluded his career as a highly successful novelist. The poem is a sonnet, although it is presented as three stanzas in that the traditional octave is split into two stanzas each of four lines and the sestet is a stanza on its own. The rhyme scheme is ABAB CDCD EFEFFE, which is a variant on <https://assignbuster.com/thomas-hardy-notes-on-hap/>

the Shakespearean form, although the clean break between octave and sestet is more associated with the Petrarchan sonnet form.

The poem can be seen as Hardy's reaction to the basic thinking that underlies Darwin's "The Origin of Species" which had been published in 1859. Hardy understood Darwin to imply that the mechanism that drove natural selection was mere accident and chance. Although this is generally held to be a misinterpretation of Darwin's theory, it was one that was widely held and it was also a reason why many Victorians regarded Darwinism as being a version of atheism and therefore to be condemned.

Hardy had no wish to reject what he understood to be Darwin's theory, but he wanted to come to terms with it, and "Hap" is one such attempt. The opening quatrain is headed by "If" and the second by "Then"; thus they can each be regarded as separate clauses of the same sentence that seems to propound a statement of logic. The "If" clause represents a somewhat Old Testament view of "some vengeful god" who delights in causing sorrow to mankind and to the poet in particular.

It appears that the poet has had a love affair go wrong: "Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy, / That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!" The "Then" clause states that the poet would have accepted the idea that his misfortune was caused by a supernatural force, or would at least have been "Half-eased" by the knowledge that he was the victim of one who was "Powerfuller than I". His attitude seems to be similar to that of Gloucester in Shakespeare's "King Lear" when he says: "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods, they kill us for their sport".

However, the “volta”, or turning-point, of this sonnet presents the reality which the poet now appreciates in the post-Darwinian world, namely that human misfortunes are not willed by the gods but happen by chance. Hardy can only blame “Crass Casualty”, and “dicing Time” which act as “purblind Doomsters”. The point he makes is that these forces are not vengeful like the gods in most mythologies but are completely indifferent. This is clear not only from his choice of adjectives (“crass” being used here to mean “insensitive” or “without thought”) but from the poem’s conclusion: “... had as readily strown / Bliss as about my pilgrimage as pain”.

So the question then arises as to which world-view is preferable, that which supposes that the gods are set on destroying man’s happiness, or the cosmos revealed by Darwin in which the forces of nature are mechanical and purposeless and man has as good a chance of happiness as of despair? There is evidence that Hardy stressed to his critics that he was not replacing one source of cosmic oppression with another, and he was in fact quoted as saying that: “The world does not despise us; it only neglects us” (See “The Life of Thomas Hardy”, by Florence Emily Hardy, p. 8). The implication of this is that man has been dealt an even hand and must play it the best way he can. The new order is therefore a bestowal of freedom, but with freedom comes responsibility. There is a mystery in this poem as to what Hardy meant by “why unblooms the best hope ever sown?” As mentioned above, the misfortune that prompted Hardy’s thoughts sounds as though it was a blighted love affair, but, although Hardy had several lady friends who came and went at this time in his career, there were none who were, as yet, potential marriage partners.

This suggests that “ the best hope” had more to do with Hardy’s failure to get his poetry into print. Hardy believed himself to be a talented poet and was surprised and disappointed that none of the journals to which he sent his work were willing to buy it. Perhaps there is a clue to this failure in the line quoted above - an editor who saw “ unblooms” instead of “ blooms not” might have considered that this was not poetic enough.

It was certainly not a word that Tennyson would have chosen, and Tennyson was at that time Poet Laureate and the leader of poetic taste in England. An aspiring poet who did not conform to the standard set by Tennyson would no doubt struggle to find an audience. “ Hap” would probably not strike the modern reader as being anything particularly remarkable. It is well constructed, with a single train of thought that does not depart down any side tracks. The language is well-controlled, with every word making an impact.

However, by not being Tennysonian enough, and expressing a view that seemed to side with Darwinism against the religious orthodoxy of the day, Hardy’s surprise at not being able to publish poems such as this should surely not have been as great as it was. Hardy unveils his determinism in this poem as a refreshing start to the Twentieth Century. This poem seems to take the shape of an altered sonnet. Divided into the three stanza, the poem has a scientific feel due to the start of each stanza sounding like an equation: “ if”, “ then”, “ but not so”. The first two stanzas are very formulated in an abab rhyme scheme and are very direct.

This structure seems to contradict the theme of the poem quite nicely by contrasting form versus the random. The third stanza, however, feels much

more colloquial, and is more abstract and personal than the first two stanzas. Hardy uses a caesura, an ellipsis, and a rhetorical question to add to the scepticism contained in his argument, and to make the stanza feel more conversational than the other two. The first stanza creates an imaginary being by arguing that IF there was a god to blame for wrongs against him, it would be a vengeful god that rejoices in pain, rather than the opposing notion of a benevolent god.

In this poem, Hardy rejects the religious standard of God, and imagines one who delights in loss and suffering. It seems to pervert the previous notion of a divine god by imagining one who states “ know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy”. By using “ if”, Hardy seems to be wishing for such a god, for reasons explained in the following stanzas. In stanza two, Hardy describes the presence of this imagined vengeful god as a relief by ‘ knowing’ the truth as to why he is allotted pain. It is because of this ‘ knowing’ that Hardy would be able to “ bear it, clench myself, and die”... “ half-eased”.

His mention of the unmerited seems in reference to religion again, as it is believed that God’s mercy is unmerited to the human race, just as Hardy’s vengeful god’s anger is unmerited to him.

Finally, in stanza three, Hardy seems to give his own world view in a colloquial nature. The image of ‘ unblooming’ symbolizes hope falling to pieces as a rose may unbloom. Hardy also names fate “ Crass Casualty”: chance, and “ dicing Time” : either meant as fragmented time, or a gambling of time.

Hardy states that the "Doomsters", or half blind judges of fate (Crass Casualty and dicing Time) randomly allot both pain and pleasure, and with that, he accepts the uncertainty of fate. Thomas Hardy's "Hap" After reading Thomas Hardy's "Hap," I was left confused and curious with feelings of doom and questions of life's sufferings. I could not quite grasp what it is the author is trying to say due to either my unfamiliar with the language or the obscurity in his riddles. With some research, I was able to better understand, or better come to an understanding of, Hardy's message in this piece.

Beginning with the title of "Hap," and considering it the piece of "happening," I read that this word was an archaic simile of "chance," or "luck" (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hap>). This is quite important in trying to dissect this poem in that Hardy questions whether the existence of such a "vengeful" god is the reason for life's cruelties. Hardy presumes that only with the existence of such a god could there be justification for allowing such evils in the world for their own pleasure and "ecstasy, that [the character's] love's loss is [the god's] hate's profiting. (1073) However, uncertainty in such the existence of a god is displayed as we identify the structure of the three stanzas (credit to danamercer.blogspot.com for seeing this). The "If," "Then," "But not so" structure is like that of an argument, leading up to a conclusion. The first stanza states that "If" there is such a god that has pleasure in his "suffering" and "sorrow," "Then" he would "bear it, clench... and die" meaning he would accept it for he must submit to that which is more "Powerfuller" who has "willed" his "tears. "But [it is] not so." Concluding that there does not exist such a God or any God for suffering is but many of nature's "Hap" events,

and thus the importance of the title. To the character, all of life's pain and suffering is but a "dicing" or roll of the dice, a gamble rather. He doesn't believe in the existence of a god that has "joy [in life's] slain" and that allows the "unblooms the best hope ever sown." What is the purpose of idolizing and turning to such a God that hates us so?

How can there be such a god that is so unjust and morbid? The final answer is that it is just "Crass Casualty [that] obstructs the sun and rain" due to only chance itself. This belief is reinforced as Hardy identifies the "Doomsters" as "purlblind" as well as their reasons for his "pains." Why is "doom" what he encounters although he is searching for the light of god ("my pilgrimage"). He is unsatisfied with the existence of such a god as he states "Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited." He feels so strong in the wrongness of a "vengeful" god that only by "bear[ing] it" and "die[ing]" would he accept this. The poem is very dramatic as it represents the author's fight with faith and the existence of a God that could allow the sufferings of life. Conversely, how can there be a God that controls everything, including the free will of humans. That's just one of many arguments against a God that would only allow evil as well as good in the world. Because we are human, and because we have free will, we will always have two sides of the coin, good and evil.

And one cannot exist without the other, for they are dependently defined. Hardy's remaining answer is his realization that chance or "Hap" is the defining justification for life's "Crass Casualty." Hardy's style is indeed representative of the transition from Victorian/Romanticism to modernistic views in that the "good" does not always win and that "things [doesn't]

always happen for a reason” since he considers chance as one of the answers much traditionalist overlook when they consider “ purpose” for the answer of all unanswered questions.