

Yunyeong Jung

“As far inland as Stourton Tower, And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge.” : Is there a God in this Starlit world in Thomas Hardy’s ‘Channel Firing.’

I would like to argue that in Hardy's 'Channel Firing' the central problem is the question of the whole existence in this bleak world. Firstly, I would like to argue that Hardy tried to say that god may exist, but only because human made god. This argument can best be approached by thinking about the god's speech and the circumstance in this period. We can see the god's speech is all-too-human and this lets readers feel less solemnity, even though he is a god. Even the war practice right now ignites the question of god's existence. How did world end up in this situation, if there is a god? These leads to my first argument, that Hardy is trying to say that human made god. This explains why god speaks like a human. And this is also reason why war is happening. Secondly, I would argue that the timing of god's intervention is also engaged with the issue of sacred existence, and a question of who is sacred enough to be saved. I think no one is sacred, and I think Hardy thinks the same as we see the poem. When Hardy shows the skeleton and neighbor's speech, we could see how people regret their sacred behavior when they knew the judgement day is yet to happen.

I am not arguing that god's speech would only lead to question of existence of God. My argument is that by looking at god's speech and the circumstance of this period, we will be able to think of the human existence, and the role of my existence, as the poem points out people's sacred mindset and bleak world.

Firstly, let me address my argument regarding god's existence and the question of human existence. The questions of why human exists has been pulled out as the poem makes us wonder of god's existence. I firmly argue that god exists, only because human made god. I think this poem represents this concept as well. There is also saying, "God exists because human exists." I think Hardy was also tried to mention this point in this poem. As we see the last paragraph, "Roaring their readiness to avenge, As far inland as Stourton Tower, And Camelot, and starlit

Stonehenge." Hardy listed tower, Camelot, and Stonehenge. Hardy suggested the structures that went over centuries in below paragraph. This shows how human went through from nowadays gunnery practice sound pass to 9 century's tower, 6 century's Camelot, and old time's ritual structure. I think by showing century's structure that human made, Hardy tried to show that human also made god. The god that we believe till nowadays, has been also made by human from long century's ago. With this concept, we can understand why god's speech seems so all too human. Because human made god. That's why the god called himself as Christés sake, just like human, as you may see the stanzas "They do no more for Christés sake Than you who are helpless in such matters." Now, this concept leads to my first question; Human existed for many century just to create and believe in god? Why does I exist? What should I do? I would like to suggest the argument I have realized. I think this is why human created god's existence. So human can get answer from virtual existence, god. Then, why can't human answer themself? It's like we can't answer to question of am I sacred and pure, because no one does, only god can answer. It is also implied in the poem, when god answers to cow. Human can not be sacred to create god. Yet, they made god, so they could follow sacred way, and get answer. "Ha, ha. It will be warmer when I blow the trumpet (if indeed I ever do; for you are men, And rest eternal sorely need)." In this stanzas, we can see how god taunts at human's worrisome about judgement day. He laugh "Ha Ha", and even says "it would be warmer" to the dead body. Yes, warm for him, but not to others- that would be hot like cleaning the hell floor! Also, why would god even blow trumpet for that day? Trumpet is for joy, and start of the judgment day ain't a joy. Why would god even made that day, that just to judge at one last second, when he let people do war and brutal things happen before? This also proves that god does not exist. Because human made god in a virtual conception.

Secondly, let me now address my argument regarding irony and the question of who is sacred enough then? I think no human are sacred or innocent to be saved. And I think Hardy thought the same too. From this stanzas, "And many a skeleton shook his head. "Instead of preaching forty year," My neighbour Parson Thirdly said, "I wish I had stuck to pipes and beer." , This is where the dead body and preacher regrets choosing divinity instead of drinking. In a sense, their conversation represents that there is no need to be sacred if they don't have

judgment day. People behave because god exists and god plans for judgment day. People care their actions and behave sacred, just because the judgment day exists. This irony shows how profane people are. Even though Hardy shows 2 people's conversation, but they could represents the people in the world. Because Hardy said the dead person as "skeleton", and preacher as "preacher". Even though Hardy explained that 1 person is preacher, he didn't explain who the dead skeleton is. I think it is because he tried to imply the "skeleton" means "all the people, excluding the "preacher". This 2 person's speech is good enough to show the whole people's conception. So, Hardy tried to say all the people in the world are not that sacred. Also, we can also see how god think of people the same. God think human are not sacred enough to answer nor care for judgment day's worrisome. "The glebe cow drooled. Till God called, " In this stanzas, we can see how god think of human, opposite with the pastured cow. How can god appear so easily to cow, while it is so hard for people to see god? I think Hardy put god's speech after cow, on purpose, so he can imply that cow is the only sacred and innocent enough to get answered by god. This can be answered by my second argument: No one is sacred to be saved. Then, this leads to another question. How do we even know if we are not sacred or not? Can anyone answer that question? Even god only responded and appeared when cow was drooled. There is no god to answer that question. So this concludes to the thinking, that the human are useless. But at the same time, we can also came up with the idea then, only human can answer our own question! I think the last paragraph also exists because Hardy wanted to say the same. That human is more mighty, than the god, or strong enough to survive for over centuries. "Roaring their readiness to avenge, As far inland as Stourton Tower, And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge.". As human made those centurial constructions, from very long time ago, human can create anything and we are capable of anything, including god.

What we can now understand about Hardy is that he tried to give us the hope, not only the depression of the world and the god's response. As we built and created those things from the centuries ago, that we human can do anything from now on too. Including causing a war, but other things like create our imagination, and built something. My argument has revealed through god's speech and god's intervention in this 18 century circumstance. By mentioning the great constrictions of the centuries, Hardy gave us hope that this catastrophe will pass like the past(just

like the commemorates in the past). And we will be able to do anything again, including answering to their own questions. What we can now see that was not clear before is the way that human's trust in god let us think of the reason of human existence, in this devastated war practicing circumstance. If there is no god, human have no rules to follow or morals they should behave. That's why human made god and the perception of the judgment day. That is why human made god. But in this world, where soldiers are practicing gunnery fire to make world more redder and bloodier, is god really worked? Did god truly existed meanwhile? Through the 6 century when they built Stourton Tower, the 9 century when Camelot built, when Stonehenge was built for ritual place? Therefore, I would like to argue that Hardy's poem "Channel Firing" shows catastrophe world where god does not matter or mattered, but he also gives us hope of human being can do anything, including creating god, built constructions and most of all, answer our own questions. Here's my favorite phrase: "Life is not about finding yourself, it is about creating yourself." So with hope that Hardy represents, let's keep our life go on regardless of god or the war.