

## **Virtuality and Counterfactuality in Hardy's The Going and Lawrence's Shadows: A Cognitive Stylistic Reading**

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### **Abstract**

Though virtual and counterfactual constructions are usually narrative relevant, the inspection of their presence in poetry and other genres is equally plausible. Poetry tends even more than fiction to conjure up and explore realms of irrealism and possibility not to mention impossibility, which are the linchpins of virtuality and counterfactuality. In the current project, these two cognitive aspects are traced in two poems by Hardy and Lawrence. Both poems invest narrative formulas, a matter that further facilitates the application of cognitive findings. More importantly, the poems discard reality and soar high up into surreal dimensions. Hence, the worlds of possibility and counterfactuality are tracked down, extracted and analyzed. The way virtuality and counterfactuality operate to convey themes is also investigated. From a cognitive stylistic vantage, both poems expose the poets' conjuration of virtual and/or counterfactual worlds in an attempt to modify, alleviate, and on top mutate and alter the reality about which the text personae seem to entertain discontentment and resentment which at large verges on rejection.

## عوالم الافتراض واللاواقعية في قصيدتي الرحيل لهاردي و الظلال للورنس: قراءة في الاسلوبيات الادراكية

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### الخلاصة

تعد دراسة عوالم الافتراض واللاواقعية واحدة من اهم المجالات التي جاءت بها الدراسات الادراكية الادبية و الاسلوبية الحديثة و التي تطورت بإسهام عدد من الباحثين من بينهم ويرث و رايان و ستكويل و غافنز وذلك بغية سبر أغوار النصوص الأدبية و التعرف على الكيفية التي يشكل مبدعوا تلك النصوص عوالمها الخيالية و التي يحاول القراء بدورهم العثور عليها و تأويلها. و رغم ان هذا النوع من الدراسات قد بدء و تطور عبر دراسة النصوص السردية، غير ان البحث عن عوالم الافتراض و الاحتمال في الأنماط الأدبية الأخرى و الشعر خاصة يوفر قناة غنية لدراسة أجواءها و سبر أغوار عوالم الافتراض التي تولدها. ثم ان الشعر قادر اكثر من غيره على استحضار الخيال و عوالم الاحتمال و الاستحالة. و لهذا تناولت الدراسة الحالية بالتقصي و التحليل الجوانب الادراكية لعوالم الافتراض و اللاواقعية التي تزخر بها قصيدتي الرحيل لتوماس هاردي و الظلال لده. لورنس.

### Introduction

Hardy's *The Going* and Lawrence's *Shadows* invest hypothetical and counterfactual formulas to promote and fathom out their major motifs and in the long run central themes. As they focus on nostalgia and future speculation respectively, virtual and counterfactual dimensions simultaneously unfold. Both poems pivot around irrealis worlds of (im)possibility, wish, virtuality and counterfactuality that overshadow reality and eclipse actuality. Therefore, they gain access to worlds that are marked by their remoteness and even detachment from the real world.

In cognitive stylistics, virtuality and counterfactuality can be accounted for and explicated by **Possible Worlds Theory** and **Text World**

**Theory.** According to these theories, the text comprises a central, initial world that accounts of the text *reality* and which may converge with or set its own actuality apart from the reality outside the text. The text either employs the dimensions of our own world or chooses – science fiction for instance– to explore imaginary worlds. In addition to the central world, a multitude of possible sub-worlds or modal worlds that more or less diverge from that reality may be generated by creating opposed, almost always, enhanced counterparts (virtual/counterfactual substitutes). While the text's initial or central world unfolds, other possible worlds meanwhile unfold as well. These sub-worlds derive from the central world of the text but they are, nevertheless, contrived to replace, modify or alter the central world so that it would approach the imagined or hypothetical world. The alteration or modification is dictated by the dissatisfaction or disappointment the text participant experiences in the actual world. As such, s/he devises sub-world(s) of possibility to mutate and surrogate the reality manifested in the text, i.e., an alternative scenario is suggested to ameliorate or at times substitute altogether the dissatisfactory version.

In Hardy's *The Going* and Lawrence's *Shadows*, it is observed that the speaking voices in the texts tend to depart from reality to overreach and attain a far more elaborate hypothetical and/or wishful spheres. Certain linguistic cues are employed to achieve this departure from reality and steer the text clear of reality towards worlds that are removed both in time and space. While in Lawrence's *Shadows*, the departure is complete and irreversible where counterfactual worlds are created, in Hardy's *The Going*, the virtual world remains attached and relevant to the actual world by its constant repair to the same past and space. The present study traces elements of virtuality and counterfactuality in both poems and attempts a thematic interpretation of the role played by both in promoting the themes of the poems.

It is important to remark that in the present study, virtuality and counterfactuality are treated separately though they are deemed to denote one and the same phenomenon. The point of separation is rather structural

and partly thematic as the analysis below makes clear. In other words, these two terms, which are at times used interchangeably elsewhere, are set apart here for convenience as the texts selected for study dictate this discrimination.

### **Virtuality**

Virtuality and hence virtual world is relatively recently introduced in narratology to account for ' the "possible worlds" concept derived from modal logic and which can be related to "virtual reality," (Herman and Vervaeck, 2001: 149). To illustrate Virtuality in a literary text, Ryan lists three dimensions of it:

First, the term can be used as a synonym of "illusory." Virtual reality is a feigned reality that gives us the illusion it is real. Second, the concept refers to computer technology. Virtual reality is the world evoked by technology, for instance the worldwide web. Third, virtuality may be synonymous with possibility or potentiality. In that reading, virtual reality becomes a potential or possible world, and in this way cybernarratology can be related to modal logic and the narratology of possible worlds it has given rise to. (in Herman and Vervaeck, 2001: 149).

The inspection of virtuality brings about the argument concerning truth. According to the anti-mimetic theory of fictionality, a literary work 'creates its own discursive universe in which propositions can be true or false' (Herman and Vervaeck, 2001: 150). The literary text evokes a world that 'may deviate from reality' as experienced by humans though it is not considered untrue or false. Thus, a literary text may comment on and even enhance realistic texts as in the case of the historical novel. The text launches its own reality; against its yardsticks, other (semi-)realities or unrealities are measured. Ultimately, there is assumingly one actual world in the text but a multitude of non-actual worlds which are termed possible worlds according to Possible Worlds Theory. The text actual or real world is not necessarily a replica of outside reality though. Nor should these possible worlds, Hansson (2006: 331) remarks, necessarily 'support the notion of best or ideal worlds. Even if all possible worlds are ordered by a

transitive and complete preference relation, there may be no worlds that are better than all the other worlds.'

According to Gavin (2003:130), Text World Theory embodies a 'methodological framework' that endeavours to uncover and examine as well as analyze factual and fictional discourses 'from the pragmatic circumstances surrounding their genesis, through to the conceptual consequences of specific language choices.' The delineation of three interconnecting levels to be operating in a given discourse launches the analytical stance. The first, the discourse world, subsumes two or more participants engaged in 'a language event.' As a participant communicates, s/he brings with along a 'personal 'baggage'...in the form of memories, intentions, knowledge and motivations.' Stockwell (2002: 94) assumes that a discourse world is the imaginary world which is conjured up by a reading of a text, and which is used to understand and keep track of events and elements in that world. Further, Stockwell introduces the notion of embedded worlds which relate to flashbacks and flashforwards where a participant:

imagines something, plans something, or considers an unrealised possibility. In each of these cases, we have to keep track of the character in the current discourse world, as well as the idea of the same character who is younger (flashback), older (flashforward), or an alternative version of themselves. These other versions are **counterparts** within the fictional discourse world. (2002: 94).

As the language event progresses, a text world is constructed by the participants whose delineation of the text yields the next level in the text world theory three-level representation. According to Lewis' concretism of the possible worlds in contrast to abstractionism, the possible worlds that unfold in a text are 'concrete spatio-temporal universes, very much like our own, causally and spatio-temporally disconnected from each other' (Benovsky, 2008:318). The structuring of the text world and the furnishing of its contents are monitored by 'linguistic indicators contained within the discourse and by further inferences drawn from the participants' background knowledge and experience' (Gavins, 2003: 130). As such, a

text world is combined 'of *world-building elements* and *function-advancing propositions*.' The former supplies the background against which the event takes place defining time, place as well as props and people that populate the discourse. The latter defines actions, events, states, and processes which operate in unison to advance the discourse through 'plot-advancing, scene-advancing, argument-advancing,' and the like (Gavins, 2003: 131).

Once the text goes past its launching point, it commences to develop 'countless other worlds which depart from the parameters of the initial text world.' These departures form the final layer of Text World Theory and are called 'sub-worlds' in Werth's (1999) original framework.' The sub/possible worlds may be either *participant-accessible* if created by discourse participants, or *character-accessible* if characters in the text world construct them. Sub-worlds, according to Stockwell (2002: 140) can be of three major types:

- **Deictic sub-worlds** construct flashbacks, as well as flashforwards, and any other departures from the current situation, such as the world within direct speech, or any view onto another scene (a character watching a play, talking on the telephone, watching television, and so on). Shifts into deictic sub-worlds involve a variation in one or more world-building elements, most usually shifts in time and location. The world expressed within direct speech is a sub-world, since it is distinct from the surrounding discourse, and will often involve shifts from third to first and second person, a proximal-remote reversal, and other features deictically recentred on the speaker within the narrative. Reported speech, by contrast, does not in itself invoke a sub-world, since it fits within the current text world as part of the narrative voice. In Reported speech, the reader does not enter into the sub-world of the direct speech, but remains in the narrator's here-and-now.

- **Attitudinal sub-worlds** subsume alternations due to the desire, belief or purpose (constituting **desire worlds**, **belief worlds** and **purpose worlds**, respectively) of participants or characters. Attitudinal sub-worlds based on desire are cued up by predicates such as 'wish', 'hope', 'dream', 'want', and similar others. Belief worlds are typically introduced by predicates such

as 'believe', 'know' and 'think', where these relate to beliefs. Purpose worlds relate to the stated intentions of participants or characters, regardless of whether the action is actually carried out. Examples would include promises, threats, commands, offers and requests.

• **Epistemic sub-worlds** are the means by which text world theory handles the dimension of possibility and probability. Hypothetical worlds are introduced by participants or characters using predicates such as 'would', 'will' and 'should', and conditional constructions of the prototypical form 'if...then...'. The content of these epistemic sub-worlds (as with deictic and attitudinal types) can contain shifts in time, location, character and objects, and a whole new richly textured world of possibility can be evoked.

Virtuality evolves and develops through epistemic modality (Gavins, 2003: 131-2) which 'creates new modal worlds in the minds of the discourse participants.' These modal worlds coincide with situations that are characterized by their detachment 'from either the participants in the discourse world' or 'from the characters in the text world.' The epistemic modality is 'a modality of propositions rather than of actions, states, event, etc' as it makes 'judgments about the possibility, etc, that something is or is not the case' (Palmer, 1979: 41), hence its virtual contours. However, the text virtuality may make use of other types of modality which Doležal divides into three more dimensions: **alethic** expressing the truth of a situation to convey 'necessity, possibility and impossibility', **deontic** which conveys 'prohibition, obligation, and permission', and **axiological** which is the domain of moral judgment' of the character's environment whether in terms of good, bad or indifferent (in Herman and Vervaeck, 2001: 152-3).

The occurrence of epistemic modality in discourse, (Gavins, 2007: 110), 'establishes a distinct text-world, an **epistemic modal-world**, containing a situation which may be unrealised at the time and place from which its description originates.' The various degrees of remoteness may be triggered by such epistemic modal auxiliary verbs as 'could' and 'might' in addition to 'lexical verbs such as 'think', 'suppose', 'know', 'doubt' 'seem', and 'believe'.' There is also available "a broad range of epistemic modal

adverbs such as *doubtfully*, *supposedly*, *perhaps*, *maybe*, *possibly*, *certainly*, and so on. Once again, adjectival constructions are also possible within this modal system, taking a 'BE . . . THAT' or 'BE . . . TO' structure: for example, '*it's doubtful that I'll pass the exam*', '*it's sure to be a good night out*', '*they're unlikely to turn up*'" (Gavins, 2007: 110).

Further, the epistemic modal system comprises 'a sub-system of 'perception' modality,' which 'conveys the degree of commitment to the truth of a particular proposition by reference to some form of human perception.' The perception modality is conveyed by 'such adjectival constructions as 'it is clear that', 'it is apparent that' and 'it is obvious that', as well as related modal adverbs such as 'clearly', 'apparently' and 'obviously'" (Gavins 2003: 132).

In a fictional work, each character is assumed to have 'a virtual world inside their fictional heads' which the reader may detect and track. Stockwell (2002:94-5) provides a more detailed and enhanced list of the possible worlds that a text may disclose:

- **epistemic worlds** – knowledge worlds; what the characters in the fictional world believe to be true about their world.

It is worth mentioning that the term epistemic, here, delineates knowledge and is no longer an umbrella label that subsumes a variety of other world types.

- **speculative extensions** – things the characters anticipate about their world, or other hypotheses they hold.

- **intention worlds** – what characters plan to do to deliberately change their world.

- **wish worlds** – what characters wish or imagine might be different about their world.

- **obligation worlds** – different versions of the world filtered through the characters' sense of moral values.

- **fantasy worlds** – the worlds of characters' dreams, visions, imaginations or fictions that they compose themselves.

The alternate worlds may approach the actual world, a matter that is determined by '**accessibility** to its conditions,' which can be measured according to the following dimensions:

**• accessibility of objects**

- properties: whether the objects in the alternate world have the same properties as actual objects.
- inventory: whether the alternate world has all the same objects as the actual world, fewer objects, or additional objects.

**• accessibility of time**

- whether the alternate world exists in the same present, and has the same history as the actual world.

**• accessibility of nature**

- whether the natural laws of the alternate discourse world match the natural physical laws of the actual world, its logical and mathematical properties.

**• accessibility of language**

- whether the alternate world and the actual world share the same language, the same principles of language, the same cognitive patterns, and whether the inventory of words in the alternate world matches exactly the inventory of words in the actual world.

**Counterfactuality**

The study of counterfactuality is by no means separated from that of virtuality as they both have the same designation. While virtuality is the domain of hypothetical speculation, counterfactuality as the term indicates is the area where what is contrary to fact or what is deemed as fact is invested. Postal (in Edelman, 2007:425) views the counterfactual as 'a logical conditional statement whose antecedent is taken to be contrary to fact by those who utter it.' Virtuality does not necessarily create an opposite version of the actual world while the essence of counterfactuality is opposition.

Dannenberg (2008: 110) points to the fact that counterfactuality belongs to normal human consciousness since 'few indeed have never pondered a lost opportunity nor regretted a foolish utterance. And . . . it is from articulations of better possible pasts that individuals may realize more desirable futures.' One may take Fauconnier and Turner's statement 'our

species has an extraordinary ability to operate mentally on the unreal' (in Dannenberg, 2008: 110) as the starting point to a more elaborate penetration of human mentality. In the real world, an individual tends 'to review one's life trajectory and formulate long-term regrets about missed opportunities' (Gilovich and Medvec in Dannenberg, 2008: 110). People tend to have alternate scenarios or versions regarding past events or in speculation of the future. This is why, the counterfactual is defined 'as theoretical alterations or *mutations* of a past sequence of events made in order to construct a different version of reality that counters the events of the "real" or factual world' (Dannenberg, 2008: 110).

Counterfactuals like if-conditionals are traditionally 'viewed as cases of possibly valid reasoning from premises that are false in actuality', where according to Fauconnier (1994:109), 'a case of forced incompatibility between spaces' is created. As such, there are at least two spaces that do not correspond with each other in that one space is set up to violate the origin (space). Evans and Green (2006: 162) explain that counterfactuals prompt the reader to imagine and formulate scenarios that are 'counter to fact'.

The counterfactual, according to Prince (in Dannenberg, 2008: 115), includes all the events that do not happen because they are either in the negative or hypothetical mode, i.e. what he terms as 'disnarrated.' The disnarrated, or more accurately, counterfactual event 'can pertain to the future, the present, the past. . . . [I]t frequently consists of hopes, desires, imaginings and pondering, unreasonable expectations and incorrect beliefs' (115-6). In relation to the counterfactualizing agent, an important distinction is to be made between self-focus and external focus. In the first, the self is central to the counterfactual as a perpetrator where the counterfactuals emit from a character that responds subjectively and emotionally to the events of her/his life. Such self-focus counterfactualities are autobiographical. External focus places the self as a victim and analyzes events, life stories or history outside the speaker's own life; they can be articulated by one character about another or by the heterodiegetic narrator (Dannenberg, 2008: 119). Such counterfactualities are either biographical

in that they focalize 'a character's life story as opposed to a larger framework of events' or historical when they propose to change real-world history (Dannenberg, 2008: 119). Further, the distinction between **behavioural** and **characterlogical** counterfactuals refers to whether the character's behaviour is central to the mutation or the counterfactual merely condemns 'the self rather than provide[s] insight into specific actions by which the outcome might be changed (McMullen, Markman, and Gavanski in Dannenberg, 2008: 112). This distinction can be summarized in terms of 'story versus character-based counterfactuals' (Dannenberg, 2008: 112). Also, behavioural counterfactuals pivot around alterations of the story or character's action but not that character's personal qualities. Contrarily, characterlogical counterfactuals alter the character to create a new version of the events for they postulate changes in character's personality (Dannenberg, 2008: 120).

A counterfactual world does not only encode wished-for or desired events, but also fears, a matter that necessitates the distinction between **upward** and **downward** counterfactuals. While the former describes those counterfactuals that 'improve reality', the latter refers to those that 'worsen reality' (Dannenberg, 2008: 112). Counterfactuals create diverse emotions dependent on whether their direction is upward or downward. Regret for instance is typical of upward counterfactuals while satisfaction marks downward ones. If a character is dissatisfied the way the events of her/his life progressed and tends to construct a new version, then s/he experiences regret. Regret can be either hot in that it generates a short-lived counterfactual emotion or wistful when it expands itself into long-termed counterfactual retrospectives of autobiographical development for instance (Gilovich and Medvec in Dannenberg, 2008: 120).

### **Virtuality and Counterfactuality in *The Going and Shadows***

The two poems under study are case in point as to the seminal role played by virtual/counterfactual worlds in giving rise to and furnishing imaginary, hypothetical, wishful and mutant worlds. As such, the worlds initiated deviate and diverge from the central actual world that relatively comes in

the line with reality. The poems summon up virtual and counterfactual alternatives to promote and bolster up a diversity of motifs relevant to the pivotal themes they advance.

As a narrative which is what the poem partially is, *The Going* relates in the first person the speculations of its central speaker who experiences regret and remorse after the death of his beloved. As an argumentative text, its main line of argument reviews the past through the perspective of the present. The poem reflects Hardy's own contemplation after the death of his wife Emma Lavinia Gifford in 1912. He was estranged from his wife for decades and he did not imagine that her death would inflict all the pain and cause all the agony which the poem tries to copy and explore. The poem is one among many others that pivot around, Dirda (2009) discusses, 'marital tragedy and division, of error and mischance,' hence the urge to rewind time and reverse its events.

The speaker in the poem is torn between immediate suffering which the unforeseen loss inflicts and the wish to wind back time and change its precedence. The world in the poem revolves around defeatism, failure, and nihilism. Alternatively, *Shadows* depicts its main character's speculations about his own allegedly immediate death experience. Lawrence intended the poem to conjure up a scenario of the after death world, which is contrived to run contrary to or at the very best differ from what is commonly conceived about it. Jones (2010:21) comments insightfully on how *Shadows* 'is as much about the changes within life as the transition between life and death' where Lawrence as 'the poet of phases and waves of life and creativity' always imagines and predicts favourably. Unlike Hardy's, Lawrence's world is far from nihilism, defeatism or failure. The death experience, the speaking voice anticipates, is a delightful adventure and rewarding conquest to which the speaker looks forward in earnest and vigour. It is a wishful journey to rejuvenate and recreate. In all, both poems reject the real world and explore other virtual or counterfactual alternatives. Their central characters express dissatisfaction with the available version of reality and aspire to mutate, alter or even replace it altogether.

At its very interrogative onset, *The Going* makes clear a temporal as well as event gap between two worlds. The first is the poem's actual/central world and the second is a virtual world of possibility and hypothesis which is intended to overthrow the former. The negative and modal constructions mark the two worlds apart respectively. The negative, nevertheless, affirms prohibition, i.e., deontic in thrust. In the actual world, the main character designated by first person pronoun "I" addresses the absent persona "You" in a mood of an acrid complaint. The addresser, first, draws contours of the actual world as he narrates that he lived long in dark ignorance about the addressee's departure, unaware of its spiritual and mental cost. As a reaction against and refute of the actual world, he creates a counterpart world where the opposite takes place, i.e., he knew before hand and was fully prepared to confront its consequences or even reverse it altogether and thus escape its grave corollaries. The actual world of ignorance is triggered by 'Why did you give no hint that night' and 'You would close your term here, up and be gone.' Time and space references, *night/ morrow's dawn/here* consecutively, operate as actual world builders. The virtual world follows close at the heels triggered first by the single adverbial reference *up*, but is later extended through modality and negation. Thus, as soon as the actual world of loss and defeat is delineated, virtual worlds of wish and then prohibition ensue:

*Why did you give no hint that night*  
That quickly after the morrow's dawn,  
And calmly, *as if indifferent* quite,  
*You would close* your term here, up and be gone  
Where *I could not* follow  
With wing of swallow  
To gain one glimpse of you *ever anon!*

At the centre of virtuality, a deictic world of flashback occurs as the interrogative brings to doubt a past event which the speaker fantasizes about mutating or even undoing and then improving by suggesting a different version of it. However, it is rather a characterlogical in that the changes

suggested are relevant though not to the speaker but to the silent persona in the poem. Shortly after the flashback, the addresser expresses regret (upward characterlogical counterfactuality) for he ' could not follow' her to where she left. In addition to negatives and modals, there occurs a conditional structure ' as if indifferent quite' which does not build a counterfactuality, but discards it altogether as the addresser, being a bereft lover, does not believe that his dead beloved could have shown such nonchalance towards him! As such, he almost levels accusation of intentional indifference or even malice at his departing beloved. The virtual worlds are not the addresser's though. They are the addressee's where the lover tries to hypothesize about his beloved's thoughts prying her mind open at her dying moments. However, the regret is his rather than hers for it is he who is subject to immediate suffering. As a living mortal, he fails to comprehend her unsubstantial presence while being ethereal existence, she is deterred by nothing. The combination of the interrogative and negative moods focalizes the invincibility and impregnability of the virtual, epistemic world. The next stanza reinforces and actualizes virtuality by a deictic flashback in the pluperfect that function-advances the argument ' *That your going / Has placed that moment, and altered all.*' The speaker contrasts two versions of the actual world. The first is a downward virtuality where he deluded himself on that he would not care about what might happen to his estranged beloved whereas in the second he admits that his belief proved to be false and that her death has altered his reality altogether.

Unlike *The Going, Shadows*' onset takes a different twist. It conjures up and elaborates on a purely counterfactual world apparent in the conditional if-clause where the main character suggests an unconventional, mutated version of the death experience:

And if tonight my soul may find her peace  
in sleep, and sink in good oblivion,  
and in the morning wake like a new-opened flower  
then I have been dipped again in God, and new-created.

Armed with the modal 'may', a full-fledged epistemic sub-world is created and furnished as well as named 'oblivion'. It also may be regarded as an attitudinal sub-world proper if the structure is taken to couch a wish expressed on the part of the speaker. The half attitudinal, half epistemic sub-world concerns itself with the future rather than the past, hence, the wish-attitudinal structure. Thus, when the speaker deludes himself of the attainability of his counterfactual world, a flashback occurs in the present perfect 'I have been dipped' instead of the pluperfect. Lawrence's world is solely counterfactual, set in entire contrast to the actual world sketched very briefly by the time reference *tonight*. The other time reference *morning* is located wholly in the counterfactual world proper. The world-builders are the virtual world relevant though the speaker used real world builders figuratively as 'in the morning wake like a new-opened flower' to approach actuality. The second stanza does not deviate remarkably from the first except for the future modal 'I shall know' which conveys virtual belief and knowledge. The epistemic modality reinforces the hypothetical sub-world whose virtuality is further strengthened by the reference to his 'thoughts'. Again, if-conditional predominates as it expands the counterfactual world, which the first stanza spells out. It is also furnished deictically by the single, unspecific time reference "And If, as weeks go round," which encodes continuity. It is a world of oblivion and numbness which the speaker delights and rejoices in its virtual accessibility. Both his body and mind sink into a blissful torpor, hence the upward direction of counterfactuality:

my spirit darkens and goes out, and soft, strange gloom  
 pervades my movements and *my thoughts* and words  
 then *I shall know that I am walking still*  
 with God, we are close together now the moon's in shadow.

Then, counterfactual world emerges as basically characterlogical since the speaker lists the alterations his soul undergoes under the impact of the virtual world created. As for 'I shall know' with its future promissory structure, it builds an epistemic world of possible knowledge as well as an attitudinal deictic world of promise and purpose. In addition, the present continuous tense 'I am walking still' which projects and is consistent with

the continuity established earlier function-advances the argument. Lawrence's virtual world inspires contentment and complaisance unlike Hardy's which pivot around loss and remorse.

When *The Going* resumes the interrogative structure, it is no longer in the negative mood. The world created in stanza (3) is wholly epistemic triggered by the cognitive verb 'think'. But unlike the previous ones, the speaker is not deluded by it very long:

Why do you make me leave the house  
And *think* for a breath it is you I see  
At the end of the alley of bending boughs  
Where so often at dusk you used to be;  
Till in darkening dankness  
The yawning blankness  
Of the perspective sickens me!

Apparently, the virtual world leads him astray for a while but he soon relapses, of course ruefully, into the central actual world of disappointment and loss. A deictic sub-world is soon created as time and place join forces and provoke him to recall a cherished memory from the past 'Where so often at dusk you used to be.' The relative prolificacy of actual world-builders such as 'house, alley of bending boughs, and dusk' promotes the real in opposition to the virtual. Dirda (2009) reflects on the idyllic atmosphere of the poem where 'Hardy remembers his idyllic early glimpses of Emma and regrets that he didn't try better to make their marriage work.' This memory evolves and develops into a series of elaborate flashbacks that dominate the next stanza:

You were she who abode  
By those red-veined rocks far West,  
You were the swan-necked one who rode  
Along the beetling Beeny Crest,  
And, reining nigh me,

Would muse and eye me,  
While Life unrolled us its very best.

Likewise, this stanza, though deictic in thrust, persists in restoring power and dominance to the actual world in opposition to the virtual. The affirmative and repetitive structure of the first two clauses emphasizes factuality which is even more reinforced by such actual geographical references as 'beetling Beeny Crest' that contributes to the idyllic ambience of the place as well as operates as an actual world-builder. The factuality of the spatial reference is intended to infect the virtual worlds in the poem so that they would approach reality or at least be accessed through actual channels, which is what a flashback mainly does. The modal structure 'would muse' is not purely epistemic for it denotes an attitudinal event that has become an urgent obsessive wish. It is eventually virtual since the cognitive verb *muse* restores balance and confers virtuality on the structure.

With the interrogative *why* of the onset, the speaker introduces his next stanza whose virtual structure is bound to the factual findings of the stanza preceding it. Since the now estranged lovers used to be once in complete harmony with each other and fully attuned to nature, he ruefully asks:

Why, then, latterly did we not speak,  
Did we not think of those days long dead,  
And ere your vanishing strive to seek  
That time's renewal? We might have said,  
"In this bright spring weather  
We'll visit together  
Those places that once we visited."

It is a flashback into the near past after they were alienated and lost contact with each other. The speaker, then, argues expressing regret about why they did not discuss their differences, bridge the gap growing between them and revive their love and companionship. As such, he creates an upward counterfactual world of characterlogical nature where they virtually talked themselves back into harmony and concord. The interrogative–negative moods indicate the non-occurrence of the counterfactuality though.

Alternatively and despite the non-occurrence , the speaker builds an epistemic virtual world pivoting around the modal structure '*might have said.*' Moreover, he ventures to report directly the kind of utterance one or both might have said. Thereupon, a deictic world is fully furnished with the direct speech which roots the situation entirely into the flashback of the deictic sub-world. Inspecting more closely the content of the reported speech, it creates a promissory/purpose attitudinal world. 'We'll visit' recalls the remote past referred to in 'the places once we visited,' which in itself spells out a deictic flashback. Thus, the speaker dwells on more than one alternative scenario to forestall and eschew the suffering he is doomed to endure in the present. The virtual worlds console and heal him while the present actual world keeps tearing him to pieces. Nevertheless, he is incapable of disrupting or abandoning it altogether to root himself entirely in the virtual past.

While in *The Going*, virtual worlds fluctuate and waver, *Shadows* persists in elaborating on its counterfactuality. Stanza (3) begins as customarily with the conditional **if** in the simple present 'And if, as autumn deepens and darkens' parallel to the previous stanza and 'I shall know' makes a second appearance. So the counterfactual world which is again time-relevant with the presence of such temporal references as *autumn*, *solstice*, *short days*, and *the silence of the year*. Once more, the speaker creates a virtual image of the world of death which mutates and dislodges wretched reality. This counterfactual world, nevertheless, is behavioural in essence as it inaugurates alterations on the speaker's world rather than personal qualities. However, characterological changes ensue where the speaker dwells in detail on his physical as well as spiritual dissolution under the impact of the upward counterfactual world:

I feel the pain of falling leaves, and stems that break in storms  
and trouble and dissolution and distress  
and then the softness of deep shadows folding, folding  
around my soul and spirit, around my lips  
so sweet, like a swoon, or more like the drowse of a low

In opposition to the third stanza, the fourth stanza creates a downward counterfactual world in which the speaker's life lapses into contemplated misery and sickness if that night conjuration of death is not accomplished and his death prayer is not answered. At the time, Jones (2010: 21) affirms, Lawrence 'was used to periods of near-fatal illness followed by recovery', a matter that may justify the contemplation if not the anticipation of immanent death in the poem. To continue living, the speaker candidly suggests, means to experience life's worst episodes yet to come creating a virtual hypothetical sub-world that conforms rather than contradicts reality as depicted in the poem:

And if, in the changing phases of man's life  
I fall in sickness and in misery  
my wrists *seem* broken and my heart *seems* dead  
and strength is gone, and my life  
is only the leavings of a life:

It commences as a behavioural counterfactuality, then turns into autobiographical, characterological counterfactuality where the speaker hypothesizes about the direction his actual world may very possibly take if he lives beyond the *tonight* of the onset. Life goes worse as time progresses inflicting him with more pain and suffering where only oblivion- the virtual world he longs for, will extract him from. The downward counterfactuality is actual world relevant hence the present simple tense persists to ensure its inevitability and justify the speaker's feverish ardour and ecstasy about his transformation to the enhanced world of upward counterfactuality. The epistemic dimension is slightly indicated by the verb *seem* occurring twice to ensure that his spiritual potential is sustained no matter what befalls him. Otherwise the inevitability of the deterioration that encloses and permeates his existence is barely questioned and he does not entertain, not even, an inkling of doubt about its liability. In the counterfactual world, he believes that, '*new, strange flowers*' would replace his '*wintry flowers upon the withered stem*' so that his life would bring forth 'new blossoms' of his. The

if-clause, which runs into (7) lines is concluded in a modal 'must' structure marking a transformation into an upward counterfactuality:

then I must know that still

I am in the hands of the unknown God,  
he is breaking me down to his own oblivion  
to send me forth on a new morning, a new man.

Unlike, the sub-worlds discussed so far, the partial alethic *must* structure proves the probability of the counterfactual world sought by the speaker and in consequence its virtual actuality. While the previous counterfactual worlds remain virtual (epistemic and attitudinal) in that they are contemplated against the backdrop of an opposite reality, the characterlogical counterfactual world of the conclusion confers on itself an actual epistemic contours due to the prophetic 'must' structure redounding to the power of virtuality. The closure encodes possible success and fulfillments of the upward characterlogical and behavioural counter actualities. However, as the speaker speculates about possibilities accessible to none except those who experience the kind of death or oblivion depicted in the poem, the virtuality of the counterfactual remains suspended and unresolved! The cognitive verb *know* which conveys belief as well as knowledge of the speaking voice in the poem tinges the structure with an epistemic atmosphere despite the alethic *must*. At large, the structure indicates the speaker's unquestionable belief in the possibility of the counterfactual world he draws its contours along the poem. The present continuous tense in 'he is breaking me' as a function-advancing constituent and the simple present elsewhere contribute to and affirm the immediacy and progress of the upward counterfactuality whose final outcome is yet to be experienced. Unlike its speaking voice, the poem ends for the reader without making a definite statement about the possibility of counterfactual worlds it generates and explores. The poem does not run a full circle to end where it begins 'tonight'. Further, as the poem closes, no hint is dropped whatsoever as to whether the oblivion so fervently sought is attained or not.

In an interesting similar vein, the conclusion in *The Going* resorts to the modal *must* structure but not to build a substitute world though. The

speaker discards his virtual world temporarily to plumb out loss and defeat and in the long run the impossibility of the virtual world of contemplation. The *must* structure evokes an intrinsic alethic modality in which a truthful statement is couched. The prevalent tone is, at large, submissive provoking no challenges and no rebellions but dwelling on regret and the irretrievability of the past prior to the death of the speaker' beloved:

Well, well! All's past amend,

Unchangeable. It must go.

I seem but a dead man held on end

To sink down soon. . . .

Still, the speaking voice with *seem* to encode virtuality describes his own passive reception and embrace of undesired reality. Apparently, *seem* with its hypothetical power provokes incredulity on the one hand but also creates epistemic shades of virtuality on the other as the speaker postulates about his virtual death-like existence. As an aftermath of his beloved's death, the lover finds himself falling and entrapped in between two distant worlds. His physical existence runs parallel to his spiritual extinction. Soon after, the speaker abandons this line of argument in favour of another where the virtuality of possible past amendments, rejected earlier, is resumed. He tries to dive deep into the past prior to his beloved's death creating a virtual hypothetical world with 'could' and 'would' to supply its atmosphere:

O you could not know

That such swift fleeing

No soul foreseeing--

Not even I--would undo me so!

He confesses in a tone of sheer desperation that neither of them could have foretold, back then, that this irreversible separation would break him the way it did. The speaker goes in retrospect to the actual past where he builds himself an unrealis virtual world that correlates with the actual world of the present, hence virtuality is prohibited as the prevalent negative structure marks the prohibitive instance. The negative mood contradicts the anticipated epistemic world of knowledge which the verb *know* could have initiated if not for the negation. As such, the actual world of the present in

which the speaker dwells on his suffering and regret is the same virtual world he admits to have failed to build in the actual past. Therefore, it is both actual as well as virtual in that it is both experienced as reality in the immediate present but it was not even predicted in the past when that same speaker was unaware and indifferent. Of course, the launching point is the present time not the past so that while the virtual world is realized in the present, it was entirely absent from the actual past. Its virtual conjuration appends to the present moment where he laments the lack of foresight on his part. The speaking voice repairs to the actual world of the poem every time he ventures to create a virtual world. This is why, his epistemic sub-worlds fail to reinforce belief let alone knowledge and remain purely hypothetical.

Unlike Lawrence's optimistic counterfactual virtuality, Hardy dwells with regret and remorse on his past failure to conjure up a future virtual world where he would project on the moment he is experiencing at the present. Moreover, while the counterfactual worlds in *Shadows* cover a future, speculative projectile of the post death world, in *The Going*, they remain situated in the past where the speaker ruefully laments the lack of predictive talents which costs him very dearly in the present.

### **Conclusions**

Hardy's and Lawrence's poems invest a number of virtual and/or counterfactual worlds that spell out and reinforce their themes and furnish their internal mosaics. In *The Going*, the speaker creates a series of possible virtual worlds which are basically epistemic, deictic and attitudinal. The speaker proposes hypotheses regarding the past through them he suggests amendments, modifications and even alterations so that the present would be improved and enhanced, bitterness mitigated and regret warded off.

Unlike Hardy's, Lawrence's *Shadows* makes no reference to the past as it builds counterfactual worlds of a hypothetical, epistemic nature with the deictic flashforwards to trigger counterfactuality. It even eschews making a definite statement about the present but tends to skip both past

and present and cross into the virtuality of the future. Therefore, its virtual worlds are purely counterfactual versions of the present with which the speakers feel dissatisfied.

To create and furnish the virtual/counterfactual worlds, both poets employ the linguistic repertoire concentrating on the modal constructions, if-conditional not to mention the negative and interrogative moods dominant in *The Going*. Both poems mark their closure with a modal 'must' structure. In *The Going*, the modal *must* is alethic, i.e., expressing truth for the speaker's *must* embraces the world as it is no matter how repulsive his responses are towards it. In *Shadows*, the *must* modal structure is rather epistemic as it conveys a belief on the part of the speaker rather than a truth acknowledged. However, the alethic dimension is retained if the purport is conceived of as a truth, which is what the speaker seems to tenaciously cling to.

In all, while *The Going* uses the present as a basis to explore past possibilities in order to virtually effect changes and create different versions of both past and present, *Shadows* rejects these two dimensions of temporality and indulges in a make-belief journey into the future. The future is altogether absent from *The Going* as the speaker could envisage no future for himself apart from the past and therefore he constantly retreats and withdraws into the security of his serene memories. Alternatively, the past is altogether denied in *Shadows* being inferior and compromising in preference to a brighter, not only less frustrating, but far more superior version of the present-future which are treated interchangeably.

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