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문학석사 학위논문

Gender and Poetic Identity  
in Thomas Hardy's Elegies:  
A Study on *Poems of 1912-13* and Others

토마스 하디의 비가에 나타난 젠더와 시적 자아:  
『시편 1912-13년』을 중심으로

2013년 8월

서울대학교 대학원  
영어영문학과 문학전공

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Abstract

Gender and Poetic Identity  
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The elegy is a major means through which Thomas Hardy constructs his poetic identity. The generic conventions of the elegy elevate the poet-mourner while lamenting the loss of the dead subject on the surface level. Since the genre has been considered a site exclusively reserved for male elegists, Hardy composes relatively conventional elegies for other eminent male poets such as Shakespeare and Swinburne, thereby laying foundation for his poetry. Nonetheless, he takes leave of these predecessors in the end and this departure from the literary forefathers anticipates the opening of his unique poetic realm. The establishment of Hardy's poetic identity is made possible through his love elegies written for women in real life, especially, his deceased wife Emma. In these works, including *Poems of*

*1912-13*, the dead women are treated merely as poetic subjects. Through various turns and tropes of the dead female, Hardy freely writes over the “blank” left by the relationship he shared with them and translates his literary anxiety into language of love. The male elegist is thus able to empower himself more readily in love elegies than in the elegies written for other male poets.

Keywords: Thomas Hardy, Emma, elegy, poetic identity, gender, *Poems of 1912-13*, love elegy  
Student Number: 2011-20025

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## **Introduction**

*Wessex Poems*, Thomas Hardy's first collection of poems, was published not until he was fifty-eight although he started composing poetry when he was twenty-five. Ever since "[a] sense of the truth of poetry, of its supreme place in literature" (*LW 415*) had awakened in him in his twenties, poetry was his only love and he left behind almost a thousand poems before he died in 1928. As James Gibson, the editor of *Thomas Hardy: The Complete Poems*, states with emphasis, "[w]e should not forget that Hardy always wanted to be a poet and that he claims to have written novels solely because in his early years he would not have been able to earn a living as a poet" (xxxv).

Despite his passion for poetry, his poetic career has been overshadowed by his eminent career as a novelist until recently. He strove hard to assert his lifelong loyalty to the genre but was often mocked at; one critic even commented that he had "a grim determination to go down to posterity wearing the laurels of a poet" (qtd. in *LW 415*). Accordingly, he perceived the need to defend himself from such derision, arguing in his personal memos that a poet's life can have patterns other than the stereotypically dramatic and curtailed ones of Shelley, Marlowe, and Keats. Finalizing his stance, he said that "Among those who accomplished late, the poetic spark must always have been latent; but its outspringing may have been frozen and delayed for half a lifetime" (*LW 414*). In order to prove that

there are precedents whose fecundity prospered till the end of their lives, he juxtaposes the “impractical” (*LW* 414) poets listed above with the writers of antiquity:

Homer sang as a blind old man, [. . .] Aeschylus wrote his best up to his death at nearly seventy, [. . .] the best of Sophocles appeared between his 55th. and 90th. years, and Euripides wrote up to 70. (*LW* 414)

The similarity between these classical figures and himself—tireless passion for their art well into the old age—enables Hardy to make a grand gesture of likening himself to the great precursors from the distant past.

Apart from this self-alignment with the classical writers, he devoted the later years of his life to the composition of poems covering a wide variety of genres in order to prepare a firm poetic foothold. Especially, in self-elegiac poems such as “A Poet” and “Afterwards,” he is unafraid to exhibit his personal anxiety about being unable to attain public recognition as a poet. But one strong faith that he holds on to in these pieces is that his ceaseless efforts will bring him lasting fame in death, if not in this life. In “A Poet,” Hardy characterizes himself as the one with keen insight to discover beauty in the ordinary and with an unassuming attitude towards vain glories. By casting himself in a favorable light, he encourages the reader to admire these virtues that he claims as his own. Less conclusive is “Afterwards” in which he wonders how he will be remembered by others once he passes away, but the main purpose is still to eulogize himself:

When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous  
stay,  
And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,  
Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the neighbours say,  
“He was a man who used to notice such things”?<sup>1</sup> (1-4)

Such self-portrayal in his poems and personal writings is so consistent that it becomes symptomatic of Hardy’s apprehension about his poetic status and ultimately, his desire to construct a secure identity.

This thesis focuses on how Hardy copes with his literary anxiety by writing elegies of different kinds. Identifying himself all the while as an elegist, or “a ghost-seer” (qtd. in Archer 39) in his own words, he wrote hundreds of elegies, or at least, elegiac poems that sing of the experience of loss and its aftermath. Among these are his most frequently anthologized works—“Neutral Tones,” “The Darkling Thrush,” “Drummer Hodge,” and “The Convergence of the Twain,” to name only a few. No wonder in an introductory writing about this prolific poet, David Perkins marks “elegiac and commemorative respect for human fates” (143) as an enduring quality of his poetry. Jahan Ramazani suggests that the writer’s ability to feel for “death in the animal kingdom and mutilation in the vegetable world” (33) is one indicator of his deep interest in death and possibly, his dispositional

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<sup>11</sup> All Hardy’s poetic works are quoted from James Gibson’s 2004 edition, which was published in England. Corresponding to the British convention of punctuation, single quotation marks are used to enclose direct speech in this book. But since I follow American English grammar throughout this thesis, the beginning and end of direct speech will be signaled by double quotation marks for the sake of consistency.

compatibility with the elegy. But most of all, one reason for Hardy's conscious choice of the elegy as his general paradigm is its generic convention of empowering the poet-mourner both in and out of the poetic frame.

From the time of classical Greece, the elegy has been considered a genre of identity making; it feigns to be allocentric, mourning for the dead other when in fact, it is the elegist's self that constitutes a beginning and an end itself.<sup>2</sup> Such self-reflexivity is embodied in the usual movement from expression of private feelings of grief and sorrow to consolation, which generally involves the enlargement of the individual scope to that of a universal level. In other words, a specific death is expanded to a transcendental principle, raising the elegist while also advocating the community values. For example, Alastair Fowler enumerates broader concepts that the dead person may represent as follows: "the ages of life, the gifts of the Spirit, regeneracy, sainthood, relation to Christ, or the cosmic identifications of encomiastic hyperbole" (137). Therefore, it can be said that

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This is one quality of the conventional elegy as many scholars have pointed out. Peter Sacks, in *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* (1985), which is now considered to be a standard work that many later critical studies on the genre are based on, defines the elegy as "a poem of mortal loss and consolation" (3), and investigates into the psychoanalytic and mythopoetic origins of the genre. With the help of these two approaches, he proposes an intimate connection between mourning and inheritance. Ramazani succeeds Sacks by exploring how modern elegists break and bend the generic conventions. Beginning with Hardy whom Sacks examines as second to the last in his own book, Ramazani first delineates this aspect of the generic conventions then coins the phrase, "melancholic mourning." He suggests that the new modality of mourning defies any traditional type of closure. In *The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy* edited by Karen Weisman, Gregory Nagy also touches upon this generic quality (13-45).

the elevation of the dead in the elegy is for the sake of the living rather than of the actual poetic subject.

In close connection with this conventional characteristic of the genre as the mourner's self-assertion is the issue of inheritance handed down by one male poet to another.<sup>3</sup> As Celeste Schenck rightly describes, the funeral elegy is "a kind of literary initiation ritual" (*Mourning and Panegyric* 34) that promotes the masculine lineage of the elegists since the genre persistently raises questions of "who sits where (thus figuring positionality), who is more powerful or skilful, who relates and defers to what predecessor, who owns what property, who goes first, who wins or inherits, and what is exchanged" (Sacks 14). It is a site for celebrating careerism, enabling the novice poet to bask in the forebears' reflected glory. The budding poet first follows the time-honored generic convention in order to identify with the already eminent precursors, while simultaneously rewriting the generic conventions so that he could be differentiated from the preceding elegists.

Hence, when John Milton composed "Lycidas" to realize his personal ambition—that is, to elevate his poetic career and the declining genre of pastoral elegy in "the first year of the so-called evolutionary epoch" (Sacks

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<sup>3</sup> No female elegist appears in Sacks's book. Celeste Schenck contends that female poets' mourning had always been a way of "talking back," rather than materializing their own potent speech because they are precluded to enter into the canonical pedigree from the very beginning (13). Ramazani proposes that Sylvia Plath is the first female elegist who effectively revamped the androcentric genre (263). According to him, she utilizes the patriarchal poetics of the elegy in order to attack "the patriarchs" who preceded her, hence part of a reason why Ramazani uses the term "patricidal mourning" (xiii) to describe her works.

92), he decided to stay mostly within the standard pattern, though not without some considerable revisions of the generic conventions.<sup>4</sup> Predictably enough, he sets up an Arcadian world where Edward King, the elegiac subject, and Milton himself make an entrance as two intimate shepherds who “nurs’d upon the self same hill / [and] Fed the same flock” (23-24). Many laments follow with Milton’s use of the mythical characters including the Muses, the blithe reflection upon the idyll, and the spiritual resuscitation. Then the final apotheosis of Lycidas as “the Genius of the shore” (183) provides a familiar ending to the conventional elegy. Having done this, the elegist stands up to leave.

And now the sun had stretch’t out all the hills,

And now was dropt into the Western bay;

At last he rose, and twitch’t his Mantle blue:

Tomorrow to fresh Woods, and Pastures new. (190-93)

It is the first time that the speaker is addressed as a third person except when he quotes Triton’s question, “What hard mishap hath doom’d this gentle swain?” (92). He suddenly distances away from himself in order to sublimate his ego as the rising poet. The abrupt shift insinuates that the

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<sup>4</sup> Samuel Johnson bitingly criticizes “Lycidas” that “whatever images it can supply are long ago exhausted” (422). In other words, there is no truth in this elegy largely because of its excessive dependence on the generic conventions. In fact, Milton still makes use of detached allusions and metaphors that are characteristic of the genre even while trying to subvert them. On the other hand, Balachandra Rajan argues that the poem’s quintessence is its “total authenticity” (63) or put differently, “its fidelity to experience” (64). He views the poet as a grief-stricken mourner who resists against the pastoral tradition because “the unacceptable is brought within the framework of order” (64). Nevertheless, Milton later restores the rules that he breaks at one point to achieve the ultimate goal of the elegy: to announce the elegist’s own immortalization.

speaker's voice might have belonged all along to a consciousness more collective than that of a common swain. Having testified his adequacy, he can now depart for an epic journey as *the poet*, taking over the setting sun. With the predominant self-awareness about "the fact that the language he uses is and is not his own" (Sacks 25), the elegist proclaims himself to be the true heir to his poetic predecessors. Writing an elegy enables the mourner to configure his poetic identity as safely located among those of other male poets. Because it is the genre that grants authority to its creator, the elegy becomes a convenient framework for Hardy who had had a lifelong desire to fortify his self.

In support of this view but focusing more on the gender problem in the genre, Schenck first demonstrates in "Feminism and Deconstruction" how the elegy has always been a patriarchal genre from its inception. She points out the exclusion of "the feminine from its perimeter except as muse principle or attendant nymph" (13) as a generic attribute before examining the central topic of the female elegists' struggle against the male-centered tradition. Originally, the muse plays a definitive role in the creation of a literary work. The male poet and the muse in Classical Greece thus maintained a two-way exchange in that she inspired his poetic creativity so that he, "by virtue of his invocation, in turn reanimate" (Bronfen 363) herself. In the specific context of the elegy, addressing her enabled the elegist to gather strength to continue singing though the frailty of life becomes starker than ever on the face of death.

But according to Sacks, both the historical and personal needs to reconsider the convention of the muse arose (148, 180, 210). To take an example of Milton's work that was mentioned above, it invokes the muses to begin the lament just as his forefathers including Theocritus, Moschus, and Virgil had done.

Begin then, Sisters of the sacred well,  
That from beneath the seat of *Jove* doth spring,  
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string. (15-17)

Nevertheless, it is only to take a drastic measure of impugning the ancient authority of the muses.

What could the Muse herself that *Orpheus* bore,  
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son  
Whom Universal nature did lament,  
When by the rout that made the hideous roar,  
His gory visage down the stream was sent,  
Down the swift *Hebrus* to the *Lesbian* shore. (58-63)

Calliope, the muse of the epic poetry, is pointed out as the object of blame for her inability to revive Orpheus and accordingly, Milton's faith in the power of poetry. Instead, it is Pheobus the sun god who consoles the elegist by assuring the poet that Fame is decided by a heavenly judge (78-82), not the earthly one. The classical muse is still invoked in the elegy, but has long lost ground.

Women's role is further reduced in Hardy's elegies; in most cases, his

female subject is impotent contrary to the conventional muse who is both empowering and empowered by the male elegist. “Her Immortality,” one of his early poems, is an example that presents a transitional muse. As any muse, the dead woman in this poem is summoned when the male speaker invokes her: “You draw me, and I come to you, / My faithful one” (13-14). But as she deprives him of the right to choose either to live or die by dissuading him from committing suicide, she becomes a huge burden on him. She visits him at each and every important occasion but his agony only worsens, and there is no room for freedom:

But grows my grief. When I surcease,  
Through whom alone lives she,  
Her spirit ends its living lease,  
Never again to be! (53-56)

Though the woman claims that she is almost powerless without the male mourner (“In you resides my single power / Of sweet continuance here” [33-34]), she exerts predominant influence over him by forcing him to live on. Through his ritual of commemorating her, she demands to outlive her earthly existence. At least in this instance, her way of “inspiring” the poet, her only means of survival, seems to be parasitic rather than symbiotic.

In order to overcome such overbearing presence of a female who cannot be called the muse proper, Hardy often treats dead women in his poems as a mere poetic subject. His female subjects are not only figures from real life but delegate their authority to the male elegist who then

becomes the sole creator of his art. Of course, the topos of the dead beloved has a long genealogy back into the classical myth about Orpheus and Eurydice that Hardy also uses in his poems about Emma. Male poets have sung of female death because by doing so, they can gain full control over their mute, inactive artistic subject. The “fructifying power of the dead as mediators with that Otherness which lies beyond the knowledge of any survivor” (Bronfen 365) makes a dead female a palatable topic to write on. Elisabeth Bronfen summarizes that elegizing the dead female subject is an effective way of mastering death as a male poet recovers “his signature, his gaze, his masculinity, and his survival” (12). What sets apart the Emma poems from other love elegies is that Emma is a particularly secularized muse with a concrete body. The elegist cohabited with her for more than four decades but eventually their relationship deteriorated into that of almost complete strangers. What Emma once called, the “dream of [her] life” (qtd. in *LW* 121) and Hardy, “‘idyll’” (qtd. in Millgate 171), transpired to be a bitter nightmare, causing “an antagonism that always threatened to burst out into violent quarrels” (*LW* 431).

The main body of this thesis is divided into three parts. First, the male-centered genre of elegy will be investigated by drawing an example of “Adonais,” and also Hardy’s poems that mourn the deaths of fellow male poets. He positions himself among this androcentric family tree by writing these relatively conventional elegies. These directly address the generically

inherent issue of succession, thus revealing the poet's anxiety about his literary status. Two poems are chosen among very few elegies Hardy produced about male poets: an occasional elegy for Shakespeare entitled "To Shakespeare after Three Hundred Years" and "A Singer Asleep," a transitional poem in which the elegist sheds away the legacies of his "old hero" (qtd. in *LW* 263), Swinburne. The fact that he does not produce many elegies about other male poets may speak for Hardy's desire to diverge from the already existing order and move on to the realm he feels most comfortable with: the love elegy.

Beginning the second chapter by discussing Sappho's problematic role in "A Singer Asleep" that anticipates the much weakened female figures in the elegies that follow, the poems about Tryphena Sparks and Louisa Harding, the poet's boyhood sweethearts, will be introduced. In these, his creativity readily occupies the space left "blank" by the dead female subjects. Then, most of *Poems of 1912-13* and other Emma poems will be discussed in the last chapter. Poems about Emma are divided largely into two groups depending on the ways in which the elegist reduces the role of the dead subject. These two major modalities cover the elegist's creation in a relationship filled with nothing but a void, and his translation of literary anxiety into language of affection. Although the kind of affection that he expresses in these poems are far from love of an ordinary couple, the tenacious pursuit of the absent woman enables Hardy to release his *angst*, thereby consolidating his position as a poet.

## **I. Hardy's self-positioning as an elegist**

The process of writing is self-reflexive by nature. Whether it is his quintessential ego, his identity defined by an external force, or a self-image of how he wishes to be seen by others, the writer's self is projected to his product.<sup>5</sup> But writing is also a social activity that involves other poets as T. S. Eliot underscores the significance of literary inheritance in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919).

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. (15)

He emphasizes the legacy handed down by the predecessors while trying to write himself into an ideal order as the disciple of the metaphysical poets. On the other hand, he heavily criticizes the Romantics and the Victorians in this essay (21) and "The Metaphysical Poets" (288). He thereby practices the strategy that has been favored by novice poets throughout history: to

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<sup>5</sup> Literature, at large, has long been considered an androcentric space. The pen is the phallus, empowering male poets to an extent that they can procreate on their own: "In patriarchal Western culture, [. . .] the text's author is a father, a progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis" (Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar 6). This urge to rule out the women from their sphere is neatly summed up by Gerard Manley Hopkins who defines poetry as follows: "masterly execution, which is a kind of male gift, and especially marks off men from women, the begetting of one's thought on paper" (qtd. in Abbott 133). Because the elegy is a doubly male-centered genre (for not only is it a literary genre but a legacy passed on from a male elegist to another male elegist), I use masculine pronouns for the general discussion of writers.

advocate poetics of the distant forefathers and simultaneously maintain safe distance from those who are closer, therefore, more threatening.

Using this framework, this section focuses on the issue of inheritance in Hardy's elegies about male poets. Eager to procure a long aspired reputation as a poet, Hardy also positions himself among those in the hall of fame as a precedent step for establishing an independent domain. Although this characteristic is pointed out as the generic norm of the elegy, it does not appear in many of his elegies; as has been noted, Hardy did not compose that many elegies for other male poets. He mourns the deaths of his contemporaries, including Meredith, Barnes, and Swinburne, but "A Singer Asleep," the one written on the last, is most worthy of notice. Except for these handful instances, "To Shakespeare after Three Hundred Years" is the sole elegy dedicated to a literary ancestor.<sup>6</sup>

The sheer number of poems that commemorate the deaths of ordinary people who are unidentified or merely fictional ("A Man," "After the Death of a Friend, and "To My Father's Violin") may indicate that Hardy is more interested in devoting his talent to the area in which he can be freest from

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<sup>6</sup> At this point, the specificity of the elegy as an occasional poem must be explained. Since it is grounded on a solid biographical fact, the elegist's mourning becomes timely, yet the temporal gap between the elegist and the dead is so enormous that Hardy's mourning for the predecessor can be anything but a personal one. The elegist takes advantage of these intrinsic attributes of the subgenre towards fortifying himself. Other than the elegy written for Shakespeare, Hardy also wrote poems for Shelley and Keats such as "Shelley's Skylark," "Rome: At the Pyramid near the Graves of Shelley and Keats." Both were composed during Hardy's trip to Italy in 1887, later to be published as a part of "Poems of Pilgrimage" section in *Poems of Past and Present* (1901). Despite the fact that they mention the dead precursors just as in "To Shakespeare," these works cannot be called elegies *per se* because strictly speaking, Shelley and Keats are not the main subjects in these poems.

the previous literary influences, since referring to one's fellow poets obliges him to stand always *in relation to* them. An examination of his lesser known works will be the most suitable in proving this point despite their mediocrity because, for one thing, there already have been exhaustive studies done on his forte, that of writing elegies for the deprived or for non-human entities. But what is more important is that delving into the rarely acknowledged site (especially "To Shakespeare") where he creates out of, and despite, his anxiety may enlighten the reader about how Hardy came to achieve a breakthrough.

Prior to exploring his works, taking a look at an earlier example might be helpful in solidifying such a speculation. In "Adonais," the tension between Shelley's desire to subdue another genius of his time and the need to properly mourn the subject prevails. He once evaluated this elegy as "a highly wrought *piece of art*, perhaps better in point of composition than anything [he has] written" (294). This statement finalizes Shelley's triumphant survival over the dead poet. By successfully carrying out the mission of writing a mourning poem for another male poet, the elegist has exhibited his capability to outlive the dead. The dilemma of Shelley mentioned in the beginning of this paragraph is displayed when he reinforces his superiority even while presenting himself as a man torn apart by Keats's death: "Ah, woe is me! Winter is come and gone, / But grief returns with the revolving year" (154-55).

Shelley's defense of Keats from undeserving criticism is also shadowed

with a desire to assert his superiority over the dead. He rewrites Keats's concept of the soul:

Dust to the dust! But the pure spirit shall flow  
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,  
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow  
Through time and change, unquenchably the same,  
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame. (338-  
42)

Shelley, unlike the mourned was convinced that a human soul is always a part of the Universal Soul and that when the body dies, the soul sheds away all the illusions to which it had to be subjected when caught in the body.<sup>7</sup> He thus transforms “Keats’s sensuous and often empirically-based poems into a series of floating Dreams and Splendours” (Epstein 113). Andrew Epstein explains that Shelley felt intimidated by the poetics his fellow poet endorsed, and that this insecurity led to his use of “typical imagery—of things dissolving, disintegrating, abstractions that flutter away as they are asserted—to his evocation of Keats’s own poems and thoughts” (Epstein 113). Notwithstanding the brotherly affection Shelley had towards his contemporary poet and a strange sense that his own fate was somehow intertwined with “Adonais” (Epstein 128), he never reduces the tension.

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<sup>7</sup> In “Adonais,” Shelley attempts to displace Keats’s—that the human soul is complete only if plunged into the human world because the artistic world has to be built on the human experience.

Eliot's theory on poetic self-positioning suggests a guideline but it does not fully account for how Shelley builds his relationships with predecessors. Likewise, Hardy's elegies for male poets do not perfectly fit into this theoretical basis. Instead, Hardy joins hands with Shakespeare and Swinburne by commemorating their deaths, only to take his flight from both in the end. Demonstrating his dutiful participation in "the male elegiac canon, replete with images of men bonding" (Ramazani 21), he relatively conforms to the generic conventions in these poems. This enables him to gather sufficient strength to stand apart from these canonical forefathers. Especially in "A Singer Asleep," he would eventually shed away the legacies of his near forbear to take his own line in elegies about women and most conspicuously, in the Emma poems.

According to Dennis Taylor, the two authors seem to have led "parallel lives" (153). In "From Stratford to Casterbridge," Taylor outlines not a few commonalities between them: "rural beginnings, humble backgrounds, minimal schooling, lack of university education, business interests" (153). Also, they both returned home in later years, Shakespeare to Stratford-upon-Avon, and Hardy to Dorchester. Developing from these startling resemblances, Taylor contends that not only was the dominant theme of haunting in Hardy's fiction greatly influenced by his early readings of Shakespeare, but he was in fact haunted by the great predecessor. To refer to this phenomenon, Taylor coins the term, "an authorial haunting" (153).

Although Taylor limits his main argument to Hardy's early works, the beginning remark of his article that, "Traditionally, or at least, since 1892, Hardy has been seen as Shakespearean – in his tragic depth and characterization, mastery and invention of language, and in his ambitious scope" (123), indicates the prevailing presence of the Renaissance colossus throughout Hardy's literary career.

"To Shakespeare" throws into relief the common ground Hardy thought he shared with the precursor. The poem is often set aside for its relatively unremarkable technique and style but the intimate connection Hardy feels towards the colossal figure in this poem should not pass unnoticed. Being one of very few elegies written about a canonical forebear in the remote past, Hardy takes a daring move to relate himself with the great historical figure. In this elegy, his portrayal of Shakespeare can be divided approximately into three parts: in the first two stanzas, he highlights Shakespeare as an undiscovered man of mystery, the next three describe him as a common man, and the last stanza conventionally elevates him with the help of a literary device.

Bright baffling Soul, least capturable of themes,

Thou, who display'dst a life of commonplace,

Leaving no intimate word or personal trace

Of high design outside the artistry

Of thy penned dreams,

Still shalt remain at heart unread eternally. (1-6)

In the first two lines, Hardy juxtaposes Shakespeare the legendary writer and Shakespeare the ordinary man. Part of the reason why Shakespeare continues to be a mythical figure who charms the public after centuries of his death is that he did not leave any personal records “outside the artistry / Of [his] penned dreams.” He remains “at heart unread eternally” when his powerful imagination arouses tantalizing speculations about his life as a natural man. Hardy seems to have taken after this example when he made his initial resolution not to reveal his personal life. To quote from his personal writings, he once declared that “the world should be concerned with his writings, not with the life or personality of the writer himself” (*LW* 476). Much later, he decided to write his biography when encouraged by Florence Dugdale, his second wife, and Sidney Cockerell. With the help of Florence, a ghost writer of his two biographies, Hardy created a palatable version of his life story with “the aura of authenticity and impersonality implicit in the use of the third-person point of view” (*LW* 479).

This lack of “personal trace” and the greatness of Shakespeare’s works almost sanctify his life. By picturing Shakespeare as a martyr who was born into this world as a part of his pilgrimage, Hardy obtains solace because he imagines himself to share many aspects with the forefather. He expresses dismay at the current situation in which the lackadaisical public and critics do not pay respect as much as he deserves. Following his double who, “like the wind” (10), is believed to have been a man of virtue who never cared for the ephemeral glory, Hardy also looks forward to a more transcendental

kind of fame that lasts through time. Shakespeare was also a seemingly ordinary man, uncaring about winning acclaim, faithfully following the vocation of a writer who had walked “in tracks unchosen and unchecked” (12). Such depiction downplays Shakespeare’s lifetime reputation so that it is comparable to the humbleness Hardy projects onto his own life. For example, in “Afterwards,” the elegist describes himself (or wishes to be remembered) as a man who never cared for fame but kept an eye on “things” (22) that mattered least to others. In another poem entitled “In Tenebris II,” he confesses to have benefited from having these special qualities but not without difficulties: “Till I think I am one born out of due time, who has no calling here” (8). As if a martyr subjected to persecution, both Shakespeare and the elegist would be able to outlive their bodies. As if to compensate for his “youthful disappointment that he could not follow Shakespeare in being a dedicated poet and a professional playwright” (Taylor 153), the mature Hardy chooses this specific image to assert that his current tribulations—first and foremost, of not being recognized enough for his poetry—would only dramatize the final obtainment of a higher reward of winning lasting fame among the posterity.

Unexpectedly, Hardy drags down the ever-apotheosized writer from the throne by anthropomorphizing.

[A]t thy last breath, with mindless note  
The borough clocks but samely tongued the hour,  
The Avon just as always glassed the tower,

Thy age was published on thy passing-bell

But in due rote

With other dwellers' deaths accorded a like knell. (13-18)

The humanization of the elevated subject is unconventional of the generic tradition, especially considering that the poem is composed as a contribution to a tercentenary celebration of the dead subject's birth. Contrary to the prestigious throne he holds until now, Shakespeare's greatness as a writer goes unobserved in his humble hometown at the time of his death. His death is an event that is most commonplace, controlled by the indifferent Fate ("in mindless note," "in due rote") in accordance with Hardy's outlook on the world. The death-knell that rings the same for everyone works as mechanically as Hardy's Universe does. One thing to note about this episode of a villager who is unaware of Shakespeare's genius is the way the elegist recounts it; his addition of unnecessary, vague parenthetical comments surely raises doubts.

(met, *maybe*,

And thereon queried by *some* squire's *good* dame

Driving in shopward) (19-21; my emphases)

Words of uncertainty sprinkled here and there suggest that the anecdote may have stemmed purely out of the elegist's imagination. Hardy inserts an episode about the more personified Shakespeare that matches with his own humble self-image in order to identify himself with the mourned subject.

Throughout "To Shakespeare," Hardy has rigorously tried to close the

spatiotemporal gap between the historical figure and himself. But having done this, the elegist seems to have realized that he would have to leave off so that he can cultivate his own territory. Before the final departure from Shakespeare, the conventional coda of immortalizing both the elegist and the mourned occurs, now that the end is near.

So, like a strange bright bird we sometimes find  
To mingle with the barn-door brood awhile,  
Then vanish from their homely domicile –  
Into man’s poesy, we wot not whence,  
Flew thy strange mind,

Lodged there a radiant guest, and sped for ever thence. (32-37)

With an abrupt transition (“So,”), Hardy readily immortalizes Shakespeare as a being that has flown away since the death. The precursor is again restored to his original high position. Most prominently through the use of literary devices that abstract the subject, Shakespeare is transformed into a entity completely unrelated to himself (“a strange bright bird”) and also, fragmented (“thy strange mind”). When this happens, there seems to be a relapse into Hardy’s alienation from his idol. The ambiguous adjective, “strange,” which repetitively appears only a few lines apart adds even more distance between them.

The gap that the elegist has attempted at filling in so far again seems to have widened by the end, perhaps inevitably. The martyr image (a haloed “guest” who has temporarily come down to live among the lowly to edify

them), which Hardy adopted to draw an analogy between himself and the predecessor, recurs but the final flight of Shakespeare's mind from the earthly world seems to take leave of the elegist who speaks from that very world. This form of elevating the dead is distinct from the conventional one. Instead of eternalizing the mourned by configuring him as the spirit or the object of commemoration, Hardy makes him vanish into the air. Although the curious way he disappears mythologizes his extraordinary talent (which satisfies the ceremonial purpose of the occasion), the elegist seems more than enthusiastic to erase the dead subject from the ground on which only he now occupies. Not only is Shakespeare's status brought down to zero in the sense that the elegist spares three stanzas each to humanize (stanzas 3, 4, 5) and apotheosize (stanzas 1, 2, 6) the dead, but the deification is interrupted by a lump that anthropomorphizes him. In "To Shakespeare," Hardy ultimately decides to go beyond the ideal image of Shakespeare—that he has expressed his wish to identify with. With this poem as the last on the deaths of male poets, the elegist devotes himself to writing mourning songs on other figures.

In "To Shakespeare," Hardy does not explicitly show his connection with the precursor whose mind finally leaves forever. Here in the elegy for Swinburne, not only are there remnants of the predecessor but the elegist directly attests to his qualification as the immediate successor to Swinburne whom he believed to be the one and only figure to represent the Victorian

period when he takes over the most authoritative contemporary rival. What is intriguing is that despite the great discrepancies between their perspectives that are to be shortly discussed, the poet displays most outstanding workmanship in an elegy about Swinburne. "A Singer Asleep" is more advanced in form and technique compared with other elegies about male poets. One possible conjecture that we can draw from this extraordinary performance is that Hardy is eager to demonstrate his aptitude when writing about the figure against whom he must have felt most immediate and strongest sense of rivalry. As Sacks suggests, "A Singer Asleep" serves as the appropriate link between Victorian and modern poetry (228).

The relationship between Hardy and Swinburne was quite similar to that between Keats and Shelley in the sense that it was based upon the admixture of mutual rivalry and admiration. They both lived in London in the 1860s, when the social code of conduct was as strict as it could be. According to Ralph Pite, Swinburne's audaciousness in speaking out what was largely forbidden was praised by Hardy (132-33). To take an instance from his biography, at the proposal to become the president of the Society Authors, he reacted as follows: "No recent English writer has been so roundly abused by the press as I have been in past times, with the single exception of Swinburne, & he is dead" (*LW* 372). This allegedly humble action is in fact a gesture full of self-confidence. He does not say a word about his direct predecessor, Meredith, at the institution. Predictably,

snatching away the poetic bequest from Meredith was much readily carried out:

No matter. Further and further still  
Through the world's vaporous vitiate air  
His words wing on – as live words will. (16-18)

The Dorset poet's case is not an exception because in "The Last Signal," Barnes is cast as an ordinary man as Hardy recounts the memories of one day at "meeting" the dead man's coffin on its way to burial.

To take his last journey forth – he who in his prime  
Trudged so many a time from that gate athwart the land!  
Thus a farewell to me he signalled on his grave-way,  
As with a wave of his hand. (13-16)

Evidently, his "prime" is past and he is put into a metaphor as it becomes hard to tell from the coffin from Barnes's spirit. In "To Shakespeare," "George Meredith," "The Last Signal," the spiritualized versions of the dead are not allowed a footing in this world. From this, it may be inferred that Hardy felt uncomfortable about forging a link with other writers. In many of Hardy's elegies about male poets, it is only the elegist himself who survives to see and materialize the transcendental experience of communicating with the dead.

On the other hand, taking over Swinburne seems to have been quite a challenge for Hardy as will be analyzed. He points out Swinburne, his former hero as the single figure whose infamy matches his own,

transforming the public disgrace into his source of pride. Through this gesture, Hardy not only places himself alongside his “hero,” but fosters his status as the only survivor of the subversive party, the status that even outlasts the elder’s.

But otherwise, their tone, style, and theme all greatly differed. Especially, the worlds that they created in their poems differed *toto caelo*. In Strachey’s words, Hardy was tied fast to the mundane world on earth, speaking “in the quiet voice of a modern man or woman” (270) whereas Swinburne was often considered a “heavenly” poet with his enthusiastic embrace of pagan mythology. Apart from their poetics, their opinion on Shakespeare diverged. As explored in the analysis of “To Shakespeare,” Hardy continuously expressed his sense of kinship with the great writer. And of course, Swinburne’s interest in the Renaissance writer was as keen as the respect Hardy had towards the eminent figure; Swinburne was one of few insightful critics who brought into attention the hitherto undervalued aspects of Shakespeare in his three eloquent books. Kozusko acknowledges Swinburne’s creative outlook on Shakespeare:

While other Victorian critics busied themselves with ridding Shakespeare’s fecund garden of its more unsettling weeds—latent homosexuality, latent anti-nationalism—Swinburne reads the bard against the grain to find support of his own subversive sexuality and aesthetic politics. (158)

Hardy could place himself beside his fellow poet in sharing his enthusiasm

for the Renaissance writer. But whereas Swinburne's rediscovery of the literary figure enhanced mainly Shakespeare's excellence in "dramatic creation" as O. J. Campbell asserts (837), Hardy admired him as "a poet, man of letters, and seer of life" (*LW* 368) than a theatrician. For this very reason, he refused to join a committee of founding Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in 1908 (Taylor 128).

First imitating Swinburne's landscape then cleverly turning it into his own, he looks forward to the Emma poems that culminate his poetry. As in "To Shakespeare," Hardy pays due respect to his contemporary in "A Singer Asleep," but he is more conscious of having to part from him to establish his originality. Without delay, he quickly diverges from the forbear whom he follows after in the first stanza. The first stanza depicts the place where Swinburne is buried as the ever flowing sea with the widely spread coastlines. The mystic mood characteristic of a classical pagan world prevails as the Fates are the governing figure in the life of a man. These all remind us of the settings in Swinburne's "The Triumph of Time" (1866) and *Atlanta in Calydon* (1865).

After having constructed a monument for Swinburne by borrowing from the precursor's ideas and words, the elegist tears it down by breaking into this peaceful landscape immediately in the second stanza.

— It was as though, a garland of red roses  
Had fallen about the hood of some smug nun  
When irresponsibly dropped as from the sun,

In fulth of numbers freaked with musical closes,

Upon Victoria's formal middle time

His leaves of rhythm and rhyme. (6-11)

The opening with “a peculiarly modern ellipsis” (Sacks 230) is startling, but Hardy proceeds with the idiosyncratic combination of archaic language and “daringly modern diction” (230). They signal the transition to the elegist’s own dominion, and the contrast within the stanza dramatizes the movement. The stanza displays a stark contrast between the Victorian euphemism and the Hardyan acerbity by mirroring them: “a garland of red roses” is a metaphor for the poetic domain that is embodied in “leaves of rhythm and rhyme,” and Queen Victoria—as Hardy understood to be “a most uninteresting woman” (qtd. in Bailey 114)—is compared to “some smug nun.” Lastly, the fall from “the sun,” of which Swinburne wrote many poems, is turned into the characteristically Hardyan beauty of chaos and irregularity that accords with “*fulth* of numbers *freaked* with musical closes” (my emphases). In this respect, the second stanza embodies the change from the Swinburnean scene detached from any sense of time and space into a Hardyan one, which is captured from quotidian life. This spatial arrangement further anticipates Hardy’s bold departure from the Victorian forefather, instead displaying his own “un-Victorian directness” (Sacks 230).

The abrupt transformation carried out by Hardy can be interpreted as a violation of the predecessor’s realm but the poet compensates for this by soon paying due respect to Swinburne. He reminisces about the day when he

first read the great writer's work:

Glassing the sunshine into my bent eyes,  
I walked and read with a quick glad surprise  
New words, in classic guise, – (13-15)

He pours out praises for the elder in the next two stanzas, as if to assure that though he will soon move on his own, he appreciates Swinburne's genius while also defending the dead from the venomous tongues of critics.

Taking notice of Swinburne's novelty, Hardy still stays within the hero's domain. It is the starkly Swinburnean idea of configuring Sappho as a means to advocate the poet's agenda.

Her singing-mistress verily was no other  
Than she the Lesbian, she the music-mother  
Of all the tribe that feel in melodies. . . . (27-29)

The immortal continuity is handed down from Sappho whom Swinburne consistently invokes in his works. Hardy imitates Swinburne's demolition of the monumental figure in women's poetry, especially when he grants his elder with the privilege to directly inherit, or to be more explicit, take over Sappho. The woman herself empowers her successor by rendering her own influence unnecessary ("Sufficient now are thine." [43]). Through this action, Hardy surpasses both precursors by arranging and commanding the words exchanged in this meeting within his poetic framework. Of course, the poet emphasizes the illusory nature of this encounter, saying that "one can hold in thought" (32) or one merely "dreams" (38) this historic scene, but it

should taken into consideration that this elegiac scene entirely depends on his own imagination. His extraordinary insight is corroborated since he is the sole director and witness of the moment. Set apart from the unknowing “mariners” (37), he brings this self-empowering scene to an end as the specters disappear without a trace, and the new stanza about the speaker’s departure from Swinburne opens. Charged with a new sense of confidence, Hardy bids farewell. He leaves behind the mythical landscape characteristic of Swinburne where the elder himself is buried.

So here, beneath the waking constellations,  
Where the waves peal their everlasting strains,  
And their dull subterrene reverberations  
Shake him when storms make mountains of their plains –  
Him once their peer in sad improvisations,  
And deft as wind to cleave their frothy manes –  
I leave him, while the daylight gleam declines  
Upon the capes and chines. (45-52)

It is at this point that Hardy, as “the only subject of the entire one-sentence stanza” (Sacks 234), completes the long expected departure. But instead of completely turning his back on the predecessor whose legacy has become “everlasting” yet “dull” for being dead and mute, Hardy still celebrates Swinburne’s influence. Not only is Hardy “beneath” the stellified dead but the sun (though much attenuated), one of the precursor’s favorite imageries as seen in the second stanza, casts upon—or more accurately, “declines

upon”—his own domain from which the elegist takes leave of. The poem concludes as Hardy displays himself as the one who outlives the “old hero” and yet preparing to testify his own qualification as the rightful successor. This ending of “A Singer Asleep” is a decrescendo placed right before the long awaited climax. And that very zenith will materialize in the elegies where real women are readily tamed into mere poetic subjects.

## **II. From the Muse to the Dead Poetic Subject: A Prelude to the Emma Poems**

Although Hardy takes his leave of the elegized male subject at the end of “A Singer Asleep,” Swinburne’s authority remains fairly undiminished. Instead of taking over, the elegist simply leaves—meaning both “to depart from” and “to let alone”—the precursor when he goes off from the Swinburnean scenery. Likewise, the title that the elegist first confers on Sappho, “the music-mother / Of *all* tribe that feel in melodies” (28-29 my emphasis), seems to elevate her as the master of poetry without distinction of gender. But as the elegy is given a close inspection, it will be evident that the title is only nominal. Hardy’s configuration of Sappho takes after the phenomenon described by Joan DeJean: the Greek female poet is abused as “an accessory in a detour of desire by which a series of male poets position themselves with respect to each other” (36).

Hardy’s emulation of Sappho-Swinburne legacy is problematic because Sappho whom Yopie Prins describes as “the proper name for the Poetess” (10), is generalized as the mother figure for “all” so that the male poets can possess her. According to Susan Brown, Sappho became a popular literary topos especially for the Victorian women poets who viewed her and her death as “a source of inspiration and despair” (182). In reaction to the acute masculine desire to aestheticize female death, Victorian women poets such as Felicia Hemans and Letitia Elizabeth Landon identified themselves with Sappho. Brown explains that they portrayed her mainly as a figure standing

“between self-display and self-destruction” (Reynolds; qtd. in Brown 196), representative of their own adversities as female writers during that time. By the middle of the century, the increasing significance of her role as “a more politicized, more overtly mediated figure” (Brown 196), began to shadow forth the profound effect she would exert in the modern and contemporary periods as the feminist icon.<sup>8</sup>

But while Brown’s study focuses on the Greek female poet’s role as a harbinger of feminism in the period, Prins’s argument that “the interest in Sappho as an increasingly fragmentary text of many parts is a distinctly Victorian phenomenon” (4) proposes a more comprehensive outlook. Prins opens *Victorian Sappho* (1999) with an introduction that has missing parts just like the Sapphic corpus itself, emphasizing that the fragmentary nature of Sappho’s works leads to “an imaginary totalization” (3). The very paucity of reliable version of her life story and literary works renders her a useful means for both male and female writers. The mysterious figure of Sappho contributes not only to female identity making but also to male

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<sup>8</sup> Gale Swiontkowski briefly summarizes Sappho’s power and how modern feminist poets apply it to accomplish their individual purpose:

Rich, like Sexton and Plath and many other poets, has used the enigmatic figure of Sappho to reflect her own most prominent concerns. A young and very ambitious Sylvia Plath ranked Sappho as the first among her rivals for poetic fame [. . .], and Anne Sexton toward the end of her life wrote a poem about a modern Sappho that reveals Sexton’s own interest in literary fame as well as her dread of losing conventional supports in pursuit of it. [. . .] To Rich, Sappho is a poetic foremother, [. . .] someone who may help her decipher the optimal female response to a male-dominated world. (87)

This intriguing passage enumerates Sappho’s legacy bequeathed upon the contemporary female poets, exhibiting the similar kind of anxiety about poetic fame and a sense of rivalry that male poets felt towards the other great figures.

appropriation of the female as in “A Singer Asleep” and Swinburne’s poetical works. Although Brown, at one point, boldly contends that upon the publication of “Anactoria,” Swinburne “liberated” (182) the female poet by publicly acknowledging her sexuality for the first time in English poetry, the male poet ultimately follows the convention of constructing his own poetic identity with the use of Sappho.<sup>9</sup> Thaïs Morgan is one scholar who asserts that Sappho does not go beyond functioning as a tool for the male poet: “the identification of sensuality and femininity ultimately aligns [Swinburne] with mainstream Victorian gender ideology: woman’s sphere includes the body and passion.” She further elaborates that no matter how Swinburne reads Sappho against the grain of his time, her death is outlasted by the male poet who speaks through her voice (207). In the end, the male poet takes advantage of the monumental figure for his own immortalization.

In his elegy for Swinburne, Hardy recognizes Sappho neither as the female poet who exercises influence upon the male descendants nor as the Platonic muse who develops the powers latent within the male poet. But when capturing the nightly meeting between Swinburne and Sappho, the

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<sup>9</sup> “A Singer Asleep” falls under the immense influence of Swinburne’s “Ave Atque Vale,” a monody for Baudelaire who marks Sappho as his dominant predecessor. Lawrence Lipking explains that Swinburne inherits the legacy of the French writer’s transformation of Sappho “to the high priestess of a Lesbian cult” (91). Before then, her lesbianism was overshadowed by the authoritative interpretation provided by Ovid’s *Heroides*, which portrays her as a woman abandoned by her male lover and unable to “find in her artistic vocation any compensation” (Brown 183) for the loss. She thus was thought to be fully dependent on her male partner, and this misconception had long disqualified her to function as a figure representative of female emancipation. Her sexuality, for posing a threat to patriarchy, had been repressed for centuries. Lipking’s *Abandoning Women and Poetic Tradition* analyzes the different ways in which male poets manipulate Sappho to meet their own ends.

elegist humbly calls himself “one” (32, 38), perhaps to give an impression that he is only an external observer who does not intervene in the event at all.

## VII

[O]ne can hold in thought that nightly here  
His phantom may draw down to the water’s brim,  
And hers come up to meet it, as a dim  
Lone shine upon the heaving hydrosphere,  
And mariners wonder as they traverse near,  
Unknowing of her and him. (32-37)

Swinburne’s specter lowers himself at the shore as she comes up to meet him. Although this configuration is based on the widely known legend that Sappho drowned herself, it is a gesture that inevitably puts her in a comparatively inferior position. The scene also equates the woman with the Siren, a mythological creature that charms men with her song and eventually kills him. This evocation of an archetypal femme fatale itself is problematic but more startling are the words exchanged between the “phantom” and “her spectral *form*” (my emphasis).

## VIII

“O teacher, where lies hid thy burning line;  
Where are those songs, O poetess divine  
Whose very orts are love incarnadine?”  
And her smile back: “Disciple true and warm,  
Sufficient now are thine.” . . . (39-43)

To the male “disciple” who is eager to seek her advice, she gives an answer that authorizes his self-sufficiency. Here, Swinburne obtains the prerogative to speak to his “teacher” (though it is only a shape of her) face to face and is also selected as her rightful inheritor. He is now assured of his capability to bring out the innate poetic genius within. It is at this point that Sappho is made willingly to give up her status either as a female poet or the muse. Having granted such power to Swinburne, her ghost almost magically evaporates as embodied in the ellipses attached at the end of stanza VIII. In short, Sappho becomes extinct once Swinburne’s wish-fulfillment is achieved. Making a stepping-stone of this scene of succession, Hardy finally moves forward to herald a new era of his poetic world, which will be examined in the next chapter.

As mentioned previously, Sappho in “A Singer Asleep” is an implement used towards fostering the fraternity, which sustains the elegiac legacy. Hardy gives her an exceedingly poor treatment, especially considering the fact that he had deep reverence for the precursor to such an extent as to imitate her style more than once. Apart from writing “Sapphic Fragment,” he chooses to borrow from the female predecessor when introducing himself to the literary world as a poet: “The Temporary and All” is a Sapphic poem that opens his first collection of poems.<sup>10</sup> He informs the reader by putting “*Sapphics*” in a parenthesis that immediately follows the title. With the help

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<sup>10</sup> *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* provides a tentative definition of the Sapphic line and the Sapphic stanza. The complex scansion and the verse form have greatly interested western poets, especially women poets. (“Sapphic”).

of the Sapphic verse form including its hendecasyllabic meter, he is able to enhance his signature creaking effect. As usual, he coins eccentric words like “chancefulness” (1) and “showance” (23) in this poem and the pattern is perfect to create the jerkiness that he also exhibits in “Hap” and “The Darkling Thrush.” By making use of the female poet’s legacy, Hardy attempts to demonstrate how he wishes to define his poetic identity.

Hardy’s reduction of Sappho’s significance in “A Singer Asleep” anticipates his elegies for real women whom he once had fallen in love with. At the end of these love elegies, he both directly and indirectly addresses his own anxiety about death, aging, and vocational inheritance. Compared to the elegies written for other male poets, what seems to be at work in these poems is the poet’s consciousness on a more individual level, independent from former literary influences. By mourning for secular women, he gains full control over the inanimate subject yet without burdening himself of having to connect to the male forebears. In his elegies for male poets, Hardy could buttress his poetic identity only through his relations with other eminent male predecessors, though the generic framework endorses the elegist’s self-elevation. In the love elegies, however, Hardy escapes from the haunting presence of the literary precursors, easily possessing the dead female subjects who are neither poets nor the muses. Once those women cease to exist, they become the objects of desire.

Loss of the female subject is the very starting point of “Thoughts of

Phena,” a lament about Tryphena Sparks, Hardy’s cousin. From the beginning, the elegist assures that the woman does not contribute to his creative production in any way.

Not a line of her writing have I,  
Not a thread of her hair,  
No mark of her late time as dame in her dwelling, whereby  
I may picture her there;  
And in vain do I urge my unsight  
To conceive my lost prize  
At her close [. . .] (1-7)

A series of negative adverbs, “not,” that are placed in the beginning of the first three lines, stresses his lack of Phena but at the same time, her existence is highlighted ironically, only in a negative form. Just as a strong denial might as well mean an acceptance, the words used to emphasize her loss exert the strongest influence over his poetic imagination she has ever been able to. Contrary to what he claims, it is not “in vain” that he tries to picture her; though he is without any relic to aid him in commemorating her, he has the ability to re-create her. His “unsight” becomes the very tool to empower his poetic identity by giving birth to new, perhaps more intriguing, versions of Phena.

By calling her name endearingly as “Phena” in the title, he seems to draw her near, but he continues to distance himself from her. He abstracts her from the beginning by claiming that he himself does not have any clue as

to how she is to be pictured. For no specific information about Phena is given, the reader has no other choice but to follow Hardy's lead. In order to guide the reader through the domain that is exclusively his, he begins to ask a chain of questions to himself, wondering about the unknown aspects of her life.

What scenes spread around her last days,

Sad, shining, or dim?

Did her gifts and compassions enray and enarch her sweet ways

With an aureate nimb?

Or did life-light decline from her years,

And mischances control

Her full day-star; unease, or regret, or forebodings, or fears

Disennoble her soul? (10-17)

This elaborate conjecture seems to rule out any personal emotions though Phena is suspected to have maintained a romantic relationship with Hardy before he met Emma (Millgate 98). Delicious musings follow "at news of her death," and the elegist depends on poetic diction more than ever in this part. These melodiously phrased speculations stand in stark contrast to the use of colloquial language in the rest of the poem. Her death does not mean much to him personally, but the event provides an occasion that officially enables him to borrow from the tradition of love-elegy.

Then stressing his helplessness in his past behavior, he casually opens his last stanza with a clause, "Thus I do but the phantom retain" (18). After

that, he generalizes her as “the maiden of yore” (19) and also totalizes her by objectifying her as his property (“my lost prize”; “my relic” [20]).

It may be the more  
That no line of her writing have I,  
Nor a thread of her hair,  
No mark of her late time as dame in her dwelling, whereby  
I may picture her there. (21-25)

Indeed, she is “fined” (20)—the curious word translatable both as “refined” and “reduced”—in his brain towards the end. Finally coming into a full circle, the exact same words in the first stanza are repeated in the last. This reiteration once again makes sure the female subject’s current state of being helplessly dead. More significantly, Hardy explicitly reveals that his intention was never to be productive but merely to toy with the subject to test his masculine prowess. He captures only “the best of her” in “Thoughts of Phena” as in Petrarch’s *Rime Sparse* and Dante’s *Vita Nuova* in order to assert his masculinity more readily. By following the love elegy tradition of idealizing the dead female, he can vindicate his claim to “the property,” the woman as his own creation. He feels more comfortable in handling his poetic subjects who, instead of being writing agents, are only written upon. The elegist escapes from the male forebears’ orbit by eliding any reference to them, so to speak.

Unlike “Thoughts of Phena” in which Hardy conjures up possible images of the dead woman, love elegies about Louisa Harding are even more

repressive in that he lays out the reconstructed relationship with her.<sup>11</sup> In his elegies about Louisa, the poet tries to rebuild frustrated love (LW304). The inability to reach her reinforces Hardy's poetic identity when he chooses to take a different route from the conventional mourning of the dead in "The Passer-By." In this poem, subtitled "(L.H. Recalls Her Romance)," Hardy speaks through Louisa's voice, imagining her to be a girl crossed in faithful love for his younger self. It thus carries out Hardy's ultimate victory over the woman and also, difference of class that hindered him from loving her.

And now he passes by no more,  
That youth I loved too true!  
.....  
He'll make her feel him dear,  
Become her daily comforter,  
Then tire him of her beauteous gear,  
And disappear! (11-12, 17-20)

The failure of fulfilling his infatuation must have left an unrecoverable scar to his pride. The way he copes with this disappointing experience is to boost

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<sup>11</sup> Hardy was prone to fall in love with women, especially those lesser known to himself. According to Millgate, he often imagined romantic relationships with the women "briefly glimpsed or slightly known" (LW 58) ever since he was a boy, or be attracted to them while catching a glimpse of them on the streets of London (LW 274). The biographer conjectures that the difficulties of Hardy's first marriage is likely to have encouraged him to "regret past failures to claim" (LW 98) women like Louisa and Tryphena. Although the nature of the relationship remains largely unknown, Millgate speculates that Hardy insists on having maintained quite a serious relationship with Louisa:

The class barrier certainly loomed large so far as Louisa was concerned, but Hardy seems to have persuaded himself that it was his own shyness that prevented the relationship from progressing even to an exchange of words, let alone of vows. (LW 58)

his injured masculine ego by making her see him as a libertine that is, a hyper-masculine type. Despite his coldness to her, the poet's version of Louisa laments his great significance he continues to have in her life. Louisa's voice is that of a virtuous woman who blushes and waits instead of flirting. According to Hardy, the elegist never learned of her true feelings because she kept her affection secret. Her emotional outburst at his "disappearance" in the last stanza completes his revenge both at Louisa who was not enthusiastic enough and the world that would not let him love freely. Written after Louisa's death, the poem takes advantage of her silence. Since the dead subject cannot talk back, the poet-mourner speaks about and *for* her with perfect freedom, thus succeeding to leave their relationship an ever unsettled conundrum. By writing this elegy, the poet-mourner manages to control the self-destructive pain caused by the loss of his past romance.

The ultimate goal of the elegist is more explicit in "To Louisa in the Lane," which is written as a response to "The Passer-By." Now that he has successfully made Louisa admit that she used to have tender emotions towards him, the elegist regrets his belatedness in his own voice ("I will not pass as in my prime / I passed at each day's wane." [3-4]). The wordplay is memorable; he used to pass her by in his youth at the end of each day, but he is now at the twilight of his life and will recant his early apathy. Since his untimely repentance does not mean much to the already dead subject, Hardy's speech has a hollow ring to it:

– Ah, I remember!

To do it you will have to see

Anew this sorry scene wherein you have ceased to be! (5-7)

This remark brings into relief her eternal absence from this world and accordingly, vanity of his effort to promise thus. To nail down his authority over the subject, he weakens her as an “aspen form” (8), transforming her into a delicate tree as she utters a “spectral frail alarm” (10). Her current existence as a phantom is feeble as it can be. It is now her turn to “remember” (12), and what she gathers is that she cannot leave this world because of the man who did not love her in the past but confesses to do so now. This situation recurs in Hardy’s other elegies, heralding the Emma poems that belatedly mourn the death of his first wife.

Hearing her grievous outcry that the male elegist’s affection towards her obstructs her from taking an eternal rest, Hardy acts out in the last stanza how he will respond if such should occur.

And I shall answer: “Sweet of eyes,

Carry me with you, Dear,

To where you donned this spirit-guise;

It’s better there than here!”

– Till I remember

Such is a deed you cannot do:

Wait must I, till with flung-off flesh I follow you. (15-21)

Hardy is a figure through whom the woman remains in this world, probably regardless of her will, as the audience can tell from her reproachful tone: “It

is through him with blitheful brow / Who did not love me then, but loves and draws me now!" (13-14) The elegist acknowledges that the dead woman is utterly powerless ("cannot") to carry him away however he asks her. He thereby does not leave room for Louisa to play a role as anything more than a dead female who is a convenient poetic subject to write about. At the same time, it seems that their relationship is turned around in the last line of this stanza because it is now the elegist who passively waits, not Louisa as she has done in "The Passer-By."

Most importantly, however, the change of focus from the dead female to the male elegist himself occurs. The phrase, "flung-off flesh," disguises his anxiety about death. Concentrating on the elegist's own death is the generic convention but imitating and subverting the tradition of the love elegy enables Hardy to freely explore his own ways of mourning since he has disconnected himself from the male poets. As he subdues Tryphena and Louisa into manageable poetic subjects, he makes most out of Emma and her death. But perhaps due to the multidimensional nature of his relationship with Emma compared to those with his boyhood sweethearts, *Poems of 1912-13* and other Emma poems that will be examined in the next chapter demand more in-depth analysis.

### **III. Poems of 1912-13 and other Emma poems**

The very group of poems, *Poems of 1912-13*, that was to place a laurel wreath on Hardy's head started to come into being in 1912, immediately following Emma's death in November that year. Carl J. Weber numbers it among the best love poems throughout literary history (v) and Sacks calls it "singular" (235). Claire Tomalin even sees the creation of the sequence as marking the second birth of the writer and opens her biography with the year of its composition, instead of 1840 when he was actually born (xvii).

Two peculiarities of *Poems of 1912-13* may be useful when reading through the sequence. The first is the change the poet made five years after the original publication. The addition of three more poems to the cycle of eighteen poems, which initially ended with "The Phantom Horsewoman," greatly affected the corpus as a whole. Compared with the previous version that ends with the apotheosis of the dead, the new version focuses more on the elegist by closing his journey covering over five years more triumphantly. Another memorable aspect of the cycle is that it is a part of the collection named *Satires of Circumstance* (1914). This title distracts the reader's attention away from the grave nature of the works included. The collection provides a curious mixture of Hardy's most widely recognized works ("Channel Firing" and "The Convergence of the Twain"), and a considerable number of other kinds that lightly satirizes the belittlement of death in modern times. Apart from "Ah, Are You Digging on My Grave?" in which

the dead female speaker is forced to face the cruel reality of her utter isolation, a group of short lyrics entitled *Satires of Circumstance in Fifteen Glimpses* capture the frivolity of human tragedy. The sequence concludes with “XV. In the Moonlight” whose speaker closely resembles the poet-mourner in *Poems of 1912-13*.

“Nay: she was the woman I did not love,  
Whom all the others were ranked above,  
Whom during her life I thought nothing of.” (13-15)

The man makes a guilt-ridden confession, trying to make amends to the dead lover he once forsook. Nevertheless, he ends up in frustration because their fortunes are reversed after her death; the man is now the jilted lover while the woman does not react to his pleas.

The male lover’s endeavor to re-construct his love story by compensating for his indifference towards the dead female when she was alive also dominates Hardy’s love elegies for Emma. Of course, *Poems of 1912-13* engages conflicting emotions compared with the songs of lament such as “The Passer-By” and “To Louisa in the Lane” that safely operate within the artificial framework of the elegy. Hardy is set apart from his male precursors who also sang of dead female subjects because he is fully conscious of how Emma’s “ghost he seeks out, addresses, impersonates, and causes to speak is but an aspect of himself” (Knoepflmacher 1062), and places his evasions in display by cleverly exposing the intricate workings of the male elegist’s mind. But even while Hardy rewrites the conventions

inherited by the male elegists, he finally achieves empowerment of his poetic identity through these elegies for the first wife. Although Emma is a wife with whom he shared more than half of his life at the time of her death, he continues to assert his identity as a poet through Emma by treating her as a poetic subject. Just like Phena and Louisa, Emma is the male poet's artistic product. This relationship resembles that between Pygmalion and Galatea in the sense that *Poems of 1912-13* is a projection of the poet's masculine ego for the most part.<sup>12</sup>

*Poems of 1912-13* can be divided into two groups depending on the ways in which Hardy deals with his dead wife as the invaluable poetic subject. The first includes those in which Hardy tames her into the female subject by writing some kind of emotion into a relationship devoid of any sentiment. He inscribes emotion that cannot simply be called grief or love. This is somewhat ironic because *Poems of 1912-13* has often been read as the unsent love letters of the poet-mourner: as mentioned earlier, Weber calls the sequence one of the best love poems while Sacks and Ramazani do not completely dismiss the possibility of Emma's death to have reignited Hardy's love. Anne-Lise François also reiterates Hardy's articulation of "a

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<sup>12</sup> In order to testify the onanistic desire within Pygmalion, Stephen Guy-Bray quotes a passage from the ending of Ovid's version of the myth. When the sculptor finally kissed the statue-turned-maiden, she "felt the kisses, blushed and, lifting her timid eyes up to the light, she saw the sky and her lover at the same time" (451). He interprets this scene as revealing the true worth of Pygmalion's creation; the sculptor cherishes the statue because she is the means by which he can identify with the heaven (451). Guy-Bray deduces that the story promotes an idea that "a fantasy object is better than a real person and that we prize art because it enables us to live in the world of the masturbatory fantasy" (451). In the Emma poems, Hardy carries out this project by transforming the female subject and his relationship with her into the objects of his artistic fantasy.

double loss,” that of Emma’s body and of “marital communication,” but pays special attention to the latter.<sup>13</sup> In her opinion, the meager signs of loss are “an after-image to the latency and uneventfulness of possession itself” (64) in spite of all the years that she and the elegist had spent together. If there is any emotion expressed by the elegist, it is “the pained surprise at how little there is to mourn” (François 64). This shocking surprise leads to the change in the male elegist’s attitude towards his poetic subject. Unlike Phena and Louisa who can be easily trimmed into figures of his own ideal vision for having maintained certain distance from the poet, Emma is a woman whose dashing charm wore off after the marriage. Being the first Mrs. Hardy, Emma was probably the only woman whom the writer could really look into, at least before he met Florence, but she is also turned *back* into an abstraction in his love elegies.

The fact that anxiety and frustration in the Emma poems are often confused as emotion related to love allows the male elegist to conceal his poetic identity yet to consolidate it. The second group of poems openly discusses the elegist’s anxiety about death, aging, and future reputation as a poet. As already looked into in the previous chapter, such attitude towards the female allows the male elegist much more power to control his poetic subject than in the elegies for his male forefathers. When he mourns for the death of a real woman to whom he once felt strong love, he is able to

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<sup>13</sup> Both Sacks (234-59) and Ramazani (47-68) comment upon this “double loss” of which the male elegist fully takes advantage by creating an elegy out of it.

translate apprehensions about making self-assertion as a poet into language of renewed affection. To put it differently, the generic framework of the love elegy enables Hardy to exhibit his personal weaknesses without appearing effeminate. Whatever complaints and laments he puts forth in the love elegies are justified as the words coming from a faithful lover. In addition, a small cluster of poems will be briefly analyzed. In these works, Hardy criticizes himself for falling back on the conventional approaches in handling his poetic subject.

Roughly speaking, Hardy's voice has two tones in the Emma poems. As the opening poem, "The Going," shows, Hardy either exhibits emotional turbulence, or calmness as in "The Walk." "The Walk" is a short poem consisting of two stanzas that delineates an aftermath of Emma's death in a surprisingly serene tone. The poem is structured so as to demonstrate the fact that the speaker perceives "almost no empirical or even affective difference" (François 69). Both stanzas tell an everyday experience of taking a walk by himself "to the hill-top tree" (2).

You did not walk with me  
Of late  
.....  
You were weak and lame,  
So you never came,  
And I went alone, and I did not mind,

Not thinking of you as left behind. (1-2, 5-8)

But the nursery-rhyme simplicity of the reason why he left her by herself sounds like a “lame” excuse, and his own carelessness is soon revealed (“I did not mind, / Not thinking of you as left behind”). Commenting on this part, François proposes that Hardy’s negligence “passes seamlessly into an equally heedless mode of inclusion that counted [Emma’s] presence as a matter of course” (70), and hence the ending that recalls her insignificance both in life and death:

What difference, then?

Only that underlying sense

Of the look of a room on returning thence. (14-16)

The little difference Emma’s death makes confuses Hardy himself; “a room,” which stands for the size of the space that Emma occupied in her husband’s life when she was alive, is so meager that it throws the four decades that they were together into the shade.

The reading of “The Walk” is based upon the premise that the loss in the sequence is “the indefiniteness and illocatability of its actual moment and even of its object” (François 64). This narrow room she leaves behind is filled by Hardy when he writes over her face in “Your Last Drive.” Confirming his self-awareness about the impossibility of any communication with the ghost, the elegist vainly endeavors to draw a speech from Emma. Zeiger compares Emma’s unseen face “in the flickering sheen” (16) with “Eurydice’s at that luminal moment at the edge of the upper world,

when the warmth and light of the sun had just reached her face” (57). But it is at this strangely idyllic moment of reminiscing about her last trip that the Hardy decides to address “the economic problem of poetic mourning” (Ramazani 53). Their earlier muteness becomes “the condition” (Ramazani 53) for his writing upon her face, and the fact that he did not see her face would later empower his speech written upon her blank face. As in “The Walk,” the elegist sounds so composed that he seems almost merciless. Retrospectively outlining the journey in which he was not with her, he expands her death to mortality of humanity in general.

[O]n your left you passed the spot

.....

Beholding it with a heedless eye

As alien from you, though under its tree

You soon would halt everlastingly. (7, 10-12)

The acute sense of time makes him repetitively remind himself how little time was left to her before she would be *made* to return (“in a week” [4]; “never again” [6]; “eight days later” [8]; “everlastingly”). There is even a hint of mockery when he does this because he points out that her lack of foresight renders her ignorant of her approaching death.

But before moving on to stanza 3 in which he briefly justifies himself and then writes on Emma’s face, he clearly reveals an inner conflict between the desires to admit his fault and to push forward by acting his own will to solidify his poetic identity. When he bluntly confesses “I drove not with

you. . . .” (13), there is a sense of guilt disguised by ellipses. Of course, this regret is only short-lived. He immediately makes excuses that he would not have been able to know nor do anything about her death had he known, stating, “Nor have read the writing upon your face” (17). According to Kerry McSweeney, this phrase can also be read as “I would not have been looking at your face as I never did” (197), throwing Hardy’s habitual indifference toward his wife into relief. The poet-mourner now reveals his consciousness about the benefit he is reaping of their former lack of communication, which now proves to be the very source of his elegizing.

“I go hence soon to my resting-place;

“You may miss me then. But I shall not know

How many times you visit me there,

Or what your thoughts are, or if you go

There never at all. And I shall not care.

Should you censure me I shall take no heed,

And even your praises no more shall need.” (18-24)

This elegy comes only as a result of the words left unsaid by Emma so that he can “impersonate” her voice, making her say things that conveniently accord with his desire to even out the faults on both parties. In order to achieve this goal, he configures the tone of her speech as vengeful, as if to pay her husband back for his unconcern during her lifetime.

What becomes manifest through this utterance is that it is only the

elegist who is benefited by mourning. The elegy can come only as a result of the words left unsaid by Emma so that he can impersonate her voice, making her say things that conveniently accord with his desire. Death is a point of no return as Hardy will conclude in the last stanza. On the other hand, this daring decision to reveal the vanity of mourning speech is liberating at the same time in that it discloses the repressive mechanism of the conventional love elegy. The dead female does not need a person to mourn for her death because whatever he does is beyond her knowledge and for this reason, the act of mourning turns out to be masturbatory.

Nonetheless, he soon defers the criticism of the love elegy in the following stanza, still trying to testify that his vocation as the elegist is not fruitless.

True: never you'll know. And you will not mind.

But shall I then slight you because of such?

Dear ghost, in the past did you ever find

The thought "What profit" move me much?

Yet abides the fact, indeed, the same, —

You are past love, praise, indifference, blame. (25-30)

He puts out a one-man show by reacting to the woman's accusation that is actually his own words. Amid this awkward self-defense, he addresses her as "Dear ghost" but it sounds clumsy at most, partly because the defense lacks conviction. Not only does it end up tautologically—note the self-defense caught in between the beginning and end of the last stanza that end up with

the same conclusions—but his language does not keep up with his insistence that he is treating her with due respect by writing an elegy. According to the speaker, his integrity is used to render the question of “profit,” an economic term, futile. Yet coupled with the compact form of stanza that wholly consists of the un-indented lines, caesuras nail her death (“Yet abides the fact, indeed, the same,— / You are past love, praise, indifference, blame.”). The line’s correspondence to the beginning of the stanza finalizes her lifelessness and although the elegist seizes control of the blankness left by Emma by writing over it, he still seems undecided as how to view and put forth his mourning act.

In order to settle this uncertainty, Hardy keeps a tight rein on the female subject by borrowing from the generic convention of abstracting the dead. One generic approach that Hardy takes when picturing Emma, disregarding her distinct status as a wife of a little less than four decades, is that he idealizes, thus erasing her real self. In “The Haunter,” he ventriloquizes Emma’s voice for the first time after “Your Last Drive” in order to force words in her moveless mouth. He seemingly expresses her desire, which fortunately accords with his own, and this unburdens Hardy from having to justify his act of mourning.

How shall I let him know

That whither his fancy sets him wandering

I, too, alertly go? – (2-4)

The elegist transforms Emma who used to be independent (or to be harsher,

unruly) into his loyal shadow. She has become “an epitome of the Victorian ideal of the female as a self-effacing help-mate” (McSweeney 201), completely giving up her unrestrained nature. By making her voice extremely submissive, full of sentimental exclamations, he willingly exposes the discordance between his alleged goal, which is to speak Emma’s mind, and the final product that empowers his poetic authority. Contrary to his own conjecture in “I Found Her Out There” that her shade will travel back to Cornwall, he makes Emma’s ghost eager to stay with him in Dorchester. The only reason he cannot be sure of her loyalty is because she is powerless to make her speech heard.

This also leads her to “[o]nly listen” (8) to “the words he lifts [her]” (7)—presumably his elegies dedicated to her. With the repeated “thereto” at the end of each stanza, she is, indeed, “his shade” (22) who echoes his words. The statement she makes that she faithfully follows him just as when she “used to do” (6), threatens the authority of the elegist’s words by contradicting Hardy’s description of their relationship in “Rain on a Grave.”

One who to shelter

Her delicate head

Would quicken and quicken

Each tentative tread

If drops chanced to pelt her (“Rain on a Grave” 10-14)

The “hereto” in the second stanza of “The Haunter,” however, seems to place the poet also at his wit’s end because his words spoken through her voice

both shake the ground of his self set up as the eager protector of his wife, while they simultaneously fulfill his desire to re-create her ideal image as a passive woman.

When I could answer he did not say them:

When I could let him know

How I would like to join in his journeys

Seldom he wished to go.

Now that he goes and wants me with him

More than he used to do,

Never he sees my faithful phantom

Though he speaks thereto. (9-16)

Further confusing the reader, Hardy vicariously confesses his faults in the past that he belatedly wishes to correct. Due to her death, however, the use of “thereto” in this stanza seems to stand alone among the four, existing only to bring into relief the lonely echo of his voice in the form of panegyric as she says in line 7. Just like her ghost who cannot help but “[o]nly listen thereto,” Hardy’s much belated attempt to communicate with Emma bounces back at himself. Her voice is weak, unheard by the poet but so is his own, incapable of reaching Emma once out of this poetic frame.

In the last stanza, the voice of a subservient woman who persistently clings to her husband comes to the climax. Her lack of “the power” (23) gives the reader a role as a mediator between Hardy and the ghost. This necessity of her to rely on an external being positions her beneath the reader and also

the poet who renders her fully dependent on “the poet’s written word” (Sacks 247).

Tell him a faithful one is doing  
All that love can do  
Still that his path may be worth pursuing,  
And to bring peace thereto. (29-32)

Written in an imperative form, it is still a favor that she has to ask considering her powerless position. In this respect, Ramazani calls the poem “a wish-fulfilling fantasy” (56) of the elegist. But the phrase that the elegist borrows from Swinburne threatens his potency. Hardy turns the line “All that love can do” from Swinburne’s “Félise” into a musically inflated language.

Though love do all that love can do,  
My heart will never ache or break  
For your heart’s sake. (23-25)

In contrast to Hardy’s version in which the ghost uses the phrase to show her eternal faith, authorizing the mourner to continue writing elegies as an act of penance, the same expression in Swinburne’s poem explains the change in the lover’s heart as a part of natural course of love, fated to be wrecked by time. Hardy’s inversion of Emma’s utterance renders her voice, and even her existence itself, nugatory and the poem turns out to be a mere play of language that aims to establish Hardy’s poetic authority. “His Visitor” is another poem that features Emma’s ghost without much power. She is

made to feel slighted by the natural changes in the realm of the living and as a result, she becomes a self-exile to “rejoin the roomy silence, and the mute and manifold / Souls of old” (19-20).

One of the most conventional methods of “exiling,” in other words, distantiating the elegist himself from the female subject, is to abstract her.<sup>14</sup> According to the history of the genre, infantilization of the deceased has been an easy way of distancing the living from the dead and this occurs in “Rain on a Grave” and “I Found Her Out There.” In the former, the pouring raindrops on Emma’s tomb are scornful just as she imagined them to be when she was alive.

Clouds spout upon her  
Their water amain  
In ruthless disdain. (1-3)

He uses strong expressions (“spout”; “ruthless disdain”; “pelt” [14]) to project his own anger upon nature that is conventionally depicted as nurturing. She was an extremely sensitive, almost hysterical woman who “lately had shivered with pain / As at touch of dishonour” (5-6) if the rain, which she felt to be a bunch of “arrows” (9), should fall upon her. The

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<sup>14</sup> Tim Armstrong enumerates “references to the cycle of the seasons, flowers on a grave, and Emma as a child” (362) as the conventional aspects of these poems. McSweeney also elaborates on other generic conventions such as the elegist’s death-wish and the muse’s apotheoses (199). Both critics speak highly of the innovative changes made by Hardy. The poet revises the conventions to verify his originality; nature in “Rain on a Grave” is even more unsympathetic than that in “A Death-Day Recalled” in which the elegist also rewrites the pastoral convention of empathizing nature. In this sense, the mourner not only laments that nature is apathetic for not grieving enough for Emma’s death, but he is also announcing the death of the elegiac convention.

following stanza, quoted above in the discussion of “Your Last Drive,” describes himself as a sort of protector who used to “shelter” her, anxious to keep her from any harm. The poem closes with the usual suicidal wish followed by the combination of a unique form of stellification (which McSweeney names “terrestrial apotheosis” [199]) and infantilization.

Soon will be growing  
Green blades from her mound,  
And daisies be showing  
Like stars on the ground,  
Till she form part of them –  
Ay –the sweet heart of them,  
Loved beyond measure  
With a child’s pleasure  
All her life’s round. (28-36)

Emma is transformed from a woman with frayed nerves to an innocent child, and it is for the better because the poet then can reduce her into a harmless being. The transforming logic is embedded in the three rhyming words in the last stanza, “mound” (29), “ground,” and “round.” With the “-ound” sound that connotes a sense of cyclical completeness or closure, they finalize her death, implying also the inevitable reversion to Mother Nature.

A similar form of infantilization, which is effective in erasing the unfavorable aspects of the dead woman, appears in “I Found Her Out There.” In this poem, the elegist more openly reveals his own violence, tracing back

his faults that led to Emma's regression to a child. In this respect, the title, which is also repeated in line 1, is confessional; to *find out* connotes a discovery of the undiscovered or a hunt for game, reducing the woman into an entity that is less than human. The poem maintains the male elegist's ego by infantilizing and explicitly affronting her. He first discovers her in a chaotic landscape

[w]here the ocean breaks  
On the purple strand,  
And the hurricane shakes  
The solid land. (5-8)

He then takes her away from there to his domain "here" (9), and lays her down in "a noiseless nest" (11) as if he was dealing with a lifeless doll. This act, which stands for the movement from Cornwall to Dorchester after their marriage in 1874, at first sounds ideal but Hardy soon discloses that she is, in fact, forced to be away from the place where she "loved so well" (16).

At this turning point, the reader begins to view the violent adjectives that Hardy uses to describe the tumultuous landscape and the woman's wild nature both preceding and following this section in a more skeptical light. Just as expected, her ghost is humiliated in the last stanza.

Yet her shade, maybe,  
Will creep underground  
Till it catch the sound  
Of that western sea

.....

And joy in its throbs

With the heart of a child. (33-36, 39-40)

Hardy revises many elegiac conventions in this poem: the woman he fell in love with is not a stereotypically ideal type but more of a wild adventuress; nature is uncaring of man and most of all; consolation he provides in the end is not the usual one as Sacks observes.<sup>15</sup> Instead of freezing her into the “Genius still of the spot” as in “The Figure in the Scene” (15), he seems to grant what he never yielded to her when she was alive: to stay the way she always wanted to be. But what happens is that he sadomasochistically imagines Emma’s ghost creep in all fours to get back to where he snatched her away from. Further weakened as an innocent child, she is unconscious of his degrading measures against her. Knoepfmacher reads the poem in a positive light, explaining that the elegist vicariously liberates himself by placing Emma in her childhood days where gender binary loses its meaning (1056). In contrast to this contention, the elegist incapacitates the female subject as much as possible by infantilizing her so that he can readily gain the upper hand. And her liberation, if it can happen at all, is only a possibility (“would” [25]; “maybe”) thought up by the man who is intent on flaunting his poetic prowess.

In the first edition of *Poems of 1912-13*, Hardy closed his sequence

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<sup>15</sup> Sacks mistakenly judges that the endings both of “Rain on a Grave” and “I Found Her Out There” are “so conventionally consoling,” despite their own “intensely ironic and bleak moments” (245).

with “The Phantom Horsewoman” that replaces the dead woman with a sublimated version of her, hinting at the next group of poems that translate the elegist’s own poetic anxiety into language of love. The poem recounts the elegist’s experience of seeing himself from a distance. In order to distance himself from his own decrepit body, the poet separates himself as a spectator in the beginning. He calls his own ways “[q]ueer” (1) since the only actions he takes are to come, stand, and then stare into the air with “moveless hands / And face and gaze” (5-6). The distanced self of the poet, “I,” gradually overtakes the visionary “he.” Blurred is the distinction between the two as “they” in the second stanza makes an entrance as “a consensus spokesman for the outside view” (McSweeney 215).

They say he sees as an instant thing  
                   More clear than to-day,  
                   .....  
                   Warm, real, and keen,  
                   What his back years bring –  
 A phantom of his own figuring. (10-11, 16-18)

What confirms the identification of the “I” and the “he” is the fact that the reader is eventually led into the elegist’s inner consciousness. Ironically, “the seaward haze” (5) sharpens his view of the phantom. A moment “once in play” (13) taken from Hardy’s past is more “real” than any experience he undergoes “to-day.” A sharp impression left by a fragment of his past is enhanced by the sound of a voiceless fricative [s] put one after another (“A

sweet soft scene” [13]), but Hardy does not hesitate to proclaim the contrived nature of this keen image of a phantom horsewoman. Once more emphasized in the next part is the very artificiality of “this vision of his” (39): “As if on the air / It were drawn rose bright” (25). In addition, it is a portable image that he can carry around anywhere.

Though the vision he creates, “refined to a pristine freshness” (McSweeney 215), is surely the transcendental form that ensures her continued existence even after her death, it is more belittling to Emma than elevating. Her specificity as a lover and a wife is reduced into nothingness as she is mythologized as “[a] ghost-girl-rider” (23). This image of Emma as a fiery girl on horseback is doubly degrading to her since it is a hybrid form of the conventional infantilization of the dead in “Rain on a Grave” and “I Found Her Out There,” and the sublimation of the dead as an artistic product. That is to say, this deification eternalizes the poetic prowess of the elegist while objectifying the dead woman who has been a living part of his life. Her image is the permanent kind that conquers time, contrary to the bereaved who “withers daily” (29). Amidst the sustained longing for the beloved that is the convention of the love elegy, the focus is subtly shifted to the survivor’s overwhelming anxiety about aging. Hardy expresses a hint of envy at the fixed image of her youth that is accented with the energetic landscape: “that shagged and shaly / Atlantic spot” (28-29).

And though, toil-tried,

He withers daily,

Time touches her not.  
But she still rides gaily  
.....  
And as when first eyed

Draws rein and sings to the swing of the tide. (23-26, 30-31).

Corresponding to the conventional coexistence of the immortalization of the woman and the elegist's anxiety about aging and approaching death, "The Phantom Horsewoman" provides a traditional coda to the sequence.

An analogous image in "A Woman Driving" places even more distance between Hardy and his wife because he freely expresses his ulterior motive in elegizing upon Emma. He seems to have no private connection to a woman and since he does not feign his eagerness to view her as he has done in the previous poems such as "The Going," "The Voice," and "After a Journey," she can no longer be seen by him. He can tell her recent condition only through the mediators, "others" (9), who do not view her with "close and curious sight" (12) as he himself once did.

Where drives she now? It may be where  
No mortal horses are,  
But in a chariot of the air  
Towards some radiant star. (17-20)

He readily accepts her as an otherworldly being. Fitting into the generic convention, she is stellified. Such an easy deification of her as the Roman goddess of the evening, Selene, who drives her moon chariot, speaks for the

fact that even persistent efforts made to retrieve the past and her ideal self in *Poems of 1912-13* seem to be lost forever.

So far, the poems in which the elegist fills up the hollow space between himself and Emma have been looked into. As a part of his project to fortify his status as a poet, he first reduces the woman to a mere poetic subject, especially by abstracting her. From now on, the poems that both directly and indirectly demonstrate Hardy's concern with poetry will be examined. In these, his anxiety to make a poetic self-assertion that might seem effeminate is transformed into a proper reaction of a bereaved husband. Through this tactic, Hardy can cut himself off from the connection with the male precursors, finally establishing his unique poetic identity.

To overcome his intangible anxiety, he needs a concrete substitute for his real object of anger and frustration. The epitome of such a poem is "The Voice," one of the most anthologized works among the Emma poems. Positioned after "The Haunter," which is spoken by Emma's submissive voice that the poet ventriloquizes, "The Voice" is allegedly the poet's response to her speech, though it enacts the male elegist's self-reflexive doubt as a poet who is too cautious to assert his poetic identity just yet. He does not hear her actual voice and the sound he hears comes from his own consciousness since the central consciousness that holds the experience together seems very vague, especially in the last stanza. As the title implies, the sonic effects take up much significance in this poem.

Woman much missed, how you call to me, call to me,  
Saying that now you are not as you were  
When you had changed from the one who was all to me  
But as at first, when our day was fair. (1-4)

This way of addressing Emma perplexes us because though “much missed,” she is called simply as “[w]oman,” a generic noun, which seems insufficient to speak for their intimate relationship. This “impersonal” apostrophe is then followed by an echo, vacant speech that boomerangs on himself (“how you call to me, call to me”). Not long after the beginning, the reader realizes that the whole unit seems a little bizarre to have come from a desperate man similar to the speaker in “XV. In the Moonlight.” The first line sounds almost condescending with an exclamatory adverb, “how.” Moreover, the convoluted quality of the speech that imitates the voice of the older Emma seems to mock at the impossibility of what he tries to make her say, because Hardy’s ideal version of Emma has always been a product of his own imagination and it can never be resurrected once out of his poetic frame. The rhyming counterpart (“all to me”) of the first line transforms the original echo into another form of an echo, this time shedding light on the eventual realization that her real self is not the one he fell in love with before the marriage. In accordance with this ideal but impossible speech, Sacks claims that both the generic noun “woman” and “*all to me*” (my emphasis) have the “totalizing force” (248) just like the idealized Emma who is always easily subsumable by the elegist. “The Voice,” in general, is the elegist’s

soliloquy. Feeling intimidated that her words might prove futile, he hastily demands to “view” her image from the past as a form of authentication. His imagination is in full command of what follows.

The speaker’s aspiration for a visual image rather than an aural one conjures up an ideal woman who passively “waits for” (7) him, but this figure is easily dissolvable because it only exists as his creation. Taking after Orpheus the singer who rescues his wife from the underworld but soon loses her when he turns to look at her, Hardy trespasses on the forbidden realm of vision.

Or is it only the breeze, in its listlessness  
Travelling across the wet mead to me here,  
You being ever dissolved to wan wistlessness,  
Heard no more again far or near? (9-12)

Just like the image of the woman, the garment her image is wearing evaporates soon with his sudden acknowledgement of “the breeze.” The sound of the airy breeze and the image is materialized into the harsh words, both in terms of sound and sense: “listlessness” and “wistlessness.” His romantic quest is again characterized with the words that mean dullness and indifference that are often used to describe his conjugal relationship with Emma. Focusing on the first word of the stanza, “Or,” however, McSweeney sees the poem in line with the nineteenth-century literature in which “the search for transcendent tokens or ‘doubtful knowledge’ [. . .] culminates in

the uncertainty of alternative possibilities”<sup>16</sup> (202). Nothing can be assured when both the voice and vision that the elegist briefly relies on turn out to be ephemeral.

Thus I; faltering forward,  
Leaves around me falling,  
Wind oozing thin through the thorn from norward  
And the woman calling. (17-20)

Standing in the ruined landscape where the leaves fall and the wind “ooz[es] thin,” the elegist seems to be uncertain about his poetic genius, which he so readily asserted in the first group of poems. Full of conundrums, the last stanza begins with an ambiguous adverb “thus,” which both looks backward and forward. The reader is confused about what to make of its meaning but Hardy refuses to give time to think, immediately placing a caesura perhaps to insinuate his isolation. A sense of torpor comes from the change of the rhythm in the last stanza that enacts the “faltering.” There is no regulated pattern but the dactylic rhythm eventually recedes toward the end, with the last word of each stanza ending with a feminine rhyme. All these create the sound that corresponds to the poet’s stumbling, halting attempts. The stress is followed by the light syllable, interrupted by commas, then gradually all progresses come to a stop. Connected with a series of commas, participial constructions appear but no concrete action takes place, and the actions that

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<sup>16</sup> McSweeney lists examples that are based on such school of philosophy: Shelley’s “The Two Spirits,” Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale,” Tennyson’s *Holy Grail* idyll, and Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (202).

might have occurred only linger. Even the symbolic source of his empowerment, “the breeze,” that stands for his poetic breath, is not sure to survive; not only does it travel from the bleak north but also is extremely lethargic. This desiccated wind will be unable to reach the poet, either disperse in the air or be caught in the bramble. The poet emphasizes its inescapability from the harsh grasp of the thorns with his use of the repeated voiceless sounds [th] (“thin through the thorn”). Far from the Romantic symbol of the wind as powerful poetic imagination, Hardy’s breeze is neither freely blowing nor raging. Concluding his poem with the even more impersonal address to Emma as the third person (“the woman”), compared with the relatively more intimate “woman much missed” in the second line, Hardy takes a step further away from the dead. The woman’s voice stagnates in the air, separated as a single line, as the elegist moves “faltering” but nonetheless, “forward.”

Written in December 1912, “The Going,” the first poem of the sequence, expresses raw shock and a sense of betrayal at Emma’s sudden death, but latent is his wish to address his poetic concern. A surprising kind of question, which breaks the generic tradition, opens this poem, accusing the dead woman. It bluntly addresses her as “you” (1).

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! (1-7)

Not knowing of her departure beforehand angers him although he was quite familiar with her “swift style” (12) as he mildly reproaches her “thoughtlessness” in “Without Ceremony.” Emma never gave him a chance to prepare for parting, an action that divests the elegist of the power to control. Having obtained only a partial authority in their relationship, Hardy underscores his desire to shirk his responsibilities—one of which is of not caring enough for her recent illness—by making the dead an active agent. She seems to leave this world almost voluntarily, against the writer’s usual deterministic views (Ramazani 50) that death is a matter of inevitability. In accordance with this change of perspective, her death knell is much softened, the word “death” itself never to appear throughout the poem. Instead, a couple other expressions here in the stanza (“close your term,” “up and begone”) and elsewhere (“vanishing” [31]; “swift fleeing” [40]) substitute for the dreadful word.

But the excessive evasion only throws her eternal departure into relief. The relative lightness of those words not only belittles the weight of her death upon his life, but simultaneously matches it with the topos of a poet’s taking flight out of this earthly world to taste the heavenly realm (“I could not follow / With wing of swallow”). From the first stanza, his concern with the self takes over Emma’s death as he readily drifts away from colloquial

language in the first four lines to the kind that belongs to the realm of poetry, melodiously echoing with the diphthong sound /-ow/. He thrusts this Romantic image of flight in an unexpected position in order to join his literary forbears. It is not “one glimpse of you” that he truly cares for but his poetic inspiration. Upon entering the second stanza, the elegist again accuses her bad manners. Interestingly enough, all the acts that she has not done are related to the act of speech:

Never to bid good-bye,  
Or lip me the softest call,  
Or utter a wish for a word, while I  
Saw morning harden upon the wall,  
Unmoved, unknowing  
That your great going  
Had place that moment, and altered all. (8-14)

Her indifference to communicate with him is countered by his own nonchalance as he reminisces about the morning that she died. At the moment of her death, he casually waits for dawn as morning, the elegiac motif of the new beginning full of hope, “hardens upon the wall.” This stiffening image describes not only the relentless fate that is characteristically Hardyian but also “a wife literally hardening into rigor mortis” (Ramazani 51). Added to this, the image also signifies the moment of irreversibility as can be deduced from the syntactical alignment of “I,” “morning,” and “wall” by the anesthetic epithets, “Unmoved, unknowing”:

“something inoperative—a latent and long-dormant relation—passes over into something permanently dead and beyond rescue” (François 68). Indeed, the significance of the two delayed epithets is emphasized as they are put in a separate line. They connote the dilemma of the relationship between Hardy and Emma; by concluding with the word, “unknowing,” the elegist self-victimizes by depicting himself in a helpless state in contrast to the woman who seems to have been more than willing to leave this world, but he also feels guilty for having been “unmoved.” For the sake of coherence, however, he closes the stanza by sarcastically naming her death, “your great going,” just as he finishes line 12 with the word that shifts his responsibility on the dead.

The accusatory tone continues on to the next stanza when he resents being deluded into believing that the illusory vision he sees is Emma.

Why do you make me [. . .]  
[. . .] think for a breath it is you I see  
.....

Till in darkening dankness

The yawning blankness

Of the perspective sickens me! (15-16, 19-21)

He is forced into envisioning her but it is only “for a breath,” infused with his own poetic breath. Because he longed for “one glimpse of” her through his swallow-flight, that is to say, his poetic power in the first stanza, he cannot bear to admit its “yawning blankness.” Apart from the ending, the

return to reality is one moment in the poem that Hardy sounds most agitated. Ramazani calls these moments as unconventional: “Never in the canonical tradition of elegy had a poet vented such anger at the dead person for betraying him” (51). These two instances, as just pointed out, concern the elegist’s poetic prowess rather than the dead female’s loss itself. His anxiety about the self is embodied in the two key phrases of the part quoted above: “darkening dankness” and “the yawning blankness.” The difficulty of pronouncing the succeeding rhyming pair of “dankness” and “blankness,” due to the consonants [k] and [s] that doubly stop the flow of wind, connotes friction and emptiness, the qualities that best represent the poet’s current state of mind. And the adjectives that describe those two conditions are also extremely dismal. Especially, “yawning blankness,” evokes the menacing image of “a gaping hole” (Sacks 242), which is suggestive of the forbidden realm that poets yearn to learn of but only the dead subject can experience. The Otherness that lurks behind the dead female intimidates him because that Otherness can engulf him anytime, even when he has not yet achieved the ultimate goal of his life: to leave behind a legacy like *Poems of 1912-13* that his posterity can remember him by.

As if to alleviate his agitated mind, the poet then winds up a clock further to the past when he was in love with Emma. This time travel back to their early days in Cornwall haunts Hardy’s poetry, making him take a real journey there and invoke those memories. According to the elegist, this was when “Life unrolled [them] its very best” (28). Her romanticized image

dominates the whole following stanza: she is a wild girl on horseback, riding among the landscape full of life, and yet “the swan-necked one” who faithfully keeps his side. As Sacks points out, this image is a product of “the old mourner but equally fictive product of the young lover” (242). The description materializes the poet’s fantasy especially since this energetic young girl coyly assists him, displacing the uncontrollable Emma of the recent past. Instead of taking leave of him without notice as in “The Going” and “Without Ceremony,” her sole happiness seems to come from staying with him.

But his imagination is again interrupted and he is made to face up to the reality. Contrary to the first and third stanzas that begin with an interrogative but, more precisely, a form of lament, he asks a real question this time:

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? (29-32)

Commenting on this question, Ramazani proposes that the poet’s monologue is facilitated by “the absence of such dialogue” (52) just as in “Your Last Drive.” He goes even further to accuse Hardy of evading to recognize their earlier lack of communication as “the basis of his current volubility” (52). In fact, what he truly mourns at the occasion of her death seems to be “those days long dead” and his youthful self in that irreversible

past. Throughout the sequence, Hardy is most likely to admit his fault when he turns his eyes to the distant past in Cornwall or when he speaks through Emma's voice, which is used to reinforce the poet's own idyllic vision. But he breaks away from the powerful literary figures when he explicitly shares the blame by bundling himself with her ("we"). Furthermore, he quotes the words that they might have said but never did. He admits a lack of human sympathy on both parts in patching up a fracture between the past and present, stressing in turn the absence of mutual communication. What is even more startling than that is his self-mockery.

"In this bright spring weather

We'll visit together

Those places that once we visited." (33-35)

The words never said are quoted rather awkwardly, emptied out of their meaning by the artificial syntax. Both the repetition of the same word ("visit"; "visited") and a couple of rhyming words ("weather"; "together") evoke "the almost nursery-rhyme simplicity" (Sacks 243). This serpentine speech enhances the uselessness of his question, sending it back to the starting point. His illusion thus quickly broken, the ending is as frustrating as it can be.

Well, well! All's past amend.

Unchangeable. It must go.

I seem but a dead man held on end

To sink down soon. . . . O you could not know

That such swift fleeing

No soul foreseeing

Not even I – would undo me so! (36-42)

The stanza is fragmented with caesuras, denoting complete discontinuity. He painfully tries to convince himself that it is too late either to correct or retrieve himself as the ambiguous word “amend” signals. Referring back to the image of vacuum that is about to swallow him up (“yawning blankness”), he confesses to be at the verge of death. In this extraordinary ending of an elegy, he self-consciously presents the disintegration of his self, reinforcing his image as a helplessly “time-torn man” (“A Broken Appointment” 15).

But even in “A Broken Appointment,” an elegy that Leavis assesses as full of “particular evocations of utter loss, the blindness of chance, the poignancy of love and its helplessness and the cruelty of time” (61), the lyric speaker affirms his own moral rather than grieving for her “dear presence” (3).<sup>17</sup> The speaker is numbed by Time and now calmly recounts his lover’s failure to show up. This “broken appointment” disillusiones his vision of the lost woman whom he discovers to lack sympathy. For her very choice not to be there, he can now lament the essential lack in the female subject.

Yet less for loss of your dear presence there

Than that I thus found lacking in your make

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<sup>17</sup> Although the poem does not mourn the death of a specific human being, it laments the failure of romance and, more broadly, faith in another human being. For this reason, Gibson and Trevor Johnson number this poem among “the five great elegies that are the summit of Hardy’s achievement” (164).

That high compassion which can overbear

Reluctance for pure lovingkindness' sake

Grieved I. (3-7)

Her refusal to sympathetically respond to his love causes pain in the speaker but the failure is for the better, because it is only then that he can envision something more valuable than the woman and worldly love, a part of “the store / Of human deeds divine in all but name” (11-12). By saying this, he disparages the woman’s unkindness and elevates himself by mentioning the sacred value of “lovingkindness.” What is more, he creates a powerful poetic utterance out of the experience.

Similarly, by depicting his self-destruction in “The Going,” Hardy accuses Emma (“O you could not know”). He censures her for the same offense as in the beginning—of not letting him know of her departure before she left. But the part placed before a dash, “Not even I,” expresses his sense of betrayal that at least, he should have known beforehand but he is treated no different than others. To put it another way, his anger is at feeling impotent rather than purely at her loss.

A moment of self-destruction as a preparatory stage for a successful identity construction occurs also in “A Dream or No.” In this poem, his self falls apart as he comes to doubt not only the initial chemistry with Emma, the only part of the relationship that he cherishes, but also the unchangeable reality. Their early romance is degraded into “[s]ome strange necromancy” (3), making him question the purpose of his journey to St. Juliot where they

first met.

Yes, I have had dreams of that place in the West,

And a maiden abiding

Thereat as in hiding;

Fair-eyed and white-shouldered, broad-browed and brown-  
tressed. (5-8)

He admits that he has idealized the past, including the woman who comes from none other than his imagination. As if to confess how he has beautified her, he describes her with a list of compound adjectives. Although her physical appearance is described with specific expressions, her form is hard to visualize. She is more of an ideal nymph who walks by the sea “lonely” (10) and surrounded by “[t]he sea-birds” (11). After trying to concretize his memories of the place and Emma, he makes statements that reveal the illusory nature of his idyllic vision: “(in my thought has it seemed)” (13) and “Such have I dreamed” (16). As in “The Voice,” both the woman and the elegist’s poetic authority are called into question. Although Emma’s death conveniently sets her aside, his inability to retrieve his former vision still remains problematic.

Does there even a place like Saint-Juliot exist?

Or a Vallency Valley

With stream and leafed alley,

Or Beeny, or Bos with its flounce flinging mist? (21-24)

He started out by expressing doubt about the nature of his relation with

Emma and now, he has come to question the reality. This lengthy question at the end of the poem implies that Hardy is shaken to the core. By adding details about the place with the use of the preposition “with,” he stresses her death’s weight upon his life.

“A Dream or No” only heightens uncertainty since it throws questions without giving answers. But “After a Journey” quickly alleviates the apprehension by first making a statement of self-assurance. This statement echoes in the final poem of the sequence, “Where the Picnic Was,” and this drastic transition is worthwhile to consider because Hardy arranged the order of each work in *Poems of 1912-13* prior to the publication. In this work positioned three poems after “The Voice,” Hardy tries again “to view a voiceless ghost” (1). Wandering the places they had been together, he feels her omnipresence in the form of a woman that he desires to preserve: “With your nut-colored hair, / And gray eyes, and rose-flush coming and going” (7-8). Put simply, he fixes her into “an image that he can control” (Ramazani 58). His invocation of the woman as an idealized figure does not arouse any loving sentiments. For example, François describes the tone of the following stanza merely as “a heroic sacrifice” (73):

Yes: I have re-entered your olden haunts at last;

Through the years, through the dead scenes I have tracked you;

What have you know found to say our of past –

Scanned across the dark space wherein I have lacked you? (9-

12)

After undergoing agony, Hardy has finally succeeded in completing his pursuit of the ghost. The first caesura after “Yes,” followed by a couple more, increases the decisive tone of the stanza. Such rhetoric minimizes emotional aspects in the language of love, and the words such as “olden haunts,” “tracked,” and “scanned,” reveal that the poem disguises the chase after the prey as the pursuit of love. The question that Hardy asks Emma’s ghost is phrased so as to make it sound indifferent in contrast to its content. In order to answer it, he uses Emma’s voice. Since he characterized the ghost earlier in the first stanza as “voiceless,” it is evident that her voice in the second stanza relies solely on his own speech. He is empowered by the priority of his ability to say the words that neither of them would have said, that she is now unable to utter even if she wished to. As if to conceal that the words in fact belong to him, he soon equivocates: “But all’s closed now, despite Time’s derision” (16).

Having vicariously given an answer to his own question, he resurrects her as in the past, but only to belittle her as the ghost with “a voice still so hollow” (21) that he “now frailly follow[s]” (24).

Ignorant of what there is flitting here to see,  
The waked birds preen and the seals flop lazily;  
Soon you will have, Dear, to vanish from me,  
For the stars close their shutters and the dawn whitens hazily.  
.....  
I am just the same as when

Our days were a joy, and our paths through flowers.

(25-28, 31-32)

Telling her to bring him here again, he lets her take her course as “his words become as light as the image of contented inaction or happy *otium* of the seals’ lazy flopping” (François 74). As mentioned earlier, the final remark about the elegist’s immutability starkly resembles a strong self-assertion made in “Where the Picnic Was.” Although he endeavors to paste the gap between what is lost (the early happiness, his younger self) and the present self (uncertainty at the moment, his aging self), Hardy cannot face up to the reality as he does in the closing poem of the sequence.

Before the grand finale of “Where the Picnic Was,” Hardy strives to perpetuate his poetic prowess most conspicuously in “At Castle Boterel.” In this poem, the permanent quality of nature fascinates the elegist who constantly displays his excessive concern with passing Time and the urgent need to immortalize his poetic creativity. Hardy aspires to assert the power of his imagination by drawing a connection between humanity and unchangeable nature. During this process, Emma’s death becomes a means by which Hardy can discuss the issues of death and love that stretch across the universe. Since the natural cycle means much to him, the elegist enhances the wetness to create somber atmosphere though it is only drizzling. He puts together the dripping sounds (“the drizzle bedrenches” [2]) and juxtaposes it with the “dry March weather” (7) forty years ago when she was alive and young.

I look behind at the fading byway,  
And see on its slope, now glistening wet,  
Distinctly yet

Myself and a girlish form benighted

In dry March weather. (3-7)

Just as he looks back at the past to recollect the happiness he shared with her, he looks behind, re-creating the images of himself and Emma. Their once passionate love, Emma's life, and Hardy's youth, all have "faded" away over the years as the physical surrounding itself. But as the byway becomes faint and his sense dims away with a caesura, the speaker's inner consciousness is eventually looked into.

The second stanza continues on with a stark enjambment that enhances the images from his memory. The enjambment that occurs when moving from line 5 to 6 highlights the abrupt transition, reinforcing the immediacy of the image of himself and Emma climbing the road by deferring an emphasis. Separating the object apart from the adverb enables the image itself to stand out as if it were a textualized piece of painting. Then, as Hardy's present self stands at a distance from that scene, the zoom-out occurs. The effect created by the technique expands the present moment to a larger perspective that embraces, but nonetheless reduces the significance of present reality. The pairing (internal) rhymes of "glistening wet" and "Distinctly yet" brings out the irony of seeing better with blurred vision. This

“veil” clears the vision, concocting the scenes from the past as more real than any he currently experiences as in “The Phantom Horsewoman.” The image is frozen by the use of present tense in the second stanza: “We climb the road / Beside a chaise.” (7-8). What is also surprising about this scene, however, is the words he chooses to describe the people involved: “Myself and a girlish form” (6). Even though Hardy would later cherish the loving moment by fossilizing it as a greater part of human history, he clearly draws a line between himself and the *form* of Emma. Since the former is indicative of the essence of his being while the latter seems to address only the external quality of the woman, placing them side by side as equals seems quite awkward. Putting aside this bizarre detail, he moves on to declare the ultimate triumph of

[s]omething that life will not be balked of

Without rude reason till hope is dead,

And feeling fled. (13-15)

This “something” remains vague, yet it is of the utmost importance, itself lasting through “Time’s unflinching rigour” (26). It is powerful enough to eternalize the moment shared by Hardy and Emma. One possible conjecture is that “something” stands for the words of love shared between the young lovers that day. This moment that seems permanent turns out to be very brief when the two conditions that should be kept away (“hope is dead, / And feeling fled”) interfere. The fleeting nature of human emotion is emphasized when line 15 is separately added with a conjunction “and.” The

next stanza likewise begins with “It filled but a minute” (17), a very short statement, the length of which corresponds to its meaning.

Toward the end, Hardy declares the relativity of the “quality” placed upon a specific moment. He stresses that what matters to himself means much more than everyone else’s view.

Primaeval rocks form the road’s steep border,  
And much have they faced there, first and last,  
Of the transitory in Earth’s long order;  
But what they record in colour and cast  
Is –that we too passed. (20-25)

This stanza demonstrates Hardy’s optimistic perspective, trying to look for a meaning in human life notwithstanding the indifferent mechanism of the Universe.<sup>18</sup> The fleeting moment of the two passengers whom the hill remembers merely as a couple among “thousands more” (20) can be traced now as a solid part of Earth’s record, a geological stratum that endures though the people may die and the spontaneous feeling of the moment, evaporate. Arriving at the sixth stanza, the mystery of the “form” (6) of a woman is solved. Hardy claims that although the time banishes him from seeing the physical “substance” (28) of Emma, “one phantom figure” (28)

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<sup>18</sup> Widely commented upon is the author’s characteristic pessimism, which his contemporary public did not value highly of. Perhaps conscious of this disapproval, he has, at number of times, refused to be labeled as a pessimist but finally gave upon denying it any further when the criticism did not subside. In his preface to *Moments of Vision* for example, he claims that “these poems mortify the human sense of self-importance by showing or suggesting, that human beings are of no matter or appreciable value in this nonchalant universe” (qtd. in *Life and Works* 409).

remains in his imaginary vision exactly in the same form as in the past. It becomes obvious that he holds Emma's shape as distinct from her original self, and that he acknowledges the shape as a figure out of his imagination, nothing more and nothing less.

The elegist achieves perpetuation of the momentary when he both participates in, and observes out of the mental frame that recalls an unremarkable scene from the distant past.<sup>19</sup> While he modestly accepts humanity's insignificant place in the universe, he praises, at the same time, the quality of love that promotes certain virtue in human life. In the last stanza, however, the poet's sanguine view gradually fades away just as he turns his head around once again.

I look and see it there, shrinking, shrinking,  
I look back at it amid the rain  
For the very last time; for my sand is sinking,  
And I shall traverse old love's domain  
Never again. (31-35)

The declining intensity of his vision matches with the "sinking" (33) sand in his hourglass. Right before this reality check, a caesura interrupts the flow to

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<sup>19</sup> Davie discovers a metaphysical dimension of the experience described in this poem. He scathingly criticizes Miller's psychological reading in general, by saying that the latter "writes a minus for every plus in the poem, and a plus for every minus" (154). In McSweeney's words, "For Davie, one might say, the glass is full; for Miller, it is prospectively empty" (211). Miller's contention about "At Castle Boterel" sounds much more convincing but Hardy does not create complete transcendence out of the momentary. Rather, the poet exhibits his worries about growing old and dying before having completed identity construction as a poet.

stress the elegist's anxiety about himself. In the last two lines, another conspicuous instance of enjambment occurs, gravely tolling for the impending end of his life that he is afraid of but tries hard to calmly embrace.

In the new edition published in 1919, Hardy chooses to disclose such overwhelming apprehension in "St. Launce's Revisited." In this poem, he simply pushes his duty as a mourner aside in order to discuss the heart of the matter in the elegy: the elegist's sense of security.

Slip back, Time!

Yet again I am nearing

Castle and keep, uprearing

Gray, as in my prime. (1-4)

He sounds impatient as he addresses his despair towards Time. His self-consciousness about aging ("uprearing / Gray") is followed after a simple, but very forceful imperative. By inserting this concern about getting old in the middle of the sentence, which describes the action he used to do as a youth and still carries out, he wishes to disguise a sign of his decrepitude only as a minor detail. Since the present is full of "[s]trange" (11, 12) people, Hardy feels closer to the past. The convoluted sense of time and space displays this sense of confusion. He hastily skips to the past in the fourth and fifth stanzas when he is back in Dorchester, addressing the place as "[h]ere" (13), later to reflect back on his journey near to the Cornish coast. Self-confidence in "At Castle Boterel" is nowhere to be found, and he cannot decide which way to go although there are many words indicating direction:

“forward” (18), “shoreward” (19), and “[t]owards” (22).

If again

Towards the Atlantic sea there

I should speed, they’d be there

Surely now as then? . . . (21-24)

His hesitancy in asking this futile question is underlined by ellipses that immediately follow. Since death, that most destructive event, is inevitable to any life on Earth, such contemplation is a “waste” (25) of thought. It is unbearable for Hardy to think of death because to be dead is not only to be “vanished / Under earth” (26-27), but to be “banished / Ever into nought” (27-28). His occasional effort to view human life from a more optimistic perspective wanes away when his own death looms darkly. The fact that Hardy added this thoroughly self-centered poem to the sequence after some time seems to indicate that he eventually came to feel more comfortable in revealing his ulterior motive in mourning for Emma.

A telling evidence for this speculation is “Where the Picnic Was,” a closing poem of the new edition. The initially morbid fear about the natural phenomenon of growing old now can be put away with a comforting resolution. When examining this particular poem, Sacks’s approach to the ending is worthy of notice:

With this ending, so far from the conventionally resurrective  
suns or stars of the tradition and yet so true to Hardy’s own  
admixture of comfort and desolation, the elegist foregrounds

himself as the survivor [. . .] finally closing forever the eyes of the dead. (259)

He implies that this ending is in touch with reality after persistently expressing the passionate anguish at having to grow old and die. Like highly romanticized “The Phantom Horsewoman,” the elegist succeeds in holding the woman under his control. But unlike in the older version, he finishes the sequence with a newly gained confidence to prove that he has now matured enough to be capable of embracing the natural course of life.

Coming into a full circle, as embodied in the image of “a burnt circle” (13), “Where the Picnic Was” provides a solution to his long struggle to cope with the loss of his youth and to restore a new kind of hope through his poetry. Rather than trying to reignite the ashes, he would “scan and trace / the forsaken place” (7-8) to start anew from there. His recollection of having a bonfire last year recalls the epigraph to the cycle, *Veteris vestigia flammae*, Latin translated into “[t]he signs of the old flame” (Virgil 4.30), taken from *The Aeneid*. In Virgil’s text, the phrase is used when Dido confesses to her sister that the feelings she used to have for her dead husband is being rekindled by Aeneas. The passionate relationship that Hardy initially maintained with Emma is burned down to ashes, and once it is reignited, it must be something quite different from the original love considering the differences between the real and retrieved Emma.

*Poems of 1912-13* has comprised of the clash between these two distinct versions of Emma: the ideal Emma is both lively and submissive

while the real woman is unruly. Now in the finale of the sequence, the poet downsizes the grand scale—of courtship and marriage years, sometimes expanding to human history as in “At Castle Boterel”—to a year’s spectrum. The occasion that the speaker reminisces about is last summer when Sir Henry John Newbolt and W. B. Yeats visited Max Gate to present the medal of the Royal Society of Literature on the writer’s seventy-second birthday. This particular context throws light on Hardy’s intention in writing specifically about the occasion. Having successfully written a new kind of the elegy, he sees the circumstance as most suitable to close the finale of his ambitious love elegies. Counting in the dead woman, Hardy talks of the four people who made the fire with “branch and briar” (3) at that prime of the year.

Where we made the fire  
In the summer time  
Of branch and briar  
On the hill to the sea,  
I slowly climb  
Through winter mire,  
And scan and trace  
The forsaken place  
Quite readily. (1-9)

The subject, “I” (5), that comes after a stanza-long modifying clause anticipates the overpowering significance of the speaker compared with that

of other characters. From the second stanza, it is now winter and the “mire” (6) that he travels through, left as vestiges of melting snow, is storm-tossed. Hardy “readily” (9) observes this “forsaken place” (8). Left behind as the only trace of the past memories, the devastated fireplace reminds him of the ever lost happiness in the back years and the present ruin.

Nonetheless, this frustration can be turned into a sign for a brighter future.

But the spot still shows  
As a burnt circle – aye,  
And stick-ends, charred,  
Still strew the sward  
Whereon I stand,

Last relic of the band who came that day! (12-18)

Though not exactly the same, the remains of that day stays here just as Hardy himself who has returned as another “last relic of the band.” This discovery elates him so much that he moves on to claim “Yes, I am here/ Just as last year” (19-20), which closely resembles the statement he makes in “After a Journey.” As hinted earlier, Hardy has come to have a better sense of reality here. He insists in the earlier poem that he is *just the same* as in the early courtship days. As if feeling anxious about coming back to this forced consolation, he abandons this closure for a while until he gathers up courage to reappraise the issue in “At Castle Boterel.” Later when he mentions the unchangeable nature of his self again in “Where the Picnic

Was,” he leisurely stands at the top of the hill, enjoying the supremacy of his “poetic breath” (Ramazani 60), comparable to the breath of the sea (“the sea breathes brine” 21). He uses a dash to separate the part where he locates those “others,” placing a special emphasis on it.

– But two have wandered far  
From this grassy rise  
Into urban roar  
Where no picnics are,  
And one – has shut her eyes  
For evermore. (25-30)

The conventional contrast between the lives in the contemplative pastoral and the shallow city implies that the two poets who visited Hardy from the city have strayed from the proper landscape where they should have remained. Hardy ends up as the only one with his calling. Another equally important point is that he now finalizes Emma’s death. He hesitates for a moment as though to take a breath (“–”) prior to making this grand announcement. Disregarding a moment’s indecision, he soon concludes with the final strong word, “For evermore,” marking emphatically his final victory over the woman as well as other male poets. There is no longer any trace of Emma’s ghost as the ideal form that he has repeatedly conjured up to fulfill his own fantasy, nor is he expiatory as he has been in many previous works.

The power he wields over Emma becomes more evident in his

extensive adaptation of Emma's *Some Recollections*. After her death, Hardy found this memoir about their days in Cornwall. Based on this biographical fact, Gewanter contends that her writing stimulates the elegist to recover a lost woman. But in order to bring Emma safely under his territory, Hardy makes use of Emma and her voice "within [his own] manner" (Gewanter 200). In "The Spell of the Rose" and "An Upbraiding," Hardy adapts the woman's voice in different ways. These are remarkable in the sense that they faithfully represent Emma's point of view. Unlike the submissive voice enforced by the poet in "The Haunter" and "His Visitor," Emma's voices here are of a mature woman who narrates how her love came to wither. Gewanter's argument that the poet "invited the dead to live inside his poems" (206) to "hear 'from'" (206) her is probably most applicable to these poems.

Especially, "The Spell of the Rose" detaches Hardy by allegorizing the situation. He can self-recriminate more effectively by objectifying the circumstance he is, in fact, involved in. The first stanza directly quotes what the male counterpart promises to the speaker and the first four lines of it exactly pair up with those in the following stanza. This correspondence indicates the speaker's sympathy with her husband's statement and their mutual affection, making it easier for the reader to see how the promise to plant roses came to be broken. As she asserts emphatically, by repeating it twice ("And as he planted never a rose" [15]; "Since he had planted never a rose" [19]), she censures the discordance of his words and action as the major factor of their "divisions dire and wry" (27). Bitter frustration that she

feels towards her relationship with the husband is expressed as “[s]ome heart-banes” (18) that “sever” (18) both their souls. Then for the first and perhaps, only time throughout the cycle, Emma acts independently. She goes into the garden “at *dead* of night” (23; my emphasis) and “screened from sight” (24) plants a rose bush herself. This act of planting roses, “the flower of love” (16), ironically forecasts her demise and eternal separation from her husband. Her death enables her to carry out her wish that this plant may settle down her conflict with the husband.

Perhaps now blooms that queen of trees

I set but saw not grow,

And he, beside its glow –

.....

He sees me as I was, though sees

Too late to tell me so! (36-38, 41-42)

The stanza quoted above demonstrates a close linkage among the three events: the planting of roses, her death, and the epiphany that comes to the husband only when she dies. At one point, she almost acquits him by using a neutral word “misconceits” (20) to describe the cause of their eventual drifting apart. But as she comments on the poet’s belated affection, her voice becomes intensely bitter at his nonchalance towards her when she was alive. As her narration circles back to her present state as a ghost, she accuses him of having had “the mis-vision that blurred” (39) her essential self. This makes explicit the objection she is likely to have against all the images of

herself that Hardy creates in the Emma poems. Another object of her rebuke is his hollow speech of mourning—hollow both because it is untimely and therefore, worthless as a currency of a two-way communication, and because his language of affection is the vicarious way of constructing his poetic identity.

“An Upbraiding” is a more straightforward self-criticism. Juxtaposed are the two similarly unfortunate, but distinct positions that the poet and Emma currently occupy. To Hardy, the prime of his youth has been the happiest time but to the ghost, it might as well be now after her death: “Ah, what would I have given alive / To win such tenderness!” (7-8). But her happiness is overshadowed with reproach as the title of her speech, “An Upbraiding” indicates. The futility of his late show of affection is more conspicuous with the pairing words “comfortless” (6) and “tenderness” that end with the same sound.

When you are dead, and stand to me

Not differenced, as nows,

But like again, will you be cold

As when we lived, or how? (9-12)

The vehement self-castigation that Hardy displays in this poem is maximized once the first two stanzas beginning with accusatory yet pitiful “Now I am dead” (1, 5) is replaced with “When you are dead” (9) in the last stanza. The poet punishes his earlier indifference through his wife’s voice, coloring this last question with a tinge of vengefulness.

With “Where the Picnic Was,” Hardy’s journey comes to an end with a predictable coda of “poems that summon woman, occlude her, and move toward an identification with mirroring images of masculine power” (Ramazani 61). Although the poet has striven to set himself apart from other male elegists to testify his originality, it remains the same that he uses Emma and her death as the means towards defining his poetic identity and ultimately, his position in the literary world. Even when she is given an opportunity to speak for herself, Hardy always limits the voice for instance, by satisfying his own ideal. Emma dies down just like the ashes of an old fire that reminds him both of what is lost and gained. What he obtains through *Poems of 1912* and other Emma poems is the poetic identity as the harbinger of the new kind of elegy, and Hardy takes a confident step forward.

## **Conclusion**

As a transitional figure, Hardy skillfully juggles between his originality and the generic norms; he defies the love elegy tradition by downsizing the role of his muse, while laying stress on his verbal potency as a male poet. Even when he places an image of his younger self and Emma's girlish figure in the temporal spectrum of Earth's history ("At Castle Boterel"), he is in fact declaring a war against Time with the help of his own artistic capability of immortalizing the momentary. The "something" that passed between Emma's "form" and himself, that he can never praise enough, applies to a more general context. His eventual concern is not so much to cherish those memories as special and private to himself as to sublimate the memories of that "something" as the great value of humanity that survives through time.

A couple of years later, he would produce a similar image of the lovers whispering sweet words to each other in "In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations.'"

Yonder a maid and her wight

Come whispering by:

War's annals will cloud into night

Ere their story die. (9-12)

Out of the three portraits that capture unvarying moments in everyday life that happen in isolation from the destructive event, the First World War, this last one is most powerful for Hardy because it involves a spiritual

communion between two human beings. This may seem too naïve a view to be adopted by a man disillusioned at love and its idylls. But what is significant here is the artist's potency accrued by catching their loving moment and freezing it into an artwork that eternalizes the universal sense of love, translatable as "lovingkindness" in "A Broken Appointment."

Apart from this creation of an artwork out of the ordinary, Hardy continued to write and rewrite the elegy and its conventions. He even proposes a new way to mourn the demise of the genre itself in poems like "God's Funeral." In it, he announces the death of God, a figure that used to provide consolation by spiritualizing the earthly.

I could not buoy their faith: and yet

Many I had known: with all I sympathized;

And though struck speechless, I did not forget

That what was mourned for, I, too, long had prized. (53-56)

Having lost the only haven, the so-called "divine origins" (Ramazani 40), in the modern society where mass death and warfare are ubiquitous, act of mourning exists merely as a formality and accordingly, the status of elegist is in a plight. Unlike Tennyson, his contemporary, who finds solace in Christianity, Hardy cannot help but "[m]echanically" (68) go along with the crowd "twixt the gleam and gloom" (68).

Caught in this obscure region between feeble light and darkness, and among a mass of the bereft, he keeps his feet firmly on the earth, persistently pondering upon a grave task assigned to the modern elegist: to mourn

properly when the very legitimacy of mourning is gone. Though Hardy is not the first to raise doubts about this time-honored genre (even “Lycidas,” a work considered to be the epitome of elegy, questions and rewrites the conventions), he refuses to adopt “a poetics of trust” (Ramazani 67) that many of his predecessors were content with. He thus seeks to bring into view new dimensions for exploring the genre, inspiring his posterity from Owen to Heaney (Ramazani 68) to push it to the limit.

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## 국 문 초 록

### 토마스 하디의 비가에 나타난 젠더와 시적 자아:

#### 『시편 1912-13년』 을 중심으로

본 논문은 토마스 하디가 시인으로서의 정체성을 확고히 하기 위해 비가 장르를 이용하는 방식과 그 방식이 애도 대상의 젠더에 따라 달라지는 양상에 주목한다. 하디는 수많은 비가를 남겼는데 이는 비가가 장르적 관습에 따라 궁극적으로 애도하는 이의 정체성을 공고히 하기 때문이다. 흔히 남성시인들의 전유물로 여겨지는 비가 장르의 관습을 계승하고 다시 쓰는 과정을 통해 하디는 자신 고유의 시 세계를 구축해 나간다. 1장은 셰익스피어와 스윈번과 같은 위대한 남성 시인의 죽음을 애도하는 작품에서 하디가 “남성중심적” 장르의 오랜 계보에 진입하면서도 자신의 고유성을 부각시키기 위해 노력하는 모습을 논한다. 2장은 3장을 위한 준비단계로서, 스윈번을 위해 쓰인 비가에 등장하는 여성시인 사포의 역할 분석을 기점으로 시적 영감의 원천이나 독립적인 주체라기보다는 단순한 시적 대상으로서 그려지는 여성을 검토한다. 1장에서 논의된 비가들에서 시적 자아 및 상속과 관련된 불안이 노골적으로 드러나는 것과는 달리, 하디는 2장에서 논의되는 작품들에서는 실제 자신이 연모했던 여성과의 사랑을 노래함으로써 스스로의 문학적 불안을 해소한다. 3장에서는 하디가 자신의 첫 번째 부인인 엠마의 죽음 이후에 쓴 『시편 1912-13년』과 그 외 엠마에 관해 쓰인 시들을 살펴본다. 엠마를 추상화하고 그녀와의 관계를 재구성하는 과정은 남성시인이 죽은 여성보다 우위를 점하는 것을 수월하게 해준다. 또한 이 과정을 통해

하디는 시인으로서 항상 가지고 있던 불안을 남성의 나약함이 정당화될 수 있는 영역인 사랑의 언어로 바꾸어 드러낸다.

주요어: 토마스 하디, 엠마, 비가, 시적 자아, 젠더, 엠마, 『시편 1912-13년』, 사랑의 애가

학 번: 2011-20025



