

THOMAS HARDY AS A THRESHOLD FIGURE AND CRISIS OF
REPRESENTATION IN HIS POETRY—A DECONSTRUCTIONIST READING

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ABSTRACT

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Thomas Hardy is a poet who produced most of his poetry in the Victorian age but published it largely in the twentieth century when the literary sensibility was predominantly modern. Although Hardy is not conventionally considered a Modernist poet, he shares with Modernists an element that can be referred to as the linguistic crisis by which they try to get over the sense of anxiety against the backdrop of a chaotic world and problematized language. The forerunner of Deconstructionism, Derrida, exposes a long established history of *logocentric* thinking, which has continually been moving between binary oppositions and Platonic dualities. Derrida simply puts forward the idea that there is no *logos*, no origin, and no centre of truth. The centre is always somewhere else; he identifies this as a “free play of signifiers.” Consequently, the anxiety of the poet with modern sensibility to find a point of reference inevitably results in a “crisis of representation,” or, in a problematic relation between language and truth, signifier and signified. This crisis can be observed in Hardy’s poetry, too. For this purpose, this research focuses on four key concepts in Hardy’s poetry that expose this problematic relationship between language and truth: his agnosticism, his concept of the self, his language and concept of structure, and his concept of time and temporality. These aspects are explored in the light of Derrida’s

Deconstructionism with reference to poems by Hardy which heralded the Modernist crisis of representation.

Keywords: Deconstructionism, Derrida, Crisis of Representation, Hardy, Modernism.

ÖZ

BİR GEÇİŞ DÖNEMİ FİGÜRÜ OLARAK THOMAS HARDY’NİN ŞİİRLERİNDEKİ TEMSİL KRİZİ—YAPISÖKÜMCÜLÜK IŞIĞINDA BİR OKUMA

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İngiliz şair ve romancı Thomas Hardy, şiirlerinin çoğunu Victoria döneminde yazmış olsa da, eserlerini, şiir anlayışının göze çarpacak biçimde modern olduğu 20. yüzyılın başında yayınlamıştır. Her ne kadar Hardy ana akım Modernistlere çok benzemese de, onun, kaotik ve rastlantısal bir dünya algısının, sorunsallaşmış bir dil anlayışının ve bunların sonucunda ortaya çıkan “temsil krizinin” zeminindeki kaygı duygusunun üstesinden gelme çabası Modernistlerle paylaştığı bir özelliktir. Yapısökümcülük felsefesinin öncüsü, Jacques Derrida, Batı kültürünün ontolojisinde ve epistemolojisinde Platon’dan itibaren süregelen ve hâkim olmuş mevcudiyet metafiziğinin logosantrik düşünme biçimini gözler önüne sermiş, bu düşünce biçiminin, ikili zıtlıkların ve ikilikçi yapıların sınırları içinde kısıtlanmış olduğunu iddia etmiştir. Derrida yalın bir iddia ile ortaya çıkmaktadır—bir logos, bütünleştirici ilke, orijin, merkez yoktur. Bu gibi kavramlar dilin ötesinde bir alandadır, dili aşkındır. Merkez daima başka bir yerdedir ve “gösterenlerin serbest bir oyunudur.” Dolayısı ile Modernist şairin sabitlenmiş bir gönderge noktası bulma çabası, hem dilsel hem de semantik anlamda bir kaygıya, bir “temsil krizine” dönüşmektedir. Bu “temsil krizi” dil ve anlam arasında, gösteren ve gösterilen arasındaki sorunsallaşmış ilişkiye işaret etmektedir. Bu dilsel gerilim Hardy’nin şiirlerinde de

gözlemlenmektedir. Bu amaçla, Hardy'nin şiirlerindeki dört anahtar öge yakından incelenmektedir: Hardy'nin bilinmezliği, karmaşık ve çoklu özbenlik anlayışı, olumsuzlama dili ve kinaye gibi yapısal unsurlar, karmaşık ve kendine özgü zaman ve uzam anlayışı. Bu ögeler Derrida'nın temel öğretileri ışığında incelendiğinde, Hardy'nin şiirinin Modernistlerde gördüğümüz temsil krizinin bir habercisi olduğunu gözlemlemekteyiz.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Yapısökümcülük, Derrida, Temsil Krizi, Hardy, Modernizm.

To all passionate lovers of literature and philosophy

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION—THOMAS HARDY AS A THRESHOLD POET

“The most prosaic man becomes a poem when you stand by his grave at his funeral and think of him” -Thomas Hardy

1.1. Aim and Scope of the Study

In a post-Nietzschean world, it has become difficult to take for granted the validity of absolute truths. From Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein to Derrida, 20th century Western philosophy has emphasized that the Aristotelian mimetic representation of objective reality is no more in power as meaning always spills over the words or words cannot exhaust meaning in its totality. This kind of approach to language and reality underlines the idea that language pre-exists everything else, thus all truth is textual. From this vantage point, Hardy's poetry lends itself better for deconstructionist analysis as it lays bare this problematic relation between language and truth. It comes as no surprise that his poetry hints at the forthcoming Modernist crisis of representation. In all his poems, absolute truth is problematized; it is either unknowable or located in the realm of the “Crass Casualty,” thus evasive. On the other hand, he wrote about one thousand poems to reach a secure grounding which provides a stable sense of truth. This attempt echoes the Modernist attempt to get over the sense of anxiety in the face of a chaotic world which resists rational explanation as well as fixed linguistic formulation.

Thomas Hardy is one of those writers who enjoyed a long career that witnessed many literary modes. The largest part of his work belongs to the Victorian age. His latest novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1895), echoes the Modernist style. When considered as a whole, Hardy's style is both traditional and non-traditional, i.e., experimental. As a novelist, Hardy is generally associated with conventional Victorianism. As a poet,

on the other hand, it has always been difficult to classify Hardy. Many critics and readers agree that he stands out as a modern poet. By stating that Hardy “is a Victorian novelist and a modern poet,” Norman Page, for example, reintroduces an idea that is taken sometimes as “general truth” and sometimes as “platitude” (2006: 262). However, this idea also reinforces Hardy's status as a transitional figure between Victorianism and Modernism and leads to the assumption that his poetry is subversive, and it challenges the attempts to reinterpret it as semantically coherent and mimetic.

The poetry of the 20th century witnesses a drastic change in style, subject, attitude and taste. However, Hardy's verse appears to be faithful to the Hardy of all ages. It is true that there is no way of grouping his poems according to theme, tone, mood or chronology. We do not expect to confront a Hardy in his later lyrics who sounds more like T. S. Eliot or Ezra Pound. The more we read the poems Hardy wrote after the 1900s, the more we are sometimes challenged and amazed by the harmony and equivocity in his later collections. *Late Lyrics*, *Human Shows* and *Winter Words* lack the agnostic touch of, say, *Wessex Poems* or *Poems of the Past and the Present*. Especially in *Human Shows*, the poems appear to reveal more coherent and synchronic overtones—folk stories, accounts, anecdotes, ditties, which the historical Hardy experienced himself and wanted to transmit to the next generations. They lack the more irreconcilable and restless tone of his earlier collections. Although it may be impossible to say that Hardy's poetry is never mimetic or representational, his agnostic self is visible in all his poems. Moreover, the poetic voice in *Human Shows* and *Winter Words* is never wholly a singular one. The concept of the self is never ultimately unified because it is evidently distanced and plural. Therefore, the lack of an element such as a unified self in his poetry of the 20th century still reveals a linguistic crisis. In almost all introductory notes of his collections, Hardy reminds that the subject in his poems is someone other than himself, that his poems are “dramatic” and “personative,” merely “impressions” and “seemings.” By making such a warning, the poet renders his poetry more impersonal, in the way Modernist poets have always intended.

The problematization of the concept of the self is one of the most important reasons why Derrida's deconstructionism works at every level of interpretation, why it lays bare the fact that language is a process of contradiction and at the same time why it communicates temporary particles of meaning. Derrida does not claim that language never acknowledges what it really "means," he only warns that meaning construction works by difference and by deferral, that it is an ongoing process. For this reason, the very claim that the language of poetry can be ultimately mimetic should be confronted with doubt.

If the readers hope to discern an organizing principle or a wholly conceived sense of self in Hardy, they will be contradicted by a single poem or several others inside a collection. Even in poems where the narrative voice merely reintroduces a folk tale of the Dorset landscape, or an account of the war, where the semantic message is clear enough, there suddenly come to the surface some elements that betray our expectations—unfamiliar linguistic patterns, structures, dialect words, invented words combined in the most unexpected ways. Reading and completing the 950 pieces of Hardy's poetry is a long process, and when meanings are illusorily grasped and pinned down, they are immediately discarded and contradicted by reversals and abstractions. In the Introductory Note to *Winter Words* Hardy writes:

My last volume of poems was pronounced wholly gloomy and pessimistic by reviewers—even by some of the more able class. My sense of the oddity of this verdict may be imagined when, in selecting them, I had been, as I thought, rather too liberal in admitting flippant, not to say farcical, pieces into the collection. However, I did not suppose that the licensed tasters have wilfully misrepresented the book, and said nothing, knowing well that they could not have read it ... I also repeat what I have often stated on such occasions, that no harmonious philosophy is attempted in these pages—or in any bygone pages of mine, for that matter. (*The Collected Poems* 834)¹

¹ The abbreviation "CP" will be preferred in the further parts of this thesis.

It is hinted in the poet's remark here that even toward the end of his life and career, misunderstanding about the nature of his poetry was still a part of the critical body. If some readers still condemned Hardy as a gloomy pessimist even at the end of his poetic career, they have probably failed to acknowledge and enjoy his light-hearted, playful, ironic voice. Derridean philosophy comes as an aid; all texts, literary or otherwise, should be allowed to remain undecidable. There is no end to the act of interpretation, but in the words of Derrida, there is a closure of metaphysical presuppositions and hard-line conclusions.

Therefore, one reason why Hardy is accepted as a subversive poet may be the fact that early critics were not able to come to an agreement about the value of his poetry when they compared him with his predecessors. On the other hand, critics of the twentieth century were more inclined to appreciate the whims of his innovative and experimentalist style. In general, criticism about his poetry mainly hints at the fact that he breaks with traditional Victorian norms and becomes the precursor of the Modernist poetic strain. A brief synopsis of the critical reactions that Hardy's poetry has aroused through the years lays bare the need to recognize his modern mind.

In "Hardy's Poetry: A General Survey," Trevor Johnson states that Hardy's is a singular genius; his verse has a stern, stubborn individuality, which, for all its evident integrity, can be forbidding (37). Johnson implies that his style is "difficult to imitate and parody," "though seldom obscure, it is both exceptionally varied and idiosyncratic in form, while it displays a wide range of subjects as any English poet's work before or since" (37). A devoted experimentalist, Hardy employed more distinctive stanzaic forms than any other English poet, sometimes writing "skeleton outlines in order to 'try out' new patterns" (43).

Hardy's poetic language puzzled the intellectual minds both of his time and after his death. Dennis Taylor mentions some of them in his book *Hardy's Literary Language and Victorian Philology* (1993). T.S. Eliot, for example, who personally disliked his poetry, observed in 1934 that Hardy "was indifferent even to the prescripts of good writing: he wrote sometimes overpoweringly well, but always very carelessly; at

times his style touched sublimity without ever having passed through the state of being good” (30). David Cecil, in 1943, expressed a negative opinion when he stated that Hardy “was incompetent too, incompetent in the ordinary mechanics of his trade” (qtd. in Taylor 30). In 1964, George Fayen stated that “we have yet to discover exactly how Hardy manages to parley ineptness into the sublime” (30). David Lodge concluded in 1966: “his vices are almost inextricably entangled with his virtues ... Alternately dazzled ... and exasperated ... we are, while reading him, tantalized by a sense of greatness not quite achieved” (30).

There were harsher remarks about Hardy which reveal that he was perceived as a poet whose verse was not quite well understood. Gibson and Johnson mention some of the negative criticism about Hardy in their *A Selection of Critical Essays*. Hardy's *Wessex Poems*, for example, was accused of being reminiscent of his novels and short stories, in terms of theme and plot (11). Poems like “Hap,” “Her Dilemma,” and “A Meeting with Despair,” for instance, echoed *Jude the Obscure*. Although after the publication of *Poems of the Past and Present* in 1901 Hardy's poetry had to be taken more seriously; occasionally, critics like Herbert Warren still dismissed Hardy's later poetry as “of much the same size and character” as *Wessex Poems*, and called it “barely poetry” (qtd. in Gibson and Johnson 12). One anonymous critic in *Saturday Review* in 1889 had been as offensive as to ask why Hardy had published his volume at all, and had not burned his verse (41). Even the scholar Edmund Chambers, who was receptive to Hardy's innovations in language and not averse to his “sombre irony and mournful music,” rebuked him for his “woodenness of rhythm and a needlessly inflated diction” (44).

As revealed further by Gibson and Johnson, Hardy continued to puzzle the critics, but the criticism he received at a later stage did not sound negative any more. In *Satires of Circumstance* in 1914, for instance, the critic Lytton Strachey pointed to Hardy's “accuracy to inhibit his talent for the telling phrase” (63). He claimed that Hardy wrote a kind of “unpoetic verse,” “flat and undistinguished” in which “cacophony was incarnate” but was nevertheless incongruously effective in solving the “secret of touching our marrow bones” (63-64). The critic Harold Child praised

Hardy for his simplicity and intensity in his “Poems of 1912-13,” and suggested that they were “the most musically and suggestively beautiful poems Hardy ever wrote” (75-76). Child dwelt on the poetry’s “fidelity to the author’s precise meaning,” but he felt uneasy about Hardy’s diction (14, 75). Some of the best criticism about Hardy’s poetry came out around 1918-20 (15). Edmund Gosse, for example, conducted an admirable defence of the “metrical peculiarities,” and discriminated nicely between Hardy’s “profoundly tragic” observation and the “romantic peevishness” of Shelley (qtd. in Gibson and Johnson 15).

At the turn of the 20th century, there was a change in the poetic climate and Hardy was considered no longer an innovator (Gibson and Johnson 16). His last three volumes displayed no signs of the times; what was wanted of poetry was something *pour epater les bourgeois* or an involved obscurity of manner (16). He had respect for tradition, continuing to admire Tennyson though he never attempted to emulate him. In 1932, F. R. Leavis, remarked that Hardy was “truly a Victorian ... with the earth firm under his feet ... a naïve poet of simple attitudes and outlook ... His originality went, indeed, with a naïve conservatism;” he displayed a “precritical innocence,” and his “rank as a major poet rested on a dozen poems” (qtd. in Gibson and Johnson 17).

These comments on Hardy's poetry, past and more recent, show that for the earlier generation, he was probably a poet who did not fit the expectations of the Victorian taste. In the eyes of the later generations, he probably remained largely a conventionalist, a “true” Victorian or Post-Romantic. Nevertheless, these critical reactions testify to the fact that it is difficult to label and categorize him. If Hardy resists classification, then the obscurity and idiosyncrasy of his style, which puzzles the readers of various epochs, may be taken as the manifestation of a crisis in representation, i.e., of the conflict between language and meaning, or the manifestation of the instability of the linguistic sign. The disruption between the signifier and the signified echoes the sensibility of Modernist poetry and it is difficult to assume that an agnostic poet like Hardy may be literally taken as a man of convention. The argument of this thesis and the poems chosen for analysis,

accordingly, rest on the idea that a Deconstructionist approach to the poetry of Hardy highlights a linguistic crisis as it poeticizes the sense of semantic insecurity both in his use of language and in his attempts at an absent but a longed for absolute truth.

The discussion of Hardy as a threshold figure in the face of the modern crisis of poetic representation requires also a quick look at the intellectual background of his time. The problem of representation in human discourse was not actually a new thing in the modern scene. That is to say, the awareness of the crisis of representation was already there long before the Structuralist and Poststructuralist era. The fact that language was a trap for the mind had been articulated ever since the analyses of the Victorian philologists. In Taylor's extensive study of Hardy's poetics, *Hardy's Literary Language and Victorian Philology*, one can see a comprehensive treatment of this crisis in the Victorian context. For example, Richard Trench once noted: "men are continually uttering deeper things than they know." "Many a single word ... is itself a concentrated poem" (qtd. in Taylor 210). Müller argued in his *Lectures* in 1863: "men believe that their reason is lord over their words, but it happens, too, that words exercise a reciprocal and reactionary power over our intellect" (212). Even before the 19th century, Hobbes stated in his *Leviathan*, that "a man will find himself entangled in words, as bird in lime-twigs" (212). Similarly, George Eliot remarked: "we all of us, grave or light, get our thoughts entangled in metaphors, and act fatally on the strength of them" (212). These examples subscribe to the idea that we are not in control of language, actually, but that language speaks through us.

Müller, whom Hardy widely read and quoted, was in a similar line of thinking to Derrida (Taylor 214). Müller relates to Derrida's discussion of "white mythology," i.e. "metaphysics which has effaced in itself that fabulous scene which brought it into being" (214). Taylor states that Hardy's mind was also occupied with the mystery of the origins of language, whether in linguistic or in epistemological terms. Spenser wrote in the 1860s in a statement which profoundly influenced Hardy: "the man of science sees himself in the midst of perpetual changes of which he can discover neither the beginning nor the end" (246). Against the thinkers of progress and intelligible order such as Darwin or Hegel, Hardy wrote "In Tenebris II": "Our times

are blessed times, they cry: Life shapes it as is most meet.” Hardy “disturbs the order here” (Taylor 246). This mystery of origin led to a dilemma which haunted Victorian philology and was at the heart of Hardy's poetry (247). Ultimate understanding of current language and thought could not be reached because the ultimate norm of comparison and contrast was lost beyond recall, “beyond chronology,” as Hardy said in “The Clapsed Skeletons” (246). Consequently, Hardy, too, was aware of the notion called a “crisis of representation,” which had long haunted the intellectual minds of the 19th century. The search for origin and tradition is a commitment which he shared with them; however, it is also an element that he simultaneously shared with other Modernist precursors.

Poetry is a challenging genre that highlights the instabilities of language, the frequently evasive connection between sign and meaning. Poetry is a domain where the poet needs to use a compact language within a limited amount of time and space. He evokes segmented or multi-layered significations in every single line, possibly an evidence of his effort to communicate human reality from inside to outside and otherwise. Since the poet insists on finding the perfect word, symbol or signifier that will claim to denominate a correspondent signified or point of reference, poetry generates much more tension and polysemy than prose. Hardy's poetry is a reflection of such a dynamic. Quintessentially, in comparison with his fiction, Hardy's poetry has always caused more controversy in its reception. Therefore, throughout his lifetime his novels had been appreciated more in comparison with his poems. The reason for this controversy may also be connected with the fact that poetry, in comparison with prose, is far more grounded on metaphoricity.

The unceasing endeavour of the poet to utter the unutterable in verse may be the reason why Hardy composed about a thousand poems. As quoted by Taylor, Hardy believed that poetry was “the heart of literature” and that “a sense of the truth of poetry, of its supreme place in literature, had awakened itself” in him (“Hardy as a Nineteenth-Century Poet” 183). Indeed, Hardy wrote novels to make a living but he had always identified himself as a poet. Norman Page and Dennis Taylor remark that his full-time poetic career, from 1860 to 1928, lasted longer than that of any other

Victorian, indeed almost any other English poet (2000: 332; 2003: 201). Hardy's poetry encompasses the mid-and late Victorian periods, the Edwardian and Georgian periods, the War and post-war periods and the twenties. Since Hardy's poetry extended over a long period that encompassed so many literary traditions, it requires to be examined in terms of how it confronted the issue of transition from one tradition to the next. If Hardy's poetics has gained recognition today, it is partly because it documents different literary traditions, and partly because it has aroused contradicting critical reactions—some of them encouraging and some of them less encouraging. Hardy experiments with language, reinvents it by combining techniques and themes that touch upon universal human emotions and reflect universal human experiences. Nevertheless, the variety of the literary tensions in Hardy's poetry forecasts the impossibility of seeing it within a unified, canonical and stable frame of interpretation.

1.2. The Imprints of Earlier Traditions on Hardy—Romantic and Victorian

Hardy's extensive poetic career displays characteristics that bear the imprints of the Romantic, Victorian and Modernist poetry. It is difficult to classify Hardy entirely within any of those traditions. Critics concerned with Hardy identify various influences. For example, in “Hardy's Farewell to Fiction: The Structure of Wessex Heights,” Frank R. Giordano Jr. claims that Hardy's mind is more typically post-Romantic in its awareness of the impossibility of victory and the illusoriness of peace and joy (253). Still in many of his novels and poems, Giordano states, he deeply engaged with Romantic conceptions of nature, memory and imagination, selfhood, and love. David Cecil calls him a “great Romantic” writer, a child of the Romantic Movement with a romantic attitude to his art (“The Hardy Mood” 233). This means that his work is openly personal (233). According to Cecil, his lyrics were melancholic; he was born sad, tender-hearted, and “unhopeful” (234).

Hardy's poetry has not always been perceived as part of the Victorian poetics. For example, Linda Shires acknowledges that “most substantial critical statements on Victorian poetry and poetics appearing in the last 50 years either omit Hardy or have almost nothing to say about him and his work” (2004: 256). Shires mentions that Hardy is not included even marginally or by analogy in important books by Victorian poetry critics such as E. D. H. Johnson, Carol T. Christ or Robert Langbaum, who focus on Browning, Tennyson and Arnold, and by Anthony Harrison who looks at intertextuality among the Romantics and the Victorians. Shires argues that important books written on Hardy's poetry by Samuel Hynes, Tom Paulin, James Richardson, Dennis Taylor and Donald Davie remain out of print and are not cited often enough. Hardy is mentioned in passing or as part of a coda in key books on Victorian poetics by W. David Shaw and Isobel Armstrong. Study of his poetry has continued, but either in highly specialised discussions, such as Taylor's on Hardy's language, or in new introductions to selected poems such as Tim Armstrong's, or buried in collections on wider topics, such as the 1993 essays by U. C. Knoepfelmacher and Kerry McSweeney on Hardy's poetic antecedents (Shires 256).

Linda Shires, too, points out the Romantic aspects in Hardy. She states that Hardy's poetry can be seen as a response to important historical and social changes that would be recorded differently in Modernism and Postmodernism, but it should also be seen as an ambivalent echo, memorialising, adaptation, reversal and/or rejection of beliefs, ideologies and poetic strategies recorded in nineteenth-century poems Hardy read (2004: 258). According to Shires:

Hardy's grim irony and parodic comedy (as in “Drummer Hodge” or “Ah, Are You Digging on my Grave?”), his broken metres or invented ones (as in “The Going”), his linguistic self-consciousness with diction and images (“Unknowing”, “Green Slates”), his refusals of generic expectations (whether in his exposé of rituals of mourning and the demands of sentimentalising human memory in “Poems of 1912-13,” or his frank explosion of history and hero worship in *The*

Dynasts) do not shut entirely the aspect of Romanticism that is positive and cheerful. (258)

On the other hand, Hardy is not alone among the Victorian poets in challenging and revising what M. H. Abrams identified as “The Great Romantic Lyric,” especially its handling of love, nature, transcendence or death (Shires 258). In addition, Shires identifies similarities between Hardy, Robert Browning, Christina Rossetti and William Thackeray. With Christina Rossetti, Hardy shares a probing, questioning, critical and ironic inquiry into the nature of being, time and subjectivity (259). His radical aesthetic and politics resemble what John Ruskin called the Gothic grotesque, which Shires explores extensively (259). Influenced by new science (Lyell, Darwin, Huxley), new technologies of representation (movable type, photography, silent film), and by cultural criticism, Hardy exposes the inability of writing to capture verities (259). Shires claims that Hardy's secularism undermines Wordsworthian project entirely in regard to its philosophic and poetic treatment of subject and object (259). She refers to Hardy's use of “double poem”—a lyric expression and a commentary, a poem describing involvement but from a removed point of view (262). Like the second-generation Romantics, such as Shelley and the Victorian successors such as Arnold, Hardy writes poetry acknowledging that we are locked into our minds and to our perception of things, rather than having access to any “truth” inherent in a thing, a scene, a relationship, or a situation (264).

When William W. Morgan claims that Hardy is a transitional poet between late Victorianism and early Modernism, he specifically refers to Hardy's elegiac poems of 1912-13. He draws similarity between Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and Hardy's “Poems of 1912-13” and suggests that the two elegies share certain structural principles such as a temporal form, the self-contained integrity of individual lyrics making up the whole, and the gradual and difficult linear move from grief to some kind of reconciliation (1974: 503). In its intimacy and openhearted sincerity, it is the direct descendant of *In Memoriam* (Morgan 503). However, Tennyson's elegy is never as ironic and negative as Hardy's, and the consolation in Hardy's elegy is predicated upon a denial of the dualism that informs Tennyson's (503). Finally, Hardy denies

the emotional validity of pastoral artifice and the philosophic validity of Christian consolation, which, according to Morgan, seemingly separates him from Victorianism (503). In addition, John Paul Riquelme states that Hardy's elegies are in "salient ways both anti-elegiac and unconsoling and in lyrics that present the voice falling silent" (205). Silence and stillness here represent "resistance to the tendency of elegies to provide comfort in situations of loss" or "to humanize the world in a self-regarding, self-validating way" (Riquelme 205). "No answerer I," says the speaker of "Nature's Questioning," and "resolves to say no more," a principled silence which typifies Hardy's modern imagination (Riquelme 205). Consequently, one may conclude that Hardy both inherits the traditional forms of Victorianism and Romanticism, and at the same time modifies them.

Linda Shires indicates that Hardy inherits elements from two Victorian traditions which are aesthetically innovative in their use of dialogism in poetry, but which also proffer political and social change through poetry (2004: 266). One of them is the "double poem," or, Matthew Arnold's 1853 idea that Victorian poetry is best described as "the dialogue of the mind with itself." The second tradition works within the Benthamite aesthetic of the 1830s, articulated by William Johnson Fox, the editor of the *Monthly Repository*, which influenced Robert Browning (Shires 273). This movement of dramatic irony and critique becomes a context for Hardy's literary practice which embodies "modern states of mind," projecting and exploring associative processes formed in different environments and different time schemes. Linda Shires extensively explores these influences on Hardy, and concludes that in the tradition of the Victorian double poem and the Gothic grotesque, Hardy breaks with the old poetic formulas and old foundations of belief (277).

Dennis Taylor views Hardy as a poet of the 19th century. The 1860s, when Hardy began studying and writing poetry, was an important decade for Victorian poetry because important developments were taking place in sonnets, ballads, hymns, classical and romance imitations (2003: 186). Hardy would compose more than 150 poems in some form of hymnal stanza (186). Taylor points that most of the poetic forms Hardy uses before 1900 are conservative forms—sonnets, song measures or

stanzas with only one or two different line lengths, and ballad or hymnal quatrains (2003: 188). Hardy also used a modified terza rima and some elegiac stanzas, and he almost always opted for rhyming stanza forms. In reference to Hardy's traditional aspects in his early poetry, it becomes clear that Hardy is largely the inheritor of the Victorian poetic tradition.

1.3. Hardy's Modernism

Hardy's poetry of the 20th century partly displays Modernist traits because Modernism, first of all, is a conscious break with traditional norms, and Hardy's later poetry with its dominant features marks the end of an era. As a literary movement, Modernism is characterized by a reaction to its antecedents—Romanticism and Victorianism. Modernists turn away from the Romantic persona, the “Wordsworthian lyric ‘I,’” from its emphasis on subjectivity, and its primary domain of spiritual “transcendence”—Nature. Modernism distrusts the ideals of 18th century Enlightenment, which underlined an optimistic faith in a scientific and empirical world of human progress. However, although Modernism was marked by disbelief in all human institutions, it still had, probably, one thing in common with Romanticism and Victorianism—the artist's endeavour to find a pattern, a unifying principle that will present a particular text as a text with its own independent logic. Derrida would call this principle the “logos,” the “transcendental signified” or “transcendental contraband.” A case in point was T. S. Eliot, the precursor of Modernist poetry and New Criticism, who insisted that the poet distance himself from the poem and evoke the emotion by means of a set of images which he called the “objective correlative.” At the same time, Eliot showed recourse to “myth,” through which he aimed to establish a poetic tradition. Eliot's use of myth, in fact, was the reflection of his search for origin, tradition, centre, in the face of a fragmented external reality and a split self. Hardy's idea of self is different from Eliot's. It is frustrated, nostalgic and melancholic. It is conscious of the loss of stability and the loss of absolute truth against the backdrop of a hostile universe but it does not often parallel the

continually divided, fragmented, multiple self of Eliot. Sometimes Hardy employs multiple voices and double selves, too. However, Eliot reinforces these as a dominant pattern in his poems. As a result, Hardy's sense of self appears to be more unified, more associated with presence, whereas Eliot's sense of self is predominantly divided and fragmented.

When it comes to Hardy's poetic diction and vocabulary, it is possible to see that they are both conventional and innovative because he experiments with language while he also retains traditional forms. Hardy's tendency to use peculiar vocabulary within traditional forms, in fact, may signal a crisis of literary representation. Hardy's poetry has taken various directions in time but not all of them have verbalized directly such a linguistic crisis. John Powell Ward, for example, points that Hardy's poetry is regarded by many "as somewhat eccentric and quirky" (65). His poetry apparently makes rules not only for itself, but also for grammar and language, too, and introduces a weird kind of vocabulary. Ward identifies a rich anarchy in Hardy's approach, a determination to shape *all* aspects of poetry and language in his own way.

Taylor's proposition is that Hardy comes to London from Dorset and "bores inside the standard language, scrutinizing its structures and materials, undermining its idioms and syntactic grace, releasing its hidden and decentring history..." (1998: 471). Moreover, in *Hardy's Literary Language* (1993), Taylor makes a detailed analysis of Hardy's peculiar linguistic style. The aspects that Taylor highlights about Hardy's language actually reveal that the poet experiments with it. He strips himself off the traditional Victorian norms to try out new patterns. Among the unique combinations with which Hardy contributes to the literary dictionaries of his time there are standard words, obsolete words, archaic words, rare words, poetic words, colloquial words, slang, local words, child's words, illiterate words, rhetorical words, technical words, nonce and coined words, and dialect words (145-172). Hardy wrote fourteen novels, but he did not choose to publish his poems until after the turn of the twentieth century; his effort to write poetry of more than nine hundred and fifty pieces shows that writing in verse was an inseparable part of his life. Namely, the

enormous amount of his poems was an attempt to utter his human impressions in the more figurative, condensed language of poetry. Moreover, the uniqueness and oddity of the word combinations, the juxtaposition of vocabulary apparently and internally irrelevant—all these point to the violence of poetic language, a kind of violence that creates tension and forces meaning into diffusion and dispersion. With his odd but innovative vocabulary, Hardy approaches the Modernists more than he sides with the Victorians. These ruptures and incongruities in Hardy's language, the unusual wording, naming, and representing lead to ambiguity, which foreshadows a new kind of sensibility, and lays bare the linguistic crisis which is characteristic of several Modernist poets.

In support of the view of Hardy as a Modernist, John Paul Riquelme, in “The Modernity of Thomas Hardy’s Poetry,” claims that Hardy’s modernism is distinctive because of its class-inflected, sceptical, and self-implicating tendencies (204). The modernity of Hardy reveals itself in a highly ambiguous language, in resistance to conventional attitudes and hierarchies involving nature and society, in the transforming of lyric traditions, and in insistence by means of negativity on the possibility of achieving a defiant, permanently revolutionary freedom to choose and refuse (204). According to Riquelme, there is evidence of Hardy’s modernity in poems that span the entire period of his career as a publishing poet from 1898 to 1928. Primary to Riquelme’s insight into Hardy’s modernity are poems that depict nature and Romantic attitudes, war poetry, elegies and poems that use negative language prominently (204).

T. R. M. Creighton, too, acknowledges the modern elements in Hardy. Creighton states that among the subjects of Hardy’s poetry, the mysterious relation between nature and man, the indifferent, inscrutable, untrustworthy face of nature deserve attention (ix). “Religion, its necessity and impossibility, the indispensableness but incredibility of the old beliefs, have never been explored more fully or less dogmatically,” so Hardy’s sensibility is essentially a “modern” sensibility (Creighton ix).

John Powell Ward offers a discussion on Hardy's poetry in terms of "imperfection," and refers to cases and views that posit Hardy toward and simultaneously against Modernist poetry. For example, in "Hardy's Aesthetics and Twentieth-Century Poetry," he refers to the views of poets such as Auden, Yeats and Pound in an anthology edited by Walter de la Mare. Auden comes across a Hardy whom he values "for not being overtly modernistic and sophisticated" (297). Auden also remarks Hardy's adherence to regular forms and his firm rebuttal of free verse (297). On the other hand, W. B. Yeats comments that although Hardy's work "lacked technical accomplishment," he "made the necessary correction through his mastery of the impersonal objective scene" (296). E. Pound, in particular, "saw in Hardy what he was striving for in others and himself: the choice of exact word is all, even if it jars awkwardly with its neighbours; that imperfection doesn't matter if what is thereby expressed is a precise truth" (296-97). Therefore, while Auden admired Hardy for not being "too" obviously Modernist, Yeats and Pound saw elements that associated him with its tendencies. Ward concludes his article with the suggestion that because of the Darwinian influence, Hardy is closer to the Postmodern world which today's poets inhabit (300).

Linda Shires sees that Hardy's poems are peculiarly modern in their "registering of instability and dislocation" (2004: 265). Hardy's special achievement in nineteenth-century poetry, drawing out tendencies from his predecessors and contemporaries, is to explore the paradoxes and contradictions of sign/icon and referent (Shires 2004: 265). Moreover, he uses the multiple interactions of time, representation, and subjectivity as a way to critique not only the poetics he inherited but also the society, in which he lived, by throwing into question all "verities" as human, and thus contingent, constructions (Shires 2004: 266). Hardy's emphasis on chance, his distrust of easy sentiment or common sense—from romantic codes to institutionalized religion—his understanding of relativity of time as it interacts with the human subject, his remarkable feel for outworn forms of words or genres and their sedimentary layers of meaning, all contribute to a poetry that is startlingly modern in its content (Shires 266).

Tim Armstrong, too, agrees with the transitional status of Hardy. According to Armstrong, the poetry of Hardy “edges towards the aesthetics of modernism; and towards an understanding of language, abstraction and the possibilities of representation akin at least to some strands of modernism” (333). Hardy “stands on the pathway towards a language of detachment; one in which the word has been shaken from its anchorage in notions of natural speech, and attached to the hesitant imperatives of thought” (326). “But the fact that he engaged, tentatively, with the newest version of the new suggests his openness as a poet, and gives the lie to those who saw his poetry as anchored in the timeless verities of rural life, eschewing development” (Armstrong 333).

As a result, Hardy’s later poetry reveals a Modernist taste, and it is manifested in his experimenting with language and content. His technical innovations, ambivalent and unusual word choices have often amazed and divided the critics who have tried to pinpoint him. Hardy’s economy of speech and his use of the exact word were traits which most Modernists adhered to. On the other hand, Hardy’s poems still reveal some romantic inspirations—melancholy, nostalgia, the consciousness of loss in an irrational world falling prey to random mechanisms, and the mystery of death as a constant presence. Although he tended to be rationalist and positivist all his life, his poetry, especially after the death of his first wife Emma, thematized a superstitious and irrational world occupied sometimes by ghosts or by voices from the past. These features reflect Hardy’s interest in the irrational and the mysterious, which many Romantics tended to possess. But at the same time, the superstitious and the irrational in Hardy implies the appropriation of a more problematized, distanced self—double vision, double voice, sometimes multiple voices, echoes—elements that are associated more with the Modernist self.

1.4. Hardy and Deconstructionist Criticism

At the core of Derridean criticism, there is a radical challenge to any harmonious, fixated sense of presence, hierarchy, or metaphysical duality. For Derrida, the “signified” is transcendental because it both delineates the human strife for an absolute signified and, at the same time, the resistance of language toward absolute linguistic and semantic formulation. In his outstanding work, *Of Grammatology*, as well as in his other books and articles, Derrida claims that the phonetic or written signifier points to a referent which proves to be only a “trace,” a “supplement,” a “deferral” or “différance.” The signified, or meaning in general, has no locale, but is the domain of an endless play of signifiers. This is not to say that there is never a signified at work. It is simply to claim that a signified assumes meaning, if any, only due to its difference from another signified, which is continually deferred, too, on its own behalf. Derrida's purpose in general, is not to claim that no text or author can ever “mean” what they say, but rather to expose what a text “does not know yet,” or to show how the reversal and decentring of the binary oppositions at work may infinitely change the process of interpretation. Simultaneously, Derrida continually emphasizes that the act of interpretation is only the interpretation of interpretation.

In all of his works, Derrida shows that any text can be deconstructed and decentred. Whether literary or philosophical, all texts are sufficiently susceptible to the challenge of open-endedness and undecidability. In this respect, Modernist literature is not an exception. It perfectly demonstrates the ruptures in language as well as in the concept of self, structure and consciousness. Poetry, whose nature to a great extent relies on metaphoricity may become an equally fascinating playground for Poststructuralist criticism. Derrida, who urges to begin “*wherever we are*,” and never indicates a point of departure, suggests that our endeavour should be focusing on showing how a text's internal tensions, ambiguities, ruptures violate the text's unified “centres” of truth: “We must begin *wherever we are* and the thought of the trace ... has already taught us that it is impossible to justify a point of departure absolutely. *Wherever we are* ... in a text where we already believe ourselves to be” (*Of Grammatology* 162). In the way Derrida approaches Plato's *Phaedrus*,

Deconstructionism appears to be modelled upon showing how the internal contradictions and paradoxes threaten to collapse the unified sense of meaning in a text, and how those contradictions cause the text to betray itself.

Even at first glance, one can see many traits that necessitate viewing Hardy's poetry in deconstructive terms. Hardy's poetic voice and his agnosticism are a challenge to logocentrism and phonocentrism. His complex imagery is an expression of his agnostic world without a centre. His symbolism epitomizes the uncertainties of a random and an accidental universe. His frequent references to transcendental realms that he fails to define, the irregularity of his rhythm and rhyme, the casualness with which he combines the traditional and the non-traditional forms, his language which is simultaneously archaic and modern, point to a Modernist sensibility.

There are several other key elements in Hardy that hint at qualities that are more often associated with Modernist writing. Above all, the concept of the self in Hardy is neither Cartesian nor fragmented but mainly plural. Although he employs language as a tool, a medium, there is "double voice" and "double vision" in his poetry. The persona in his poems is often multi-vocal. Dialogues between his present self and past self occur frequently. These imply, to a certain degree, a unified, but also a dissociated kind of self. Hardy's concept of the self is unique—it does not resemble either the unified, divinely-inspired Romantic self or the clearly-defined, empirical, rationalistic Cartesian self or the split, fragmented Modernist self.

Moreover, there is a sense of structure in Hardy; however, it is ruptured. While he is experimenting with form, he comes across a world without a "centre." He has no stable point of reference; his points of reference are identified merely by the operations of "chances" and "coincidences" that isolate him in his empirical world. Although he attempts to make transcendental references, they remain ambiguous in his realm of "Crass Casualty." The scientific determinism and naturalism in his poetry dissolve into agnosticism or stoicism.

Hardy's perception of time and space is also unconventional. His concept of time is both linear and non-linear. It is simultaneously diachronic and synchronic. This fact reveals a unique, partly nonlinear temporality while he does not totally drift away from linearity. The space which he cannot define or identify on a secure ground reappears as “echoes,” “shadows,” or “voices.” Although the phonetic signifier is there, the signified is beyond his grasp, its locus is evacuated. Therefore, this unidentifiable space becomes the epitome of a crisis in representation and presents itself as a challenge to phonocentrism. Other aspects that hint at tensions and contradictions in language also allow the possibility of examining Hardy in terms of Deconstructionism. In his early work—*Dissemination*—Derrida develops exactly such kind of an approach to language. In Barbara Johnson's view, Derrida proceeds through the levels “of the insistent but invisible contradictions and *différance*” (xvi). The presence of the phonetic signifier in the absence of a point of transcendental reference is the reason why Hardy may become the subject for deconstructive criticism. Deconstructionism emphasizes the free play, or flight of signifiers, the lack of centre, locus, structure. The Deconstructionism of Derrida highlights exactly the obscurity, ambiguity and the undecidability of language, and its resistance to designate a *transcendental signified*, which are thematized in Hardy's poetry.

1.5. Modernist Poetry and its Contradictory Nature

It is essentially possible to “deconstruct” any literary text, regardless of its tradition and of its chronological, cultural, and intellectual context. Derrida himself argues in *Of Grammatology* that the act of deconstruction is not limited to only literary or philosophical texts (99). In an interview with D. Attridge (1989), titled “This Strange Institution Called Literature,” Derrida states that he “almost always writes *about, toward, for, in the name of, in honour of, against* literary texts ... and ... in response to solicitations and provocations” (9). His writings about literary texts, though he puts under question the term “literature” and “literary texts,” concern contemporaries such as Mallarmé, Joyce, Celan, Bataille, Artaud and Blanchot. Derrida, however, does not accept them as a homogenous group. He suggests that “these 'twentieth-

century modernist, or at least non-traditional texts' all have in common that they are inscribed in a *critical* experience of literature" (9). These texts operate a sort of turning back, they *are* themselves a sort of turning back on the literary institution. Derrida himself confesses that he is more easily "brought toward texts which are very sensitive to this crisis of the literary institution" (which is more than, and other than, a crisis), to what is called "the end of literature," from Mallarmé to Blanchot, beyond the "absolute poem," that "there is not" ("*das es nicht gibt*"—Celan). But given the paradoxical structure of this thing called literature, its beginning *is* its end. Its history *is constructed* like the ruin of a monument which basically never existed (Derrida 9). Derrida opposes even the term *fiction* because not all literature is of the genre or of the type of "fiction," but there is fictionality in all literature (15). And it is through this fictionality that we try to thematize the "essence" or the "truth" of language (15). Although Derrida admits that he does not always agree with Paul de Man, one of the precursors of Deconstructionism, he accepts de Man's suggestion that ultimately all literary rhetoric in general is itself deconstructive, practicing what you might call a sort of irony, (or a "suspension," an *epoché*) an irony of detachment with regard to metaphysical belief or thesis, even when apparently it puts it forward, ... but there is something irreducible in poetic or literary experience (15). Obviously, in this interview, Derrida puts under erasure the whole institution of literature and literary text, and hints that while Modernist texts tend to be non-traditional in the sense that they subvert themselves, in fact, all literature has an inherent fictionality which subverts its very foundations.

However, if a distinction has to be made, some texts appear to be "more mimetic," i.e., more representational, whereas some others largely display greater tensions and ruptures in language. Though Derrida would not make sharp distinctions between prose and verse, it is in the nature of prosaic texts to be more often considered more "mimetic, representational" than poetry. Poetry is more figurative and relies on compact language that makes use of comparisons, metaphoric compounds, and symbolism. Modernist poetry is controversial in its own way, in the sense that Modernist poets attempt to capture a sense of a "unifying principle," but the material

of language does not allow it. As a result, Modernist poetry fails to become largely “mimetic.” In support of this view, Rainer Emig argues:

Modernist poems are not mimetic depictions, mirror images of an environment that determine their shape and not that of their material, language ... Modernist poems respond to societal conditions which provide the realm and the stimulus of works as well as their material, but their response dislocates the premises from which they emerge. It destabilizes their authority, and questions their validity in a way much later recaptured theoretically in textual deconstruction ... The poem violates the locutionary aspect of discourse by mutilating and obscuring the message until it eventually threatens meaning and interpretation altogether. It corrodes the illocutionary aspect, too: the modernist poem makes it increasingly difficult to locate its voice, its identity. It splits it up, disqualifies its fragments as mere quotations or irony, until it eventually unveils the very concept of subjectivity as far from stable ... Yet there is also an equally strong tendency in modernist poems to present themselves as coherent and complete, as works. (237-239)

Emig's argument, in fact, summarizes the nature of Modernist literature—its search for a “centre,” or a “unifying principle,” and its failure to build one. Emig defends that modernist poems:

display a desire to leave their character as appearance behind and try to overcome internal ruptures by presenting themselves as synthetic wholes, as an artificial consciousness or even as a reality of their own ... The failure to be mimetic is transformed into a rejection of the mimetic or rather into a massive redistribution of value on to the aspect of construction. (237-239)

According to Emig, the linguistic sign is also problematised—“the sign, the all-too problematic connection between signifier and signified is overcome by a further reduction: now the signifier alone remains and guarantees the absolute control of signification” (237-239). Emig's emphasis might be one way of building a connection between Modernist poetry and Deconstructionist criticism.

A similar emphasis comes from Howard Felperin, who suggests that by scrutinizing the words on the page harder than New Criticism ever had, Deconstruction discovered not their translucent and free-standing autonomy but, in a radical defamiliarization, their dark, even opaque character as writing, black marks on white paper; not the organic unity that binds together irony, paradox and ambiguity in a privileged, indeed redeemed and redeeming language, but unrecuperable rhetorical discontinuity (110). Felperin refers to the example of R. Frost, whose poem “Acquainted with the Night,” lays bare the problematic nature of the linguistic sign, and concludes that:

What emerges from ... deconstructive reading is not the absence of a presence in the speaker, ..., but something more like the presence of an absence in the speaker, a mind or a voice which is simultaneously there and not there, a kind of revenant voyeur whose mode of existence, being posthumous or alienated, puts historical time and its own personal history into brackets or into abeyance. Needless to say, the aporia to which the poem leads in such a reading, its simultaneous offer and withdrawal of meaning, would be seen by Miller as the successful accomplishment of its literary and philosophical mission: to blow the cover on logocentricity, on the “tradition of presence,” with its epistemological and interpretive idealism. (Felperin 124)

In the light of the aforementioned references, the possibility of viewing Modernist texts as inherently incoherent and subversive is strengthened by the fact that literature and literary texts are already self-reflexive and self-referential. They expose the already problematic relationship between sign and meaning, but this problematic

relationship is not actually limited to Modernist texts only, or even to literary texts. However, Modernist texts tend to admit, to “confess” openly this self-betrayal which other kinds of literary currents would claim to deny or disguise.

1.6. The “Non-Mimetic” Nature of Hardy’s Poetry and His Transitional Status

As indicated by Emig, the Modernist poem tends to corrode and collapse its logic by means of internal tensions. At the same time, it struggles to present itself as a unified whole. Where Hardy stands in regard to the convulsions of the language of figuration might be an issue that will probably require a continual argumentation. Hardy's poems, which resist thematic and stylistic categorizations, display both mimetic and non-mimetic characteristics. This means that at times his poetic language appears to be representational of a reality claimed by the subject/persona, and sometimes non-representational in the sense that semantic incongruity and ambiguity overtake the poem. This element in Hardy's poetry has captured the attention of the critics who agree that Hardy must be seen as a transitional poet.

Taylor makes it clear that Hardy is also a transitional poet on account of the extensiveness of his poetic career. Hardy straddled the great transition from traditional versification to free verse (2003: 201). While he always maintained accentual-syllabic stanza forms, he moved toward “poems composed in unique and complex stanzas increasingly conscious of their own visibility in the manner of the free verse poem” (Taylor 2003: 201). In sum, Hardy’s poetry extends beyond the Victorian into the Modernist period.

Peter Widdowson, too, emphasizes that Hardy can be cast as ineluctably “transitional” between the “Victorian” and the “Modern” (71). Widdowson acknowledges that by the 1920s, Hardy’s work was more often aligned with the now enfeebled “Georgian Poetry” movement rather than with the dynamic innovations of the Modernists (77). Hardy’s Georgian characteristics included his celebration of the rural scene, his melancholy love poems, his reinvocation of the lost past, his witty

obsession with time, aging, death, his downbeat poetic language, and his controlled rhythmically ever-inventive prosody—all become conventionally associated with the “true” Hardy as a Poet (77).

The difficulty of Hardy’s aesthetics captures the attention of other critics, too. In her article “Object-Loss and Object-Bondage,” Marjorie Levinson mentions that Hardy’s poetry causes division between readers—those who interpret it as mimetic and those who see it as non-mimetic. While Levinson discusses Hardy’s stunning writing, she actually sees reasons why Hardy transcends “all kinds of modernisms” we know of (552). She remarks that Hardy’s poetry bears the influence of late nineteenth-century inventions and spread of technologies of optical production and reproduction (565). She refers to a new kind of photographic realism, which merges realism and impressionism. That is to say, realism and impressionism are no more contrary, as they seem, but one integral reflection of a cultural Real. This notion helps us grasp the material conditions of Hardy’s poetry, which has long divided its readers as those who see it as a mimetic discourse and those who read it along modernist, anti-mimetic lines (565-66). It explains how his poetry manages to give a deep, normalizing construction of world-ness, and at the same time to impress us as an “affair of collaterals,” “a scientific game,” “a disproportioning art,” “unadjusted impressions,” Hardy’s signature slogans for his art (566). Levinson suggests that Hardy’s poems about Emma’s loss are an exception as they revolve around a more stable thematic construction and defines them as more “representative” (557). However, Hardy is seen to challenge all projects of modernity, and Levinson sees in his poems what Eric Santner calls “a perpetual leave-taking from fantasies of plenitude, purity, totality, unity, mastery” (552-53). In other words, Levinson implies Hardy’s subversive experimenting with form and content, a quality which must make us consider him as partly siding with the Modernists.

In his discussion of Hardy’s elegiac poems in *Poems of 1912-13*, William W. Morgan states that “Hardy has long been seen as a transitional poet—as both the last Victorian and the first Modern—and his elegy is as temperamentally and historically ambivalent as is the rest of his poetry” (1974: 501). In some ways it points directly

forward to the elegiac verse of W. H. Auden, George Baker, John Ciardi, Theodore Roethke, and other Modern poets, but it has firm ties with earlier elegies as well (501). This dissertation does not concentrate specifically on the elegiac poetry of Hardy, but it is important to acknowledge why Hardy has been accepted as a transitional poet. Morgan emphasizes that “like the poets who came after him, Hardy was facing a post-Darwinian cosmos,” and his elegy, like later ones, is built upon an axiology not of faith but of scepticism (501). Morgan compares Hardy with later modern poets' elegiac forms, and points out similarities such as a conversational tone, informal diction, a structural division of the whole into separate lyrics, and self-scrutiny. Moreover, Morgan emphasizes that not only in terms of technique, but also in terms of thought and theme, Hardy's poems anticipate later elegies (501). Still, Hardy's elegy seems even more firmly tied to the tradition that preceded it. It is not a traditional pastoral elegy, but it is in several important ways related to the elegiac tradition (501).

As stated above, some critics discuss Hardy as a nineteenth-century poet and some others, on the contrary, elaborate on his Modernist aspects and non-mimetic language. It is possible to say that Hardy's poetry of the nineteenth century reveals a more traditional form and content whereas his lyrics after 1900 reflect the consciousness and style of the new age. All in all, the fact that Hardy's poetry can be taken as both mimetic and non-mimetic leads to the conclusion that it opens itself for Deconstructionist criticism. In linguistic and semantic terms, non-mimetic language implies a gap between the signifier and the signified, and Deconstructionist strategy embraces the opportunity to expose such gaps.

1.7. Hardy's Dramatized Persona as the Reflection of a Modernist Self

One of the challenges of Deconstructionism is posited against the concept of the unified, Cartesian self. In Hardy, the problematisation of the self finds expression in his use of “dramatized persona.” Hardy gives his own definition of the persona in his Preface to *Wessex Poems*: “The pieces are in a large degree dramatic or personative

in conception; and this even when they are not obviously so” (*The Complete Poems* 6). Naturally, terms like “dramatic” and “personative” may imply a more ambiguous sort of poetic voice. By choosing a dramatic persona, the poet partly withholds his subjectivity but it is not the impersonal fragmented voice of Eliot and Pound. Hardy places himself in a less strictly defined area. Dennis Taylor, accordingly, states that this is not a theory of the modern persona we expect as the speaker of lyrics in the tradition of Browning and Pound (2003: 197). Rather, Hardy, who regarded all of his experiences as “impressions,” is suggesting a merging of personal and dramatic voice. The word “personative” is a rare word, suggesting neither the dramatic immediacy in Browning nor the aesthetic detachment in Pound, but an enmeshment in a conditioning language which is ancient and complex (Taylor 197).

William W. Morgan, too, discusses the paradox in Hardy's definition of “dramatized persona.” Morgan points that Hardy's frequent use of the designation “dramatic” to describe his work does not comply with much of his poetry which is “transparently personal” (1979: 244). In several introductory statements to his volumes of verse, Hardy states that he does not often speak as himself in his poems, and they are “in a large degree dramatic or personative in conception” (244). Morgan states that Hardy is insistent on this matter, but his words sound confusing. Eventually, Morgan infers that Hardy's conception of dramatic poetry is much broader than the usual and that, for him, the dramatic does not stand in simple opposition to the personal (245). Thus Hardy's conception of dramatic poetry becomes paradoxically a key to understanding the authentically personal voice which characterises much of his poetry. In his Preface to *Time's Laughingstocks*, Hardy emphasizes again:

Now that the miscellany is brought together, some lack of concord in pieces written at widely severed dates, and in contrasting moods and circumstances, will be obvious enough. This I cannot help, but the sense of disconnection, particularly in respect of those lyrics penned in the first person, will be immaterial when it is borne in mind that they are to be regarded, in the main, as dramatic monologues by different characters. (*The Complete Poems* 190)

Morgan concludes that the message of the poet is clearer here: Hardy is saying that poems, the products of his own moods and circumstances, are in some sense personal utterances, and should also be regarded as the statements of created characters (1979: 245). It appears that one of the important things Hardy means by dramatic is, rather, simply, a *temporary* persona, mood, feeling, fancy, or idea (246). His personae, even when they are versions of himself, are often making statements and expressing states of mind which are circumscribed by time and place and are not, in any permanent or complete sense, the attitudes of the poet himself (246). For Hardy, there are no rigid boundaries between the personal and the dramatic; a poem may be both at once (247). The following sections of this dissertation will explore how Hardy's problematisation of the self and his idea of "dramatized persona" correlate with each other.

John Paul Riquelme, on the other hand, clearly sees the modern Hardy and claims that Hardy is in the same line as Yeats and Eliot in his challenge to the singular character of the self (204). However, Hardy's style is neither abstract nor fragmented in the manner of Eliot, who uses ambiguous pronoun references, multiple literary allusions, and a group of speeches based on liturgical language, among other techniques, to disrupt the continuity and spontaneity of the individual voice (204). Hardy projects at times an anti-self comparable in some ways to the anti-self in Yeats, but he does so in a less mellifluous style. Furthermore, Riquelme acknowledges that Hardy employs language of negation, multiple visions and styles, doubling, double perspective and self-reflection (204-220). He draws his conclusions by identifying in Hardy reminiscences of Yeats' "play with all masks," Beckettian style of falling silent, the multiple views of reality in Wallace Stevens (220) and the multiplying of views and selves in D. H. Lawrence, which Lawrence called the allotropic form of fictional characters (219). These can be seen in Hardy's war poems, poems about nature as well as in his elegies. Therefore, in Riquelme's view, Hardy does not stand in a place too aloof from the Modernist poets. Riquelme posits strong arguments about why Hardy shares a modern sensibility with these poets in terms of both theme and technique.

Due to the above given elements, Hardy's poetic language should be viewed largely as non-mimetic rather than mimetic. The complication of the poetic mimesis in Hardy's language necessitates the act of viewing him as a transitional poet whose works lend enough material for a Poststructuralist analysis. The limited capacity of language to transcend external reality and at the same time its falling off within its limitations to subscribe to this external reality is the concern of Poststructuralist thinking. This is the reason why Hardy might be viewed in the light of Deconstructionist literary criticism. The following chapters will analyse the non-representational elements of Hardy's poetry and the analysis of the poems will be carried out in Deconstructionist terms with emphasis on the implications of crisis of representation.

CHAPTER 2

KEY CONCEPTS IN DERRIDA'S DECONSTRUCTIONISM AND IN WESTERN EPISTEMOLOGY

Considered in general terms, crisis of representation is the displacement of the Aristotelian idea that language is mimetic or representational of the external reality. Crisis of representation is an expression which mainly implies the discrepancy between sign and meaning, between representation and referent, between the signifier and the signified. In the words of Jacques Derrida, crisis of representation implies “the unconscious breaks to which the speech is liable” (*Of Grammatology* 6). This crisis of representation is a symptom, too, because it “indicates that a historico-metaphysical epoch must finally determine as language the totality of its problematic horizon.” Derrida asserts that “language itself is menaced in its very life, helpless, adrift in the threat of limitlessness, brought back to its finitude at the very moment when its limits seem to disappear, when it ceases to be self-assured, contained, and guaranteed by the infinite signified which seemed to exceed it” (*Of Grammatology* 6). Therefore, he infers that this is not only a linguistic crisis but also a bankruptcy of the dominant ideology and epistemology.

The major strategy of Derrida's Deconstructionism rests on highlighting the paradoxes and contradictions in language that threaten to tear apart the text's meaning altogether. Derrida calls to attention Plato's *Phaedrus* and refers to his term “pharmakon,” a word which has opposite meanings: it refers to both a medical remedy and poison. As suggested by Barry Stocker, these contradictory meanings provide a particularly convenient example, of the contradictions that condition all language and all meaning (56). For Derrida, there is no possibility of communication in language without the possibility of contradiction (Stocker 56). Derrida argues that Plato's philosophy rests on a series of metaphysical oppositions. Metaphysics itself can be defined as the thought that relies on absolute oppositions. Derrida writes: “Plato thinks of writing and tries to comprehend it, to dominate it, on the basis of

opposition as such” (“The Pharmakon” 103). In order for these contrary values (good/evil, true/false, essence/appearance, inside/outside, etc.) to be in opposition, each of the terms must be simply *external* to the other, which means that one of these oppositions (the opposition between inside and outside) must already be accredited as the matrix of all possible opposition (103). Derrida claims that “deconstruction does not consist in passing from one concept to another, but in overturning and displacing a conceptual order, as well as the nonconceptual order with which the conceptual order is articulated” (“Signature Event Context” 329). Stocker emphasises that in Derrida's strategy of deconstruction, the reversal of the hierarchy of two terms may be a strategy but cannot be the end goal (139). The reality defended by Derrida is that the two opposites contain each other and are mutually dependent. That does not suggest a harmonisation between them; they are always in contradiction but belong together (139). Therefore, it is important to grasp how Derrida practices the strategy of reversing the metaphysical oppositions. In the following sub-sections of this thesis, Derridean ideas and terms that can be applied to Hardy's poetry will be introduced and discussed in detail to prepare the ground for a thorough analysis of the poems. Some other Derridean terms and ideas this dissertation will not consult in this chapter.

2.1. Derrida as the Inheritor of Nietzsche and Heidegger's Legacy

In order to initiate a detailed discussion on Hardy in the light of Deconstructionist strategies, first, it is necessary to trace back the emergence of Deconstructionism and the transition from the mode of Structuralism to Poststructuralism. Deconstructionism is generally associated with Poststructuralism. Deconstructionism and Poststructuralism coincide with a time of many upheavals and reformative political action—the second half of the twentieth century. Raman Selden, for instance, claims that Deconstructionism actually achieved self-consciousness in the 1970s; however, it is often dated back to 1966—the year in which Jacques Derrida read a paper titled “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human

Sciences” at a conference on Structuralism at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore (166). Selden states that Derrida's paper, which was marked by an explicit break with the assumptions of structuralism, promptly heralded the emergence of poststructuralism. But this term, according to Selden, remained hopelessly vague. It acquired “whatever sense it had from a wave of the hand in the direction of Derrida and Michel Foucault.” Derrida's early work, which paved the way for deconstructionism, was continuation and intensification of Heidegger's attack on Platonism (Selden 166).

The philosophy of Derrida is based on the discussion and criticism of many thinkers, among whom Rousseau, Hegel, Husserl, Freud, Nietzsche, Saussure, and Heidegger stand out. In *Dissemination* (1972), Derrida deals mainly with Plato's metaphysics and subverts Plato's “pharmakon.” In his major work, *Of Grammatology* (1967), Derrida undertakes a discussion on Rousseau and Lévi-Strauss. In *Speech and Phenomena* (1973), he mainly contradicts Husserlian phenomenology. In *Writing and Difference* (1963), Derrida offers discussion on Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralism. Other works by Derrida include *Margins of Philosophy* (1972), where he handles issues concerning Husserl and J. L. Austin, *Positions* (1972), and *Glas* (1974). These works by Derrida will be referred to in my further discussions.

In order to understand Derrida better, it is necessary to acknowledge his position primarily as the inheritor of thinkers such as Nietzsche and Heidegger, among others. Nietzsche and Heidegger were the precursors in the philosophical movement that questioned Western metaphysics. They radicalized the ontological and epistemological implications of human knowledge and truth, in general. In such a context, in order to question any kind of relation between language and truth, it is necessary to refer back to the idea of crisis of representation, which, in fact, implies first the questioning and problematization of the concept of truth. To some extent, it may be taken as the challenge to “mimetic representation,” which implies a linguistic correspondence between the signifier and the signified. According to Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida, the whole Western metaphysics has been based on the assumption that there is a harmonious relationship between language and meaning,

referent and truth. All three philosophers agree that such a harmonious relationship does not exist. However, they disagree on some grounds, and Derrida undertakes the act of deconstructing metaphysics beyond Nietzsche and Heidegger.

2.1.1. The Nietzschean Challenge to Metaphysical Oppositions and Derridean *Différance*

Gayatri Spivak and Keith C. Pheby discuss the role of Nietzsche and Heidegger in situating Derrida within the Poststructuralist mode of thinking. Both critics emphasize Nietzsche's radical definition of truth in his article "On Truth and Lies in Their Non Moral Sense." Not without a sense of irony, Nietzsche subverts the definition of truth and alleges that the truth of being, as represented by Western ontology is "a mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms ... truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions" ("On Truth" 4-5). Nietzsche points out that in order to cope with chaos, mankind has to seek an order, a unifying principle (*The Will to Power* 278, 444). This urge, this desire for order is fundamental for the continuation of human institutions, and Nietzsche calls it "the will to power." He questions the ontological certainty of knowledge and truth. But truth, as everything else, is a metaphor for Nietzsche. As early as 1873, Nietzsche described the metaphor as the originary process of what the intellect presents as truth: "The intellect, as a means for the preservation of the individual, develops its chief power in dissimulation" ("On Truth" 8-9). In its simplest sense, Nietzsche's definition of metaphor seems to imply establishing an identity between dissimilar things: "Every idea originates through equating the unequal" (qtd. in Spivak xxii).

Nietzsche argues that "the drive toward the formation of metaphors is the fundamental human drive, which one cannot for a single instant dispense with in thought, for one would thereby dispense with man himself" ("On Truth" 8). Spivak states that later, Nietzsche will give this drive the name the "will to power." Our so-called will to truth is a will to power because "the so-called drive for knowledge can

be traced back to a drive to appropriate and conquer" (Spivak xxii). Nietzsche suggests that this need for power compels humanity to create an unending proliferation of interpretations whose only "origin," that shudder in the nerve strings, being a direct sign of nothing, leads to no primary signified (Spivak xxiii). The will to power is a process of "incessant deciphering"—figuring, interpreting, signi-fying through apparent identification (Spivak xxiii). Man seeks the "truth," Nietzsche maintains, a world that is not self-contradictory, not deceptive, does not change, a *true* world—a world in which one does not suffer contradiction, deception, change—causes of suffering! ... the will to truth here is merely the desire for a world of the constant (*The Will to Power* 316-17).

Nietzsche explores a long tradition of metaphysics and otherworldliness in the Western world. In *The Twilight of the Idols* he gives an account of the gradual dissolution of the other-worldly way of thinking common to Plato, to Christianity, and to Kant, the way of thinking which contrasts the True World of Reality with the World of Appearance created by the senses, or matter, or Sin, or the structure of the human understanding (Selden 169). The characteristic expressions of this other-worldliness, this attempt to escape from time and history into eternity, are what deconstructionists often call "the traditional binary oppositions": true—false, original—derivative, unified—diverse, objective—subjective, and so on. Nietzsche challenges these metaphysical oppositions.

In *The Will to Power*, in particular, Nietzsche deconstructs the dual oppositions of the metaphysics of presence and says: "There are no opposites, only from those of logic do we derive the concept of opposites—and falsely transfer it to things" (298). One strategy of Nietzsche in dealing with the problem of perspective, or interpretation, is intersubstituting opposites (Spivak xxviii). If one is always bound by one's perspective, one can at least deliberately reverse perspectives as often as possible, in the process, undoing opposed perspectives, showing that the two terms of an opposition are merely accomplices of each other. Nietzsche's undoing of opposites is a version of Derrida's practice of undoing them through the concept of *différance* (deferment-difference) (Spivak xxix). In his article "Différance" Derrida suggests:

We could thus take up all the coupled oppositions on which philosophy is constructed, and from which our language lives, not in order to see opposition vanish but to see the emergence of a necessity such that one of the terms appears as the *différance* of the other, the other as "differed" within the systematic ordering of the same (e.g., the intelligible as differing from the sensible, as sensible differed; the concept differed-differing intuition, life as differed-differing matter; mind as differed-differing life; culture as differed-differing nature...). In Nietzsche, there are so many themes that can be related with the symptomatology that always diagnoses the evasions and ruses of anything disguised in its *différance*. (*Speech and Phenomena* 148-49)

Derrida says about Nietzsche that by “radicalizing the concepts of *interpretation, perspective, evaluation, difference* ... Nietzsche, far from remaining 'simply' (with Hegel and as Heidegger wished) *within* metaphysics, contributed a great deal to the liberation of the signifier from its dependence or derivation with respect to the logos, and the related concept of truth or the primary signified ...” (*Of Grammatology* 19). Therefore, Nietzsche's suspicion of the value of truth, of meaning and of being, of "meaning of being" and of the concept of the primary signified," is intimately shared by Derrida (Spivak xxii).

Another “conceptuality” that Derrida endorses through Nietzsche is the idea of “play” and “affirmative joy.” Nietzsche's “play” is the equivalent of “difference,” “trace,” or “supplement” in Derrida. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida describes the Nietzschean *affirmation* as the joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, without origin, offered to an active interpretation (Spivak xii).

2.1.2. Heideggerean Being and Derrida's Trace

Heidegger was in the same line of thinking as Nietzsche when, in *Being and Time*, he identified Platonism with the metaphysics of presence which dominated the culture of the West and the history of philosophy. According to Heidegger, not only Plato and Aristotle, but also the figures such as St. Paul, Descartes, Newton, Kant, John Stuart Mill, and Marx were merely episodes of the metaphysics of presence (Selden 169). Their visions remained Platonic, even when they thought of themselves as repudiating other-worldliness. They clung to the distinction between reality and appearance, or between the rational and the irrational. Even empiricism and positivism took these distinctions for granted, and therefore, for Heidegger, were merely the trivialized and degenerate forms of metaphysical thought (169).

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger sought a way to twist free from the metaphysical oppositions, and his strategy shaped itself as the act of putting *Dasein*, or *Being* under erasure. While Heidegger maintained that the question of Being had been forgotten, and needed to be restated, he pointed out that the question of Being had constituted the stimulus for the work of Plato and Aristotle (*Being and Time* 21). The dialectic method of Aristotle and Plato, which persisted down to the logic of Hegel, had become not only "trivialized" but also dogmatic (21).

Heidegger argues that he is not seeking for a definition of Being, rather he emphasizes that an ontical, ontological and epistemological restating of the question of Being is needed. Paradoxically, although he puts the concept of Being under erasure, he inevitably grounds his whole work on the search of this mysterious and "forgotten" Being and the need to "formulate" the question about the meaning of Being (25). Heidegger tries to twist free from the metaphysics of presence which he identifies as the history of the West, but he finds himself continually asking the question: "What is the Being?" (25).

While Heidegger does not acknowledge his own metaphysical positioning, he criticizes Nietzsche for his essentialism. In "The Word of Nietzsche," Heidegger

evaluates Nietzsche as a metaphysician because Nietzsche appears to prioritise “the will to power” as the essence of “becoming” (73). This essentialist approach becomes the ground for Heidegger's criticism of Nietzsche. For him, Nietzsche inverted the Platonic opposition between Being and Becoming by making Becoming, in the form of the endless flow of power from point to point, primary (Selden 169).

Heidegger's strategy that helps avoid metaphysical entrapment may be referred to as *sous rature* or “under erasure” (Spivak xiv). Derrida agrees with such an approach to language. This is to write a word, cross it out, and then print both word and deletion. This is Heidegger's formulation and strategic practice. However, there is a certain difference between what Heidegger and Derrida put under erasure (Spivak xv). “Being” is the master word that Heidegger crosses out. Derrida does not reject this. But his word is a “trace” (the French word carries strong implications of track, footprint, imprint), a word that cannot be a master-word that presents itself as the mark of an anterior presence, origin, master. For “trace” one can substitute “arche-writing” (*archi-écriture*), or *différance*, or, in fact, quite a few other words that Derrida uses in the same way.

Derrida's notion of “sous rature” differs from that of Heidegger's (Spivak xvii). Heidegger's *Being* might point at an inarticulable presence. Derrida's trace is the mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent present, of the lack at the origin that is the condition of thought and experience (xvii). For somewhat different yet similar contingencies, both Derrida and Heidegger teach us to use language in terms of a trace-structure, effacing it even as it presents its legibility (Spivak xvii-xviii). To put it in another way, Derrida departs from Heidegger because he suspects that Heidegger's mysterious Being appears to serve as a sort of substitute for the “transcendental signified.” For Derrida, Heidegger's discussion of “authenticity” and the “meaning of being” is rife with metaphysical complicities, with nostalgia (Pheby 69).

Derrida embraces many Heideggerean ideas but he implements his own terminology. What Heidegger called “Platonism” or “metaphysics” or “onto-theology” Derrida

calls “the metaphysics of presence,” “logocentrism,” or “phallogocentrism.” Both philosophers see the influence of the traditional binary oppositions as infecting all areas of life and thought, including literature and criticism of literature (Selden 169). Derrida entirely agrees with Heidegger that the task of the thinker is to twist free of these oppositions and of the forms of intellectual and cultural life which they structure. However, Derrida does not think that Heidegger succeeded in twisting free of these opposites. The reason for this is the persistently metaphysical character of Heidegger's thought and his notion of “Being.” Heidegger emphasizes that Western metaphysics confuses “Being” with “beings.” However, in “Implications: An Interview with Henry Ronsbo,” Derrida makes it clear that he regards the “ontological difference” between “Being” and “beings” as a notion which is still “in the grasp of metaphysics” (*Positions* 9-10). According to Derrida: “there will be no unique name, even if it were the name of Being. And we must think without *nostalgia*, that is, outside of the myth of a purely maternal or paternal language, a lost native country of thought” (“Differance” 159).

It is difficult to draw the line that separates metaphysical from non-metaphysical thinking. It would do no justice to any of the philosophers mentioned above to be labelled as metaphysical. Each thinker in his own way has played a great role in subverting the hierarchized modes of thinking that govern the Western world. Pheby believes that even the plurality of Nietzsche's style does disrupt logocentrism and free the signifier from its dependence upon “truth” and “meaning.” Heidegger’s emphasis on movement seriously undermines the metaphysical conception of being, as a whole, present totality (Pheby 21).

In Spivak's view, Heidegger stands between Derrida and Nietzsche (xxxiii). Almost on every occasion that Derrida writes of Nietzsche, Heidegger's reading is invoked. It is as if Derrida discovers his Nietzsche through and against Heidegger. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida writes: “...rather than protect Nietzsche from the Heideggerean reading, we should perhaps offer him up to it completely, underwriting that interpretation without reserve...” (19).

Heidegger and Nietzsche, as the “last metaphysicians” in comparison with Derrida, have contributed greatly to the process of shaking down the metaphysics of presence. It can be seen that Derrida is a descendant of those great thinkers. In the way Derrida was unfairly accused of pure relativism and scepticism by those who had not read his work thoroughly, it would be equally unjust to think of Nietzsche and Heidegger as having fallen in the logocentric grip. Both Nietzsche and Heidegger should always be acknowledged as the forefathers, if not as the forerunners of Poststructuralist philosophy.

2.2. Problematization of Linguistic Idealism in Derrida

As discussed above, Derrida stands out as one of the most influential forerunners of Poststructuralist philosophy. Although Derridean criticism has taken over its rightful place in the field of literature, the philosophy of Derrida has not always aroused agreement from all sides. In fact, the work of Derrida and others cast grave doubt upon the classical notions of truth, reality, meaning and knowledge, all of which could be exposed as resting on a naively representational theory of language (Eagleton 143). If meaning, the signified, was a passing product of words or signifiers, always shifting and unstable, part-present and part-absent, how could there be any determinate truth or meaning at all? If reality was constructed by our discourse rather than reflected by it, how could we ever know reality itself, rather than merely knowing our own discourse? (Eagleton 144) Eagleton warns that, saying there are no absolute grounds for the use of such words as truth, certainty, reality and so on, is not to say that these words lack meaning or are ineffectual. This study will put special emphasis on this contradiction.

Like analytic philosophy itself, Derrida's Deconstructionist theory highlights this problem of *impassé*, by invoking opposition and suspicion (Selden 174). His work has been sometimes reduced by some critics to pure relativism. For example, Jacques Bouveresse in France and Jürgen Habermas in Germany accused Derrida of regressing to irrationalism. Others like David Novitz treated Derrida as a linguistic

idealist. They saw his doctrines as a sort of *reductio ad absurdum* of doubts about “realism”—about the claim that our language and thought are structured and given content by the world, by non-language (Selden 174). They think that the causal influence of the environment upon linguistic behaviour enables us to give a clear sense to the claim that some bits of language “correspond” to something non-linguistic (Selden 175). Their opponents, both anti-realists and those who try to set aside the realism/ anti-realism issue as misconceived, think that no such sense can be found (175).

Barry Stocker alleges that there is no “linguistic idealism” in Derrida (11). The claim that Derrida has a metaphysical position according to which the only reality is that of language, or the text, picks up on what has become a legendary line from Derrida in *Of Grammatology* “there is nothing outside of the text” (“Part II” 158). Stocker suggests that the line has a context that has nothing to do with the rather peculiar claim that existence is linguistic. What is significant is what Derrida says about meaning and interpretation: interpretation is always the interpretation of interpretation, since language never disappears to leave us with the reality of the referent (Stocker 11). Language, even in its simplest naming functions, is always a way of defining a word in the context of other words. This is not to say that there are no real referents out there, it is to say that we can only talk about referents through language as a whole (Stocker 11).

Although Derrida seems to be in conflict with analytic philosophy, there are still reasons why Derrida does not transgress its borders. Derrida's position may not be exactly the same as any particular analytic philosopher (Stocker 11). In his discussion of J. L. Austin, an analytic philosopher, in “Signature Event Context,” Derrida suggests that J. L. Austin always resorts to a moment of certainty in determining meaning around sincere intentionality (*Margins of Philosophy* 322). Derrida argues that no such moment can ever be definitely established (Stocker 11). The claim that no name or word can be defined outside the linguistic context is not outrageous for analytic philosophy, and no one would deny that context is necessary to fix meaning, even if we may believe that the meaning itself is given by the object

named in pure reference, denotation or designation (Stocker 11-12). Writing and language are themselves conceived as material for Derrida. The point of his discussion on Rousseau is to insist that language emerges from, and contains, natural material forces.

As a result, once we accept that Deconstructionism is not a regression to irrationalism and that it does not deny the possibility of a causal relation between language and non-language, its strategies become applicable to Modernist texts. Moreover, it is possible to trace a relationship between Modernist poetry and the changing nature of language, as it is no more the mimetic representation of the objective reality. It prepares the ground for the transition to Deconstructionism which allows us most flexibly to discuss the recurring problem of the sign, of structure, of origin, and of the episteme in general. Thus, this study will attempt to handle the problem of crisis of representation in Hardy's poetry, both in linguistic and ontological terms.

2.3. Problem of the Sign, Saussurean and Derridean Conceptions of the Sign

A rough trajectory of the idea of linguistic sign will prepare the ground for a thorough discussion on the nature of the sign. Rainer Emig explains that from antiquity until the Renaissance, the concept of the sign was commonly a tripartite one that consisted of the *signifier* (the element that represents—either as a material artefact, writing for instance, or a sound, gesture, etc.), the *signified* (the reality it stands for), and the third element of *similarity* which related the two others (10). These three entities were imagined as concrete and real. Around the seventeenth century, “similarity” became integrated into the signifier and the signified and part of each, while disappearing as an external reference point. The sign was thus transformed into a binary concept while still retaining a linking element between its two parts. An example of this process is the allegory which combines representation and represented reality in one figure of speech or visual representation (Emig 10).

Emig draws his analysis on Michel Foucault's model. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault traces the history of the relation between language and reality, and he distinguishes three stages in the development of the sign (88). Phase one (from the Stoic philosophers of ancient Greece to the Renaissance) is characterised by a threefold structure of the sign which unites the signifier, the signified, and the *conjuncture*, their relation. The Renaissance fuses these three elements by stressing the aspect of relation. It becomes associated with similarity and thus assumes aspects of both the signifier and the signified. This muddled but still tertiary structure is then superseded in the Enlightenment (i. e. the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century) by a binary model deriving from the dissociation of sign and reality. This is the compound of the signifier and the signified encountered in Saussure. Foucault mentions, among others, Hobbes, Berkeley, and Hume as thinkers of this rift (88).

The 18th century posited the ideas of an empirical universe and a rational human intellect. The idea of Cartesian self, or the “cogito,” epitomised by Descartes' statement “I think, therefore, I am,” rests on the binary model, and on a mimetic representation of reality. Pheby mentions in *Interventions* that in Descartes' philosophy, rational consciousness, or consciousness as representation becomes, in the Cartesian meditations, the guarantor of certainty and knowledge (17). Indeed, Descartes' Cartesian self accepts the superiority of the mind and of the senses. In Meditation III, Descartes writes:

I am certain that I am a thinking thing. But do I not therefore also know what is required in order for me to be certain of something? For in this first act of knowledge [*cognitione*] there is nothing other than a clear and distinct perception of what I affirm to be the case; and this certainly would be insufficient to make me certain of the truth of the matter, if it could ever come to pass that something I perceived so clearly and distinctly was false. And therefore I seem already to be able to lay down, as a general rule, that everything I very clearly and distinctly perceive is true. (“Of God, That He Exists” 25)

In the mind of Descartes, something true is that which man clearly and distinctly brings before himself and confronts as what is thus brought before him (re-presented) in order to guarantee what is represented in such a confrontation (Pheby 17). The assurance of such a representation is certainty. What is true in the sense of being certain is what is real. Reality becomes that which is open to the mind's act or representing. In this way then, the split between subject and object is generated. With the dawn of the Enlightenment, "true" knowledge becomes the privilege of the pure attentive intelligence (Pheby 17). Thus we see language as completely confined to its representational role (Pheby 18-19).

From the 18th century onwards, the linking element of similarity in the tripartite relationship disappears. According to Emig, the reasons for this are complex. Yet it would not be wrong to assume that scientific advances, together with the ever-intensifying effect of the Industrial Revolution shook the belief in a predetermined order of things—which could be expressed in a stable concept of similarity. Instead, both objects and human subjects were granted individual power—and so were signs (Emig 11). This created gaps between human subjectivity and nature, which paved the way for Romanticism (11). It also spawned a more problematic concept of the sign, one that still consisted of the signifier and the signified, yet had greater trouble holding those two parts together. While the effects of this changed concept of the sign were felt in literature as early as the middle of the nineteenth century, it took half a century more for it to be expressed in theory by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure.

It is of great necessity to acknowledge Jacques Derrida's philosophy as a major stance against the Structuralist literary theory. Saussure's Structuralism poses a bipolar relationship between the signifier and the signified. Although Saussure says that this relationship is unmotivated and arbitrary, he accepts this binary relationship as coherent. Derrida agrees that it is arbitrary but disagrees with the idea that it is a one-to-one coherent relationship. It is impossible not to acknowledge Saussure's revolutionary contribution to the theory of language. However, first, the concept of the linguistic sign must be paid closer attention to in order to distinguish how Derrida

departs from Saussurean linguistics. In *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure claims:

the linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image. The latter is not the material sound, a purely physical thing, but the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes on our senses. The sound-image is sensory, and if I happen to call it "material," it is only in that sense, and by way of opposing it to the other term of the association, the concept, which is generally more abstract. (66)

Consequently, Saussure sees the linguistic sign as “a two-sided psychological entity” where the concept and the sound-image are “intimately united and each recalls the other” (66). Terry Eagleton, on the other hand, shows how Saussure's structuralism falls short in acknowledging the disruption in the relationship between the signifier and the signified, the sign and the referent. Saussure argues that meaning in language is just a matter of difference. But this process of difference in language can be traced round infinitely. If every sign is what it is because it is not all the other signs, every sign would seem to be made up of a potentially infinite tissue of differences. Another way of putting forward Saussure's point about the differential nature of meaning is to say that meaning is always the result of a division or “articulation” of the signs (Eagleton 127).

Saussure's concept of the sign does not know an outside of language, a referent (i. e. a real object or entity) that language relates to (Emig 11). For Saussure the function of language can be described while remaining entirely inside the boundaries of language. This closed nature of language will become a central issue and the most important problem of modernism (11). Jacques Derrida is one of the many theorists who claim that the sign has undergone a further structural change in what can be interpreted as the shift from modernity to modernism, i. e. in the process of the questioning of rationality by this very rationality. The signified has disappeared and left only the signifier (Emig 88-89).

In an interview with Julia Kristeva, Derrida stated that Saussure's binary concept of the sign, questioning the separable primacy of meaning—the transcendental signified—pointed a way out of metaphysics of presence (“Semiology and Grammatology” 34). But in terms of Derrida's teaching, we might simply say that Saussure was not a grammatologist because, having launched the binary sign, he did not proceed to put it under erasure. The binary opposition within the Saussurean sign is in a sense paradigmatic of the structure of structuralist methodology (Spivak lviii).

In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida opposes Saussure's linguistic theory by emphasizing that a clear distinction between the signifier and the signified cannot be fully made. Thus Derrida exposes the Western metaphysics' preference for privileging speech over writing since Plato. In Aristotelian terms, the voice is considered the closest to the signified whereas the written signifier is considered a derivative of the voice (*Grammatology* 11). By decentring the speech/writing opposition, Derrida presents his most powerful opposition to metaphysics of presence, phonocentrism and logocentrism. Derrida asserts that Saussure's theory of language also thematizes this phonocentrism:

The written signifier is always technical and representative. It has no constitutive meaning. This derivation is the very origin of the notion of the “signifier.” The notion of the sign always implies within itself the distinction between signifier and signified, even if, as Saussure argues, they are distinguished simply as the two faces of one and the same leaf. This notion remains within the heritage of that *logocentrism* which is also a *phonocentrism*: the absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and the ideality of meaning. (*Of Grammatology* 11-12)

Derrida establishes a link between phonocentrism, logocentrism and metaphysics of presence. He indicates that actually they come to mean the same thing and refers to other ideas, key concepts which become the signposts of the discourse of metaphysics of presence:

We already have a foreboding that phonocentrism merges with the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as *presence*, with all the subdeterminations which depend on this general form and which organize within it their system and their historical sequence (presence of the thing to the sight as *eidos*, presence as substance/ essence/ existence [*ousia*], temporal presence as point [*stigmé*] of the now or of the moment [*nun*], the self-presence of the cogito, consciousness, subjectivity, the co-presence of the other and of the self, intersubjectivity as the intentional phenomenon of the ego, and so forth). Logocentrism would thus support the determination of the being of the entity as presence. (*Of Grammatology* 12)

Derrida deconstructs the privileging of speech over writing. He states that writing is an “image,” a “figuration,” a “representation” of the spoken language, a symbol (*Of Grammatology* 45). Writing is exterior to speech, not being its “image” or its “symbol;” but at the same time interior to speech, which is already in itself a writing. Instead of a symbol or sign, Derrida speaks of a becoming-sign of the symbol (47). The absence of the transcendental signified may be called “limitlessness of *play*,” or, the destruction of onto-theology and the metaphysics of presence (50).

“As the face of pure intelligibility,” the sign, indicates Derrida, “refers to an absolute logos to which it is immediately united” (*Of Grammatology* 13). “This absolute logos was an infinite creative subjectivity in medieval theology: the intelligible face of the sign remains turned toward the word and the face of God” (13). Of course, it is not a question of “rejecting” these notions; they are necessary and, at least at present, nothing is conceivable for us without them. It is a question at first of demonstrating the systematic and historical solidarity of the concepts and gestures of thought that one often believes can be innocently separated (13-14). The sign and divinity have the same place and time of birth. The age of the sign is essentially theological. Perhaps it will never *end*. Its historical *closure* is, however, outlined (14).

In short, in *Of Grammatology*, Derrida reminds us how phonocentrism merges with the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as *presence*, with all the subdeterminations which depend on this general form and which organize within it their system and their historical sequence, such as *eidos*, substance, essence, existence, the cogito, consciousness, subjectivity, the co-presence of the other and of the self, intersubjectivity as the intentional phenomenon of the ego, and so forth (12). Derrida asserts that meaning does not constitute in inverting the literal meaning and the figurative meaning, but in determining the “literal” meaning as metaphoricity itself (*Of Grammatology* 15).

Consequently, Jacques Derrida's greatest contribution to Western philosophy and literature was his challenge to the metaphysics of presence and logocentrism. He identified logocentrism as the “exigent, powerful, systematic, and irrepressible desire” for a “transcendental signified” (*Of Grammatology* 49). Derrida also acknowledged that the epoch that prioritised speech over writing had to come to a closure and that the very act of writing was a proof of a rupture in the episteme and the structure in general. He exceeded the line of the traditional metaphysics by challenging the Saussurean Structuralism and by pointing at the rupture in the relationship between the signifier and the signified. Saussure's Structuralism had dominated the field of linguistics and literary education for almost half a century. However, in an age in which Freud posited a fragmented self in opposition to the long-embraced idea of the “cogito,” in an age of Existentialism and Nihilism, of Nietzsche, Sartre, Heidegger, Camus and Kierkegaard, it was no longer possible to take human language as a “safe haven” that reflected external reality.

2.3.1. Trace/ Origin/ Différance/ Supplement/ Arche-Writing

Apart from the act of undermining the phonocentrism of the Western metaphysics, Derrida subverts the idea of origin. He gives it different names—*trace*, *différance*, *reserve* (*Of Grammatology* 93). In the following parts of his major work, *Of*

Grammatology, he uses terms such as “supplement,” “arche-writing” etc. He uses these terms with different implications each time they appear in the text and this shows how cautious he is about avoiding the repetition of unique words or fixed points of reference. Spivak, too, indicates that Derrida does not hold onto a single conceptual master-word for very long (lxxi). “Arche-writing,” “trace,” “supplementarity,” such important words in *Of Grammatology*, do not remain consistently important conceptual master-words in subsequent texts. Derrida's vocabulary is forever on the move (Spivak lxxi).

Derrida points that “the unheard difference between the appearing and the appearance (between the ‘world’ and ‘lived experience’) is the condition of all other differences, of all other traces, and *it is already a trace*” (*Of Grammatology* 65). The trace is in fact the absolute origin of sense in general. But once again there is no absolute origin of sense in general. The trace is the *différance* which opens appearance and signification (65). Trace is that which does not let itself be summed up in the simplicity of a present (66). Trace is arche-phenomenon of memory, which must be thought before the opposition of nature and culture, animality and humanity, etc. (70). The presence-absence of the trace carries in itself the problems of all the dualisms, all theories of the immortality of the soul or of the spirit, as well as all the monisms, spiritualist or materialist, dialectical or vulgar, which are the unique theme of a metaphysics whose entire history was compelled to strive toward the reduction of the trace.

2.3.2. Full Speech/ *Point de Capiton*/ Upholstery Button

Derrida distrusts the stability of meaning. It is one of the characteristics that contrasts him with Jacques Lacan, who suggests that sometimes in language there are meeting points of signification. Lacan calls them *point de capiton* or “upholstery buttons.” The *point de capiton* is an “anchoring point” by which the signifier stops the otherwise endless movement of signification (*Ecrits* 303). Madan Sarup elaborates on the term: “It is a linguistic *point de capiton* that provides a vantage point from

which everything that happens in a given discourse can be situated both retroactively and prospectively. The subject attaches significance to certain signifiers; these signifiers, like upholstery buttons, pin down the floating mass of signification” (53-54). Lacan, however, emphasises that the “upholstery button” is not a constant. He stresses the fact that we do not understand a sentence until we know we have reached the end; its meaning remains in suspense until the closure (Sarup 54). Its diachronic function is to put a halt to the otherwise endless process whereby the signifier refers to the signifier.

In Lacan’s psychoanalysis, intersubjectivity, and the subject’s transition from empty to full speech is essential. In *Ecrits*, Lacan describes “empty speech” as that in which “the subject seems to speak in vain about someone who—even if he were such a dead ringer for him that you might confuse them—will never join him in the assumption of his desire” (211). Full speech in Lacan is the language of desire, and “the effect of full speech is to reorder past contingencies by conferring on them the sense of necessities to come, such as they are constituted by the scant freedom through which the subject makes them present” (213).

Derrida, in contrast, claims that the discontinuity of language marks the impossibility that a sign, the unity of a signifier and a signified, be produced within the plenitude of a present and an absolute presence (*Of Grammatology* 69). That is why there is no full speech, says Derrida, however much one might wish to restore it by means or without benefit of psychoanalysis. Before thinking to reduce it or to restore the meaning of the full speech which claims to be the truth, one must ask the question of meaning and of its origin in difference (69-70). Only the infinite being can reduce the difference in presence (71). In that sense, the name of God, at least as it is pronounced within the classical rationalism, is the name of indifference itself.

2.3.3. Centre/ Logos/ Structure/ Structurality/ Play

Derrida questions the idea of structure and subverts the idea of *logos* altogether. In his famous lecture “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences,” delivered in 1966, he announces that the history of the function of the concept of “structure,” or the “episteme,” has changed (*Writing and Difference* 351). A “rupture”, a “redoubling” has taken place. Here, Derrida insists that rather than the concept of structure, which dominated the Western science and philosophy, one should prefer to use the term “structurality” of structure (351-352). Since the time of Plato, the whole Western philosophy has always reduced or neutralized the “structure” by a process of giving it a centre or of referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin (352). The function of this centre was to orient, balance, and organize the structure, and at the same time to limit the “play” of the structure. By orienting and organizing the coherence of the system, the centre of the structure permits the play of its elements inside the total form (352). The centre is, paradoxically, *within* the structure and *outside* it. The centre is at the centre of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality *has its center elsewhere*. The center is not the center (352). On the basis of what we call the center (and which, because it can be either inside or outside, can also indifferently be called the origin or end, *arché* or *telos*), repetitions, substitutions, transformations, and permutations are always *taken* from a history of meaning [*sens*]—that is, in a word, a history—whose origin may always be reawakened or whose end may always be anticipated in the form of presence (352-353).

In the same lecture, Derrida speaks of the different names and forms that the *centre* receives throughout history. The history of metaphysics, like the history of the West, is the history of these metaphors and metonymies. Its matrix is the determination of Being as *presence* in all senses of this word (*Writing and Difference* 353). It could be shown that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the center have always designated an invariable presence—*eidos*, *arché*, *telos*, *energeia*, *ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject), *alétheia*, transcendentality, consciousness,

God, man, and so forth (353). Therefore, it is possible to take the “logos” as a unifying principle or centre of truth.

The event Derrida calls “rupture,” disruption, alludes to the fact that *centre* cannot be thought in the form of a present-being, that the centre has no natural site, that it is not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions come into play (*Writing and Difference* 353-354). In the absence of a centre, or origin, language becomes discourse, i.e., a process, a system in which the central signified, the original or *transcendental signified*, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences (354). The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely.

Derrida suggests two ways of erasing the difference between the signifier and the signified: one, the classic way, consists in reducing or deriving the signifier in *submitting* the sign to thought; the other, the one we are using against the first one, consists in putting into question the system in which the preceding reduction functioned: first and foremost, the opposition between the sensible and the intelligible (355). The paradox is that the metaphysical reduction of the sign needed the opposition it was reducing. The opposition is systematic with the reduction. What we are saying here about the sign can be extended to all the concepts and all the sentences of metaphysics, in particular the discourse on “structure.” But there are several ways of being caught in this circle. They are all more or less naïve, more or less empirical, more or less systematic, more or less close to the formulation—that is, to the formalization—of this circle (355).

Lastly, the concept which Derrida coins as “play” is actually the disruption of presence. The presence of an element is always a signifying and substitutive reference inscribed in a system of differences and the movement of a chain (*Writing and Difference* 369). *Play* is always a play of absence and presence, but if it is to be thought radically, play must be conceived of before the alternative of presence and absence. Being must be conceived as presence or absence on the basis of the possibility of play and not the other way round (369). Derrida claims that Lévi-

Strauss, better than any other, brought to light the play of repetition and the repetition of play. He perceives in his work a sort of ethic of presence, an ethic of nostalgia for origins, an ethic of archaic and natural innocence, of a purity of presence and self-presence in speech (369). Derrida opposes exactly this nostalgic search for origin.

Since Derrida subverts the idea of structure and episteme altogether, one can understand why Derrida prefers to use the term “structurality” instead. Unlike Saussure's Structuralism which is based upon the notion of a “centered structure which permits only a limited number of combinations and therefore gives closure to the text, Derrida calls attention to the notion of *structuralité de la structure* (structured structure)” (Pheby 66). Because the center is continually displaced during deconstructive analysis, the analysis also constitutes a critique of the center itself (66). It is in a similar fashion that Heidegger crosses out Being and puts it under erasure. Thus Derrida's structure and Heidegger's Being do not signify transcendental referents; they signify a movement, a deferral, a suspense in meaning-formation.

2.3.4. Dissemination vs. Polysemy

In his article “Signature Event Context (1972),” Derrida discusses the problem of polysemia and communication. He substitutes the term “dissemination” for polysemia. To Derrida, dissemination is also a concept of writing, however: “The semantic horizon which habitually governs the notion of communication is exceeded or punctured by the intervention of writing, that of a *dissemination* which cannot be reduced to a *polysemia*. Writing is read... and, does not give rise to a hermeneutic deciphering, to the decoding of meaning and truth” (*Margins of Philosophy* 329).

As a reciprocity to Lacan's *Phallus* as the cite for all desires which are absent, Derrida's term in the production of meaning is *dissemination* (Spivak lxv). Dissemination is considered as quite different from polysemy. Polysemy implies a finitude, whereas *dissemination* does not. *Dissemination* implies words “spilling over” meanings. Thus meaning can never exhaust itself. Spivak refers to Derrida's

playful implications of *dissemination*. Exploiting a false etymological kinship between semantics and semen, Derrida offers this version of textuality: A sowing that does not produce plants, but is simply infinitely repeated. A semination that is not *insemination* but *dissemination*, seed spilled in vain, an emission that cannot return to its origin in the father (lxv). Not an exact or controlled polysemy, but a proliferation of always different, always postponed meanings.

2.3.5. Transcendental Contraband

Derrida's transcendental contraband is a pseudo-reference point that is similar to other flexible, open-ended, fluid terms he coined—trace, *différance*, transcendental signified, supplement, etc. In *Glass*, Derrida introduces the implications of this term:

The (con)striction—what is useful for thinking the ontological or the transcendental—is then also in the position of transcendental trans-category, the transcendental transcendental. All the more because the (con)striction cannot produce the philosophical effect it produces. There is no choosing here: each time a discourse contra the transcendental is held, a matrix—the (con)striction itself constrains the discourse to place the non-transcendental, the outside of the transcendental field, the excluded in the structuring position. The matrix in question constitutes the excluded as transcendental of the transcendental, as imitation transcendental: transcendental contraband. The contra-band is not yet dialectical contradiction. To be sure the contra-band necessarily becomes that but is not yet the teleological anticipation, which results in it never becoming dialectical contradiction. The contra-band remains something other than what, necessarily, it is to become. (244)

Joanna Hodge proposes to take Derrida's notion of contraband as a concealed principle of order and consistency threading through Derrida's writings (307).

Derrida utilises an original format in *Glass*, and accordingly, Hodge draws an analogy between the notion of transcendental contraband and the graphic organization of Derrida's text. The contraband is:

also the second column in the text, as running commentary, subverting any claim to all-inclusiveness of a first column. If the text, set up as the definitive text, all the same requires a second text, even if only in the form of series of interruptive footnotes, indicating use made of sources, the stability and priority of the main line of argument is disrupted, and the order of its considerations shaken by a need to return to those sources, to check if they are adequately taken up, or distorted in the process of their citation ... There is then no determinate textual context in which its meaning might be fixed. (308)

2.4. Possible Derridean Strategies to Read a Text

How is then one to develop a Deconstructionist interpretation of a literary text? How are individuals supposed to find grounds for their attempts at reaching “meaning” without prioritising or privileging a “centre” of truth which might be more or less historical, political or cultural? There are no easy answers to these questions, especially when Deconstructionism denies being a closed circuit, a system, a method, or even a strategy. The process of interpreting a text is supposed to proceed while Deconstructionism obviously opposes thematic and thetic approaches. There is too much at stake when one attempts to perform a Poststructuralist or Deconstructionist reading—there is the risk of positing no theses or assertions at all, or serving ends of dubious consequences, if not of being caught in a logocentric trap of thinking. With the exception of the latter, these risks have been the very reasons why many sceptics of Derrida attacked him in the first place.

If Deconstructionist theory does not provide a systematized methodology, it does not mean that there is no point in attempting to deconstruct a text. Derrida teaches that

Deconstructionism does not have a point of departure, or an initial point of reference; Deconstructionism is what happens at the moment, simultaneously. No matter what theory is there to be applied, theory is going to resist and challenge the act of interpretation anyway. As Paul de Man stated in his article “The Resistance to Theory,” there is nothing wrong with such kind of a resistance or opposition because literary theory already resists itself (207).

2.4.1. “Reversal of Binary Oppositions”

One suggestion about how to practice Deconstructionist criticism comes from Charles E. Bressler, who discusses “deconstruction” and suggests a possible strategy. Bressler points out that a “deconstructor” could begin textual analysis by assuming that a text has multiple interpretations and that it allows to be reread and thus reinterpreted countless times (116). In order to overrule their own logocentric and inherited ways of thinking, deconstructors initially start with finding the binary oppositions at work in the text itself. Realizing that the binary oppositions represent established and accepted ideologies, they seek to reverse those binary oppositions. In this way, they challenge the fixed views assumed by the hierarchies and the values associated with rigid beliefs. Bressler says that “by identifying the binary oppositions that exist in the text, deconstructors can then show the preconceived assumptions upon which most of us base our interpretations” (116).

At first glance, warns Bressler, a Deconstructionist reading strategy may appear to be linear—that is, having a clearly delineated beginning, middle, and end (118). If this is so, then to apply this strategy to the text, we must first discover the binary oppositions that operate in a text, then comment on the values, concepts, and ideas behind these operations, then reverse these present binary operations, afterwards dismantle previously held worldviews, then accept the possibility of various levels of a text on the new binary inversions, and finally allow the meaning of the text to be undecidable. Bressler adds that although all the above elements do operate in a

deconstructionist reading, they may not always operate in this exact sequence. However, we may never declare such a reading to be complete or finished, for the process of meaning is ongoing, never allowing us to pledge allegiance to any one view. Overall, deconstruction aims at an ongoing relationship between the interpreter (the critic) and the text (118).

Most evidently, Derrida himself would have argued against a systematised model of Deconstructionist analysis. One reason would be the very idea of linearity in assuming such a strategy for deconstruction. Such linearity in the act of interpretation would imply a systematized, closed circuit of propositions. Clearly, Bressler is aware that “deconstruction” admits no methodology. If such a way were possible, Derrida himself would have mentioned it.

2.4.2. “Deciphering the Systems of Meaning”

One strategy that Derrida advises is the act of deciphering the systems of meaning that seem to govern a text. In “Ousia and Gramme,” Derrida remarks:

... the "critique"—or rather the denunciatory determination of a limit, the de-marcation, the de-limitation—which at any given moment is believed to be applicable to a "past" text is to be deciphered within it. More simply: every text of metaphysics carries within itself, for example, both the so-called "vulgar" concept of time and the resources that will be borrowed from the system of metaphysics in order to criticize that concept. (*Margins of Philosophy* 60)

In a way, Derrida implies that the possibility of reversing and subverting the metaphysical oppositions has to make its way to, through and from deciphering those oppositions. Similarly, Terry Eagleton claims that deciphering the systems of meaning and the ideologies that govern a text is also part of the Deconstructionist practice. Jacques Derrida labels as “metaphysical” any thought-system which

depends on an unassailable foundation, a first principle or unimpeachable ground upon which a whole hierarchy of meanings may be constructed (132). It is not that he believes that we can merely rid ourselves of the urge to forge such principles, for such an impulse is deeply embedded in our history, and cannot—at least as yet—be eradicated or ignored. But if one examines such first principles closely, one can see that they may always be “deconstructed”: they can be shown to be products of a particular system of meaning, rather than what props them up from the outside. First principles of this kind are commonly defined by what they exclude: they are part of the sort of “binary opposition” beloved of Structuralism. “Deconstruction” is the name given to the critical operation by which such oppositions can be partly undermined, or by which they can be shown partly to undermine each other in the process of textual meaning (132). Thus Eagleton, too, tries to shed light on how Deconstructionist criticism may be carried out.

Ideologies like to draw rigid boundaries between what is acceptable and what is not, between self and non-self, truth and falsity, sense and non-sense, reason and madness, central and marginal, surface and depth (Eagleton 133). Such metaphysical thinking cannot be simply eluded: we cannot catapult ourselves beyond this binary habit of thought into an ultra-metaphysical realm. Deconstructionism tries to show how oppositions, in order to hold themselves in place, are sometimes betrayed into inverting or collapsing themselves, or need to banish to the text's margins certain niggling details which can be made to return to plague them. Derrida's own typical habit of reading is to seize on some apparently peripheral fragment in the work—a footnote, a recurrent minor term or image, a casual allusion—and work it tenaciously through to the point where it threatens to dismantle the oppositions which govern the text as a whole. The tactic of deconstructive criticism is to show how texts come to embarrass their own ruling systems of logic; and Deconstructionism shows this by fastening on the “symptomatic” points, the *aporia* or impasses of meaning, where texts get into trouble, come unstuck, offer to contradict themselves (Eagleton 133-34). Consequently, Eagleton recommends a strategy that first exposes the unifying

principles and metaphysical grounds which govern the text, shows how they undermine themselves within their antithetic relationships.

2.4.3. “The Deconstructive Jetty”

Derrida himself is aware of the difficulty of coming up with a definition of literary theory. He attempts to clarify what he really had in mind by Deconstructionist criticism. In his article “Some Statements and Truisms about Neo-Logisms, Newisms, Postisms, Parasitisms, and Other Small Seisms,” Derrida begins by stating that Deconstructionism itself is a resistance to theory because it cannot be formulated in a definition (371). Deconstructionism is neither a theory nor a philosophy. It is neither a school nor a method. It is not even a discourse, nor an act, nor a practice. It is “what happens, what is happening today in what they call society, politics, diplomacy, economics, historical reality, and so on and so forth. Deconstruction is the case” (Derrida 371). He uses the term “jetty,” here, for convenience. He emphasizes that the deconstructive jetty has both destabilizing and stabilizing effects. The *destabilizing* and *devastating* jetty itself, and its effects of deconstruction, are paradoxically a “resistance to theory:”

It is a resistance which produces theory and theories. It resists theorization first because it functions in a place which the jetty questions, and destabilizes the conditions of the possibility of objectivity, the relationship to the *object*, everything that constitutes and institutes the assurance of *subjectivity* in the indubitable presence of the *cogito*, the certainty of self-consciousness, the original project, the relation to the other determined as ecological intersubjectivity, the principle of reason and the system of representation associated with it, and hence everything that supports a modern concept of theory as objectivity. Deconstruction resists theory because it demonstrates the impossibility of closure, of the closure of an ensemble or totality on an

organized network of theorems, laws, rules, methods ... And it is not a *system* because the deconstructive jetty is no more *propositional* than *positional*; it deconstructs precisely the *thesis*, both as philosophical thesis and as *theme*. As a matter of fact, it has included as one of its essential paths in the literary field a deconstruction of thematic, or rather thematicist, reading. (“Some Statements and Truisms” 371-72)

The deconstructive jetty has never simply been concerned with discursive meaning or content, the thematics or the semantics of a discourse (372). It is not simply a reading or an interpretation, but the deconstruction of phallogocentrism itself placed in a place where insulating semantic content (signified-signifier) was impracticable in a rigorous way (372). Hence Derrida points at the necessity of deconstruction to deal with texts in a different way than as discursive contents, themes, or theses, but always as institutional structures—political-juridical-sociohistorical. This in no way means lack of interest or a withdrawal as regards to those things—reality, history, society, law, politics. The deconstructing jetty does not fix the text in a thematic or thetic station; it deconstructs the hierarchizing structure which orders a multiplicity of regions, discourses, or beings under a fundamental or transcendental agency (372-73). Thus the deconstructive jetty is a form of resistance. It is a *resistance*, and more a *restance*.

However, this resistance at the same time institutes the consolidating and *stabilizing* structure of the jetty (“Some Statements and Truisms” 373). It constructs and fortifies theories, it offers thematics and theses, and it organizes methods, disciplines, indeed schools. This time, the resistance reconstitutes the *stanza* of a coherent theory into a system, a method, a discipline, and in the worst case an institution with its legitimating orthodoxy (373).

The closest type, the stabilizing jetty which resembles the destabilizing jetty most, is what is called “poststructuralism,” alias “deconstructionism” (“Some Statements and Truisms” 373). “It isn't bad, it isn't [an] evil, and if it were one, it would be a necessary evil” (Derrida 373). It produces certain strategic necessities of the

deconstructive jetty and puts forward a system of technical rules, teachable methodological procedures, a discipline, school phenomena, a kind of knowledge, principles, theorems, which are for the most part principles of interpretation and reading (rather than of writing) (373). Deconstruction is not monolithic—among deconstructionisms and deconstructionists there are differences in style, orientation, and even serious conflicts—but according to Derrida, one can say that there is *deconstructionism in general* each time that the destabilizing jetty closes and stabilizes itself in a teachable set of theorems, each time that there is self-presentation of *a*, or more problematically, of *the* theory (373-74).

Derrida claims that Deconstructionism is not what it is accused of being—formalist, aestheticist, ignorant of reality, of history, enclosed in language, word play, books, literature, indifferent to politics (“Some Statements and Truisms” 374). If it were so, Derrida would consider Marxism and New Historicism as absolutely legitimate, necessary, urgent. On the contrary, deconstruction is all the less confined to the prisonhouse of language because it *starts* by tackling logocentrism (375). There is no manifesto for it, no manifestation as such (377). It has neither consistency nor existence, and besides, it would not have lasted very long anyway if it had.

As it may be inferred up to now, Derridean Deconstructionism assumes different manifestations in practice. Deconstructionism in the Anglo-American world, for instance, was mainly represented by the so-called Yale school, and the works of Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller, Geoffrey Hartman and in some respects Harold Bloom (Eagleton 145). De Man's criticism, in particular, has been devoted to demonstrating that literary language constantly undermines its own meaning. All language, as de Man perceives, is ineradicably metaphorical, working by tropes and figures; it is a mistake to believe that any language is *literally* literal. Philosophy, law, political theory work by metaphor just as poems do, and so are just as fictional. Since “metaphors” are essentially “groundless,” mere substitutions of one set of signs for another, language tends to betray its own fictive and arbitrary nature at just those points where it is offering to be most intensively persuasive (Eagleton 145). “Literature” is that realm in which this ambiguity is most evident. Literary works,

however, are in a sense less deluded than other forms of discourse, because they implicitly acknowledge their own rhetorical status—the fact that what they say is different from what they do, that all their claims to knowledge work through figurative structures which render them ambiguous and indeterminate. They are, one might say, ironic in nature (145). Other forms of writing are just as figurative and ambiguous, but pass themselves off as unquestionable truth (145). For de Man, literature can be shown to deconstruct itself, and, moreover, deconstructionism is actually about this very operation.

2.4.4. “Undecidability” vs. “Ambiguity”

A clear example for how deconstructionists disagree in practice on Deconstructionist strategies is embodied in a debate between Hillis Miller and Shlomith Rimmon-Kennan. Perhaps Eagleton's criticism does not necessarily refer to this example, and when we take a look at the disparity between Miller's and Rimmon's approaches, we realize how dubious the practice of deconstructionism might appear. Nevertheless, this debate at the same time extends and enriches our understanding of criticism. To illustrate, Hillis Miller favours the strategy that implies the “undecidability” and “unreadability” of literary texts whereas Rimmon clings to the term “ambiguity” (Rimmon-Kennan 85-188).

In *The Linguistic Moment*, Miller claims that the text “is undecidable in meaning, though the choices the text offers (among which the reader cannot except arbitrarily decide) may be precisely defined” (54). Rimmon-Kennan explains that in Miller's view, “unreadability” “names the presence in a text of two or more incompatible or contradictory meanings which imply each other or are intertwined with one another, but which may by no means be felt or named as a unified totality” (187). Rimmon-Kennan counters Hillis J. Miller's version of unreadability and claims that it yields precisely that unified totality which unreadability is supposed to subvert. In response to Miller, Rimmon-Kennan claims that to advocate the ultimate “undecidability” or

“unreadability” of a text “turns from an impossibility of stating meaning to a statement of this impossibility as the meaning of this particular text” (187). This crystallization of unreadability into a kind of “last word” paradoxically makes it more readable than the ambiguity which it was meant to displace. While ambiguity keeps oscillating between mutually exclusive possibilities, unreadability uncannily becomes the one and only possibility.

How is then one to proceed and what strategy might be preferred? To disrupt the dominant code makes one vulnerable to the risk of substituting another code, equally restrictive, equally metaphysical (Pheby 65). The subversion can never be completed or finalized, it must be incessant and without arche. Accordingly, Derrida writes:

If there is thus no thematic unity or overall meaning to re-appropriate beyond the textual instances, no total message located in some imaginary order, intentionality or lived experience, the text is no longer the expression or representation (felicitous or otherwise) of any “truth” that would come to diffract or assemble itself in the polysemy of literature. It is this hermeneutic concept of polysemy that must be replaced by dissemination. (*Dissemination* 262)

Pheby reminds that we must be careful not to fall into a type of neo-conservatism which already mourns the fragmentation of the self as indicative of our era only, as if there was ever a pristine, whole, complete and autonomous subject (100). He believes that a response must be offered to those Marxist critics, like Jameson, for example, who would see in “deconstruction” a perpetuation of the type of fragmentation already indicative of “late Capitalism” (100). Fredric Jameson has written in *Fables of Aggression*:

The contemporary poststructuralist aesthetic signals the dissolution of the modernist paradigm—with its valorization of myth and symbol, temporality, organic form and the concrete universal, the identity of the subject and the continuity of the linguistic expression—and

foretells the emergence of some new, properly postmodernist or schizophrenic conception of the artifact—now strategically reformulated as “text” or *écriture*, and stressing discontinuity, allegory, the mechanical, the gap between the signifier and signified, the lapse of meaning, the syncope in the experience of the subject. (qtd. in Pheby 100)

A Deconstructionist critic, then, is supposed to avoid such generalizations. If such emphases become the constants when one approaches the texts, the workings of the metaphysical traps will be unavoidable.

Finally, Pheby emphasizes the importance of making a distinction between the notions of “difference” and “opposition” (102). It has been the tendency of the rationalist tradition to confuse these. From the perspective of deconstruction, *différance* operates in a positive manner, providing for the possibility of conceptuality itself. “Opposition,” on the other hand, narrows the openness of this “productive” act, forcing differences to stand one against the other, usually in a relation of master/slave, society/nature, self/other, man/woman, etc. There are, however, relations of difference which do not operate according to the binary oppositions of formal systems. No reduction to one pole of an artificial dichotomy can exhaust the nature of the place within which I am situated. The boundaries that separate and exclude, demarcate and differentiate, are ideological productions (Pheby 102).

In conclusion, the literary critical discourse had to change in a drastic way in order to keep up with the premises of Poststructuralism which was now largely identified with Derrida's Deconstructionism. As long as one is capable of delineating and deciphering the grand narratives, the metaphysical boundaries to which human discourse is liable, Deconstructionist strategies may work out effectively.

With regard to the aforementioned statements, this thesis needs to justify further the reasons why Derridean Deconstructionism should be applied to Hardy. One reason is

that the attempt to view Hardy in Deconstructionist terms is not among the most popular attempts. We have less critical material that covers the poetry of Hardy in comparison with his fiction, and even much less material that discusses him by way of Derridean strategies. J. Hillis Miller stands out as the most influential Poststructuralist critic who undertook Deconstructionist studies on Hardy. In *The Linguistic Moment*, Miller views Hardy's poetry in Poststructuralist light. Hardy's poetry is of enormous length, and many poems, more and less popular, need to be continually reexplored. Poststructuralist strategies and Deconstructionist criticism may rightfully demand a deserving place and role in this claim. Derridean interpretation will allow us not only to view Hardy in a new light, but it will also expose the reasons why Hardy's poetry foreshadows the emergence of the Modernist literary attitude. This dissertation aims to explore the poetic language of Thomas Hardy in the light of Derridean ideas in order to demonstrate how its ambiguity, subversiveness, and experimentalism foreground a linguistic "crisis," namely, a continual tension between sign and meaning.

2.5. Modernist Poetry as Context for Deconstructionist Criticism

Modernist literature is a domain which, in fact, clearly exposes the disruption in the dual relationship between language and objective reality. Rainer Emig identifies three crucial areas to look at in defining Modernist poetry: a) the concept of a self, a controlling force within the texts (although this is a post-Freudian, thus, post-Cartesian self); b) the idea of reality which is external to the poems and with which they interact; c) the interchange between subjective inside and objective outside. All these points are reflected by Modernist poems as linked with language, the sign. The crucial role of the sign in relation to reality can be presented as an offspring of Modernism (Emig 4). Modernist poetry can also be considered the result of "the impossibility to control the interchange of the subjective interior and the objective outside;" "of texts and their exteriors" (Emig 6).

Twentieth century philosophy marks an era in which human knowledge and language become the subjects of a persistent questioning as in Nietzsche and Heidegger. With Modernism taking hold in literature and cultural life, the fact that the stable relationship between language and truth begins to dissolve becomes more self-evident. This testifies to the unfolding of a linguistic crisis which involves a disruption between the signifier and the signified. Poetry, with its more figurative and metaphoric nature, potentially challenges the stability of the linguistic sign, thus, of metaphysical presence.

Rainer Emig, in support of this view, remarks that by shifting the attention to truth as a human creation, Nietzsche reinvests language with an enormous potential, and this applies especially to poetic language with its necessary imprecisions and instabilities (210). According to Emig, Nietzsche's move can be regarded as the second major shift within modernity. The first move is from theology to science and empirical philosophy in the Enlightenment. The second move reacts against the Enlightenment philosophy by shifting the emphasis from the false alternative of materialist empiricism and idealism to aesthetics, which corresponds to the move from a mimetic approach (which relies on the existence of an objective reality) to the symbolic approach which stresses the inextricable involvement of the subject in the creation of truth. That is to say, symbolic truth hovers between a subject it cannot define without endangering and a notion of transcendental Truth it requires as an orientation yet is unable to reach. This oppositional move against the modernity of the Enlightenment with its ensuing instabilities of both identity and statements is the starting point of Modernism (Emig 210).

The move from mimetic toward symbolic truth was best heralded by the emergence of Modernism. In a similar line of thinking, the move from Structuralist to Poststructuralist theory of literature testifies to a move from semantic stability to semantic plurality. Terry Eagleton, for instance, maintains that the movement from Structuralism to Poststructuralism is, in part, a shift from seeing the poem or novel as a closed entity, equipped with definite meanings which it is the critic's task to

decipher, to seeing it as irreducibly plural, an endless play of signifiers which can never be finally nailed down to a single centre, essence or meaning (138).

Eagleton claims that it is, in fact, the Modernist literary movement which brought Structuralist and Poststructuralist criticism into being in the first place. Some of the later works of Barthes and Derrida are “modernist” literary texts in themselves: experimental, enigmatic and richly ambiguous (139). According to Eagleton, Structuralism began when language became an obsessive preoccupation of the intellectuals, and this happened in turn because in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, language in Western Europe was felt to be in the throes of deep crisis (140). How did humanity realize the existence of this linguistic crisis? Eagleton implies that probably writing had to change; it could no longer remain the instrument of a largely industrial and commercial society, it could no longer share the “confident rationalist and empiricist trust of the mid-nineteenth century middle class that language did indeed hook itself onto the world” (140).

2.6. Hardy and Deconstructionist Criticism

Looking at the critics who approached Hardy's poetry from a Deconstructionist vantage point might expose other layers for understanding his poetry. One such contribution comes from J. Hillis Miller. In his Deconstructionist study titled *The Linguistic Moment: From Wordsworth to Stevens*, Miller discusses Hardy among other Romantic and Modernist poets such as Wordsworth, Shelley, Hopkins, Yeats, and Stevens. Miller's “linguistic moment” implies “the moment when language itself is foregrounded and becomes problematic” (41). It is “a suspension a breaking of the illusion that language is a transparent medium of meaning” (Miller xix). Michael North argues that Miller's purpose is to observe how the moment acquires “such momentum that it tends to spread out and dominate the functioning of the whole poem” (105). In fact, Miller's “linguistic moment” actually echoes the Derridean idea of a text's “self-referentiality” or “dissemination.” All truth is textual, according

to Derrida, and words spill over meanings. Language is already problematic, and slippery; the idea of crisis of representation is already foregrounded in it. Miller's "linguistic moment" appears to be an alternative expression for Derrida's "play of language."

Miller remarks that Hardy's 950-plus individual poems are exemplary, and notes the "uniqueness of each moment of experience... each record(s) in words;" "each moment, each text, is incommensurate with all the others" and that forms of "discontinuity," "discord," and "irrelation" characterize the *oeuvre* (*The Linguistic Moment* 270-71, 282). According to Peter Widdowson, Miller's own attentive close reading of a "miscellaneous" selection of poems focuses on their recognition of "life's incoherence," which is explained by the irrational, "discordant," and unsystematic properties of language (87). Miller emphasises that for Hardy, "between the intention and the deed, between moment and moment, between the self and itself, between mind and landscape, falls the word. This descent of the word is the linguistic moment in Hardy" (*The Linguistic Moment* 290). Miller's "exploration of the consequences for man of the absence of the *logos*" means that there can be no "ontological ground" for the coherence of "collective history or of individual histories," of the "single self," or of "language"—be it the English language, the language of "Complete Poems," or that of any individual poem (290, 303-304).

Michael North criticises Miller for presenting a rather obscure definition of the "linguistic moment." North claims that the "linguistic moment" is in fact "simply another name for the point of deconstructive purchase and it tends to dominate the specific readings that make up the bulk of the book" (105). He emphasizes that Miller's description of Hardy's linguistic moment is almost wholly thematic (106). Miller, accordingly, believes that Hardy writes *about* the "descent of the word," of its dismaying power to survive human intentions (*The Linguistic Moment* 290). This is the "abiding topic" of Hardy's poetry (Miller 303). Hardy's work is "unmappable," according to Miller (273). North concludes that Miller's "moment" is usually figural, yet it can also be semantic, syntactical, thematic, or even, in the case of Williams, phenomenological (106).

However, Miller's discussion of Hardy also leads to the conclusion that Hardy as a poet cannot be interpreted within the margins of grand narratives. Hardy's language, complex as it seems, resists a stable mimetic and representational interpretation. Essentially, Widdowson asserts that in the light of Deconstructionist criticism, Hardy reappears as a proto-postmodern anti-realist whose own fictional texture is self-deconstructing:

Hardy the Poet, once "truly" characterized only by his "finest" poems as the wryly lyrical celebrant of nature, love, time, and mortality or as the ironic liberal-humanist who refuses Modernist cultural despair, is now reconstituted by the undifferentiated mass of his "Collected Poems" in deconstructive proof of the inadequacy of all "grand narratives"—of history, politics, religion, philosophy, and, indeed, of poetry itself. Central to all this is the recognition that Hardy's language, in both poetry and prose, is not the linguistic medium through which his "vision" is expressed, but the self-reflexive *subject* of all his writing—a language not to be read for its "unifying" and "coherent" systems of imagery and symbolism, but for its contradictory, unstable, and hence revealing, inscription of complex social and sexual tensions. (Widdowson 88)

In her book *Imagining Imagination*, Barbara Hardy, too, points out the un-Romantic and pre-Modern sensibility of Hardy's lyric and anticipates the positioning of Hardy as a poet beyond the conventional Romantic and Victorian essentialism:

We are confronted with an emotional utterance but denied completion, causality or objective correlative ... Hardy keeps his secrets as he makes his reduced and unromantic claims for the imagination's access to truth and wholeness. Such omissions, reductions, invitations and displacements are congenial to modern readers practised in the appreciation of openness, fracture, displacement, deconstruction and lisibility, who are educated to be wary of wholeness, harmony,

completeness and closure. Hardy reminds us that pre-modern writers, despite partisan and jealous critical fictions about their essentialism and idealism, may be more at home with uncertainty and hesitation than we expect, can pause before the apparently noumenal, visionary and essential, or leave out the specification, to admit, identify, check and destabilize imagination's tendency to idealize, systematize, blend and unify. Hardy uses his poetry in ways that require the reader to experience checks, halts, gaps, limited access and impassable thresholds, and question the conventions of completion. Such narrative reticence is common in lyric, part of its generic conditions. (216-217)

Barbara Hardy, too, realizes that Hardy's lyric echoes the linguistic tensions that characterize Modernist poetry, with its gaps, uncertainties, instabilities, and lack of closure, and that Hardy's poetry gains a status beyond conventional poetic imagination.

Therefore, in the light of the aforementioned critical approaches, this dissertation will also attempt to show why Hardy's poetry can be taken as the manifestation of the Modernist crisis of representation. With its emphasis on linguistic and semantic contradictions, Modernist poetry becomes the bridge between literary criticism and Derridean Deconstructionism. The strategy of this thesis does not have to approve or disprove the methods applied by other deconstructionists. Miller's approach is valid because it discloses the fact Hardy's poetry is semantically and thematically undecidable. His approach coheres with Derrida's teachings. Similarly, this study rests on the discussion of semantic and linguistic instabilities in such poems by Hardy that appear to be less mimetic or less thematically organized within their placement in the collections. My argument dwells on poems that either have not been analysed in Deconstructionist terms or have not been thoroughly referred to in Derridean terms. While some of the thirty four poems analysed in Chapter 3 have been accepted among Hardy's best and most well-known poems, some of them have not been given much attention at all. In short, there is no single principle or treatment

by which the poems appear to be chosen for discussion in this thesis. There are sub-sections in the following chapter by which Derridean and Hardy-esque key concepts appear to manifest their challenge to the logocentrism, phonocentrism and phallogocentrism of the Western epistemology. Those sub-sections mainly explore some key concepts in Hardy, such as agnosticism, the self, language of negation, irony, and temporality, by which Hardy, like Derrida, appears to present a challenge to the metaphysics of presence through the language of poetry.

CHAPTER 3

HARDY DECONSTRUCTING HARDY: HIS POETRY AS A CHALLENGE TO METAPHYSICS OF PRESENCE

This chapter will attempt to apply Derrida's Deconstructionist criticism to specific poems of Hardy taken from his various collections. Hardy's status as a threshold poet and his Modernist elements prepare the ground for a Deconstructionist reading of his poems. As discussed in the earlier sections of this thesis, Hardy displays thematic and linguistic characteristics that nod toward Modernism—economy of speech, irregular verse, ambiguity, complex imagery, search for precision and the exact word, a partly unified and partly split self, post-Darwinian agnosticism and empiricism. Hardy's modern sensibility also testifies to the fact that the language of poetry changed. In a post-Darwinian, post-Nietzschean and post-industrial Western society, the language of literature, inevitably, appears to be contaminated by human suffering and vices. The outbreak of the World War left little room for optimism and chance for redemption. In a world of human isolation, hopelessness and rising materialism, language, too, suffers the imprints of human loss and limitation. In such a context, it is the language of poetry that illustrates best the incongruity in the relationship between human pursuit for truth and the potential of language, between sign and meaning. Modern philosophy challenged the conventional norms of society, opened up new ontological and epistemological modalities, and discussed the futility or fragility of metaphysical oppositions, of dichotomies such as object/subject, internal/external, self/unself. Derrida is one of those philosophers who challenged the ontological and epistemological taken-for-granted elements in the mainstream discourse against the background of the above given binary oppositions. Hardy, as a transitional poet, presents his own challenge to the metaphysics of presence. Therefore, the analyses of the poems will be basically grounded on four key concepts (though not limited to them) inherent in Hardy that will open up the possibility for a Deconstructionist literary discussion: Hardy's agnosticism as a challenge to

logocentrism and metaphysics of presence; the concept of the self in Hardy as a challenge to phonocentrism, epitomised through narrative techniques such as “double voice,” “double vision,” “dramatised persona,” “echoes,” and “multiple voices;” structure and language in Hardy—language of negation, and irony as destabilising elements of metaphysical discourse and finally, temporality and space-time in Hardy as a challenge to linearity—Hardy's unique sense of time, both synchronic and diachronic. This dissertation is based on the assumption that these aspects in the poetry of Hardy are the key elements that deserve to be studied more closely and at the same time enable the enhancement of an analysis on Deconstructionist grounds.

Hardy's poetry lends itself as a platform to discuss many Derridean ideas such as *différance*, *trace*, *supplement*, and *dissemination*. As explained previously, Hardy's language and perception of the self are a challenge to phonocentrism and metaphysics of presence. Hardy's agnosticism is a very clear manifestation of the Derridean notion of the movedness of the “centre,” of the transcendental signified. Hardy's agnosticism and scepticism often find expression in a semi-conscious failure to locate a “transcendental signified.” Hardy creates ambivalence when, for instance, in one single poem he attributes multiple metaphors to designate space or a transcendental signified. Hardy's apparently intentional failure to designate a master signified results in semantic ambiguity. Black humour, irony and polysemy overtake his poetry—thus the poet also distances the self and the speaking voice. As a result, his poems appear to represent a more problematic self. Finally, Hardy's sense of temporality partly disrupts the conventional perception of linearity; therefore, Derridean implications seem to be at work in a considerable number of his poems.

In the way Derrida's ideas challenge and subvert the mechanics of logocentric-phonocentric thinking, Hardy's poetry subverts Victorian and Romantic modalities and reveals itself as semantically incoherent and discordant. It must be remembered, too, that there can be no sharp distinctions between the categories chosen for exploration, for it is only for convenience that poems are analyzed under certain subtitles and headings. We should remember how Heidegger and Derrida insist that concepts be always put “under erasure.” As suggested in the introductory part of this

study, this chapter will limit itself to four basic key concepts that may justify the idea that Hardy might be viewed in Deconstructionist terms. Without doubt, the discussion cannot be finalized in terms of a number of key concepts. Deconstructive reading certainly cannot limit itself to any number of key concepts or margins, no matter how many one may think of. Rather than developing an argument based on a number of particular concepts, which would actually imply the proceedings of a thematic approach, the present discussion will attempt to observe, instead, how these four key concepts in Hardy actually fulfil, complete or substitute each other. Indeed, they are each other's *traces* and *supplements*. The poems which will be referred to lay bare the impossibility of a strict classification and grouping within the margins of those four key concepts. The argument of this thesis will be initiated by recourse to Hardy's agnosticism, which actually constitutes a large pool of ideas that may extend further the key concepts of Derrida as a challenge to not only logocentrism but also traditional poetic norms.

3.1. Hardy's Agnosticism as a Challenge to Logocentrism

Hardy's agnosticism was shaped by the influence of ideas of many contemporary thinkers and philosophers. Some of these figures are Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Leslie Stephen, François Fourier, John Stuart Mill, Ludwig Feuerbach, Auguste Comte, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Edward von Hartmann. Hardy's agnosticism represents his vacillation between a rational and an irrational world, between his empiricism, scientific determinism and stoicism. In a world where human condition is determined simply by random chances and coincidences, by the uncertainty of a divine plan, or of mechanisms of a God-centred universe, Hardy stands out as a pure sceptic about the location and existence of the logos. He has often called himself agnostic, but religion and the Christian ritual have always remained an inseparable part of his life. Accordingly, W. J. Keith (278) and Pamela Dalziel (7), mention Hardy's "churchiness," or his being "churchy," to use Hardy's own memorable phrase. Keith emphasises that while "loss of faith" was a

characteristic experience of Victorian intellectuals, Hardy's personal response was unusual since it resulted in neither ostentatious abandonment nor a hypocritical outward conformity masking inner rejection (278). Hardy no longer believed and made his nonbelief clear, but he maintained a love for church architecture and the details of ritual observance. He even attended Sunday services with reasonable regularity throughout his life, and is on record as reading the lesson for clergyman friends (Keith 278).

Hardy himself refuses to belong to any system of philosophy or ideology. Trevor Johnson acknowledges that at various times, he has been labelled as "Nietzschean," "Schopenhauerian," "monistic materialist," "determinist" and "scientific humanist" ("Hardy's Poetry: A General Survey" 52). However, Robert Schweik alludes to Hardy's *Letters*, and declares that Hardy was "hostile to the ideas of Nietzsche and Bergson" (64). He emphasizes that Hardy was usually sceptical and hesitant to embrace wholeheartedly any of the various systems of ideas current in his day because "none of them altered Hardy's conviction, conveyed both in his poetry and his prose, that human aspiration, human feeling, and human hope, however dwarfed in the cosmic scale of things, were nevertheless more important than all the rest" (Schweik 54, 70).

Hardy denied that his works of art were parts of a scientific system of philosophy, and stated in his Preface to *Wessex Poems* that the views in them were merely *seemings*, provisional impressions only, used for artistic purposes (*The Complete Poems* 6). Hardy simply called himself agnostic in defence against those who attempted to label him as an atheist. However, what is important here is that poetry was a more convenient field than prose for Hardy to make his artistic expression bolder. In Florence Emily Hardy's biography of the poet, it becomes obvious that Hardy was able to express his non-conformist views more comfortably in verse. When poetry is in question, it seems that a poet has more freedom, and can more fully express unusual ideas and emotions in comparison with prose:

To cry out in a passionate poem that (for instance) the Supreme Mover or Movers, the Prime Force or Forces, must be either limited in power, unknowing, or cruel—which is obvious enough, and has been for centuries—will cause them merely a shake of the head; but to put it in argumentative prose will make them sneer, or foam, and set all the literary contortionists jumping upon me, a harmless agnostic, as if I were a clamorous atheist, which in their crass illiteracy they seem to think is the same thing... If Galileo had said in verse that the world moved, the Inquisition might have let him alone. (*The Later Years of Thomas Hardy* 58-59)

That is to say, poetry, as an embodiment of a more figurative and metaphoric language somehow provided more freedom for Hardy. Moreover, Hardy's preference for writing poetry displays the capacity of poetry to transcend mainstream discourse, by eliminating totalizing and fixed interpretations, and by allowing the possibility for various and more flexible approaches to the relationship between language and meaning.

3.1.1. Hardy's Transcendental Signified and the Absence of Logos in His Poetry

As an agnostic poet, Hardy's world is a world without a logos. J. Hillis Miller, for example, agrees with this idea while he also exemplifies any possible substitutes or supplements for the “word” *logos*. Miller states that “Hardy's work constitutes a long, patient, faithful exploration of the consequences for man in the absence of the *logos*, in all the systematically interconnected senses of that word, as mind, voice, ground, word, meaning, reason, message, measure, ratio, logic, concord, gathering” (*The Linguistic Moment* 303). “If there is no logos in the sense of transcendent conscious directing power, God in short..., then there is no ontological ground guaranteeing the coherence of beginning, middle, and end, either of collective history or of individual histories” (303). Miller concludes that for Hardy “there is no *logos*,

neither in the sense of an immanent reasonable force making for order, nor in the sense of the unified mind of the poet as order-giving perspective, nor in the sense of language itself as a pre-existing order” (304).

Miller's analysis of Hardy emphasizes his status as an agnostic poet. Sheila Berger, similarly, views Hardy in a light quite different from his mainstream Victorian contemporaries. For example, she does not see Hardy as a “pessimist” (a frequently preferred label) but as “existential isolationist.” She mentions Albert Guerard's defence of Hardy against those who saw him as exclusively harsh in outlook and undisciplined in style, redefining him as a “deliberate anti-realist” who used expressionistic means to convey his modern, absurdist perspective (“Iconology and Epistemology” 6). According to Berger, Hardy's modern, absurdist position, more fully described by David deLaura, is noted in his departure from various forms of Victorian idealism or pessimism or from shallow compromises between religion and rationalism. Rather, he accepted the price that must be paid for the modern view of a world without God: “psychic dislocation and alienation... wandering in an unmapped no-man's land 'between two worlds'. What seemed to an earlier generation to be pessimism now appears to be existential isolationism” (Berger 6).

Nevertheless, Hardy strives at the same time to remain an empiricist, if we are to take the term as the immediate potential of the individual to identify as “truth” everything that is perceived through the five senses. Accordingly, Berger claims that as an empiricist, Hardy stressed the senses—primarily the visual sense—as the basis for knowledge. Sight, however, does not spontaneously mean knowledge (Preface xii). Hardy's epistemology can be summed up as a meeting of the senses, emotions, imagination, human will and the external world to produce knowledge (xii). His prose and poetry are permeated with an extraordinary visual quality, seemingly embedded in concreteness, but it is the element of subjective perception—shifting and non-authoritative “impressions of the moment”—that is even more powerful in the knowing of/creation of reality (xii). Thus in Hardy, images become icons while objects turn into metaphors and myths. This creative activity is the process through which Hardy creates aesthetic structures and his characters create their lives (xii). In

this context, Berger insists that visual thinking is at the core of Hardy's aesthetics. Seeing for him is not a metaphor for knowing; it is a form of knowing.

Although Sheila Berger does not make references to Derrida in her work, her statements and conclusions about Hardy, like Miller's, emphasize the instabilities and tensions in Hardy's poetic language. My further analyses of Hardy's poems, therefore, will make occasional references to Berger's views since they foreshadow indeed the fact that Hardy's poetry displays linguistic crisis peculiar to Modernists.

What Sheila Berger emphasizes about Hardy's positions of perception can be illustrated in the poem "The Subalterns" (see app. 1). Hardy's agnostic, "indeterminate" mind, existential isolationism, and conflicting sensibility peep out of the poem, which presents visual imagery that stands out as Hardy's incomplete experience of "knowing." The absence of the logos in the poem reinforces the impression of semantic dislocation: "But there be laws in force on high/ Which say it must not be" (3-4). An ambiguous and mysterious superior power is hinted; even the poem's title suggests subordination or a status of inferiority. The four speakers in the poem, the sky, the North wind, Sickness and Death are natural phenomena personified as subordinate to this superior and mysterious power. Hardy's agnosticism is highlighted by the fact that he does not use a denomination for "God" in this poem. In other words, some kind of a presence is implied in each stanza, but an all-encompassing signifier is absent. Rather, there are groupings of signifiers: "I am ruled" (8), "there be laws in force on high" (3), "I am bid (12), "I, too, am a slave" (16). Hardy leaves out the signifier in order to create a sense of indeterminacy so much so that it is difficult to take the poem merely as the reflection of a single philosophy—fatalism, theism, scientific determinism or agnosticism. There is only one certainty in the poem, it is human suffering. But what causes all this suffering is left in suspension. The lack of divine logos is reminiscent of the Derridean idea of the transcendental signified. It is not attached to the tail of a signified, but is a *trace*, deferred through difference. The power that operates in the universe is beyond the control of the sky, the wind, sickness and death, thus external to the human being as well. Despite the fact that it is a passive, amoral power, the logos (or the so-called

centre) is at the same time internal, intrinsic to human life because it causes all the agony on earth. It is one of the most ambiguous poems where Hardy's status as a believer or non-believer is the least determinate. Hardy is an empiricist, a positivist, but superstition, fantasy and the supernatural have always been a part of his imagery as in the following lines:

We smiled upon each other then,
And life to me wore less
That fell contour it wore ere when
They owned their passiveness. (17-20)

In support of this view, Sheila Berger emphasizes that Hardy's is a modern perspective of a chaotic universe, without absolute meaning or value (xii-xiii). The only way for Hardy to know is the eye, the sight. Actually, it is only a form of knowing, not knowing itself. But Hardy—despite his position as materialist, sceptic, positivist—could not finally be content with cold, lifeless matter; however, neither could he accept the idea of a god in the skies or in the self (xiii). The result is an unresolved tension and a dynamic play among images. The image and the eye are not two parts of a harmonious unity, just as framing and disruption are not two parts of a balanced whole (xiii). Rather, these are opposing points of tension, metaphoric of the collision and resulting destabilization from which new metaphors and meanings can emerge. Berger states that Hardy's writing can hardly be coined as fatalism or pessimism or any other static or monistic abstraction which are too often ascribed to him (xiv). Rather, she states, his writing displays a mind indeterminate, a sensibility in conflict.

As a matter of fact, the ending of the poem, “we smiled upon each other” (17) is the most ambiguous part and shows that the semantic conclusiveness of the poem is suspended. This expression partly implies a playful acceptance of man's helplessness against the superior, external forces. Sheila Berger's suggestion is evoked here; the pessimism of the poem appears to be resolved into existential isolationism, because “we smiled upon each other” implies also one's capacity to endure and accept. Hardy

is isolated in his empirical world, but withdraws with maturity since the “fell contour” (19) of his life was possibly pre-ordained, “ere when they owned their passiveness” (20), even before they spoke. Or, life “wore less” (18) of that broken shape when they spoke to him. “Wore” is a signifier that creates suspension in its obscure use—a possible pun that characterizes the impressions of “carry” and “weary.”

The indeterminate ending of the poem may be taken as a double ending, or polysemy, even as an example of Derrida's *dissemination*, a spilling over of meaning because the word “passiveness” has no correspondent signified and produces ambiguity rather than multiplicity of meaning. “Passiveness” evacuates its status as a signified—it is impossible to decide if it stands for the passive existence of God, or the forces of nature, or humans, or silence, or speech, or non-existence. Thus the poem, which employs multiple voices, and at the same time one single perspective—that of the weak and feeble mankind—becomes a curious blend of fatalism, determinism and agnosticism.

Finally, the poem reveals a cosmos which is given in anthropocentric terms. Rather than God, there is an ambiguous speaking sky. It is another example for the reversal of the signified and the signifier. We hear their voices, all the poem is based on the dialogue between the miserable human and the ambiguous but anthropocentric abstractions of Death, Sickness, North, and the sky. This also testifies to the dissolution of the hierarchy between the shadows and the higher form of being in a Platonic frame. Ambiguity overrules the poem and the ending is polysemic. It denies the traditional solipsistic ending, which again testifies to the fact that telos (or teleological thinking) is impossible in such a chaotic epistemology. Awareness of the absence of a functioning logos and its inability to impose a coherent pattern on man's perception leave man in utter ambiguity and isolation.

The logos is only one key element of the metaphysical presuppositions. Even if it exists, it is not in the grasp of language, neither is it the reciprocity of the stable

linguistic sign. In Derrida, the logos is absent because the history of presence is ended and vice versa. In “The Supplement of Origin,” Derrida asserts:

The history of presence is closed, for "history" has never meant anything but the presentation (*Gegenwartigung*) of Being, the production and recollection of beings in presence, as knowledge and mastery. Since absolute self-presence in con-sciousness is the infinite *vocation* of full presence, the achievement of absolute knowledge is the end of the infinite, which could only be the unity of the concept, logos, and consciousness in a voice without *differance*. *The history of metaphysics therefore can be expressed as the unfolding of the structure or schema of an absolute will-to-hear-oneself-speak*. This history is closed when this infinite absolute appears to itself as its own death. *A voice without differance, a voice without writing, is at once absolutely alive and absolutely dead.* (*Speech and Phenomena* 102)

Here Derrida argues that Husserl's distinction between “expression” and “indication” foregrounds a phenomenological distinction between empirical life and transcendental life, and it actually carries in itself the metaphysical presupposition that a distinction as such can challenge the conventional metaphysics of Plato or Aristotle. Derrida envisions no such distinction, just as he refuses the dichotomy of “empirical logos” and “transcendental logos,” the “purely grammatical” and the “purely logical” (*Speech and Phenomena* 4-16). If the presentation of Being is merely the presentation or the production and recollection of beings in presence, as knowledge and mastery, then so is the presentation of logos. There is no logos because it would mean the end of the “infinite,” or a status without a further *différance*, which is something impossible. Thus Hardy's logos seems to be evacuated, primarily by being presented as anthropomorphized, anthropocentric, and by the reversal of the roles of the signifier and the signified. On this plane of thinking, the signifier is left alone, without the attachment of metaphoric or symbolic supplements.

If Derrida does not make a binary distinction between empirical and transcendental lives, he may be foregrounding also the idea that any metaphor of presence or being will be illusory, or subject to *différance*. The empirical in Hardy is construed by words that imply perception, sight, vision, and voice. However, as Sheila Berger suggests, “seeing” in Hardy is only a form of knowing, not knowing itself. His speakers observe their surroundings, nature and the landscape, but this act of looking is mostly a sign of isolation rather than integration with the world around them. Despite the plurality of words that suggest “perception” in some poems, Hardy’s linguistic sign is usually dissolved. In other words, the transcendental signified or its substitute/supplement is absent. The poem “A Sign-Seeker” (see app. 2) illustrates this kind of positioning. The “sign” in the title becomes the symbol of Hardy’s missing or evacuated “signified,” of the “logos.” Margaret Mahar remarks that the poem epitomises the fact that “Hardy has given up the search for the object of belief which would be its own beginning and end” (318). “A Sign-Seeker’ is a relatively early poem about a man searching for such a sign sufficient unto itself, a fulfilled emblem standing as guarantee of both antecedent being and life after death” (318). However, Mahar emphasizes that “Hardy’s poetry is also at one remove from both the original faith and the emblem of that faith, and can, when it wishes, measure it ‘in reverse’ from ending to beginning” (318). Hardy once praised a painting of the “shadow of the crucifixion instead of the crucifixion itself,” as an example of making “the old faith. . . seem again arresting . . . , by turning it in reverse positions” (*Life*, 206; qtd. in Mahar 318). As a conclusion, Mahar reveals the idea that the poem manifests Hardy’s agnosticism, but at the same time reinforces the need to believe. Furthermore, in Barbara Hardy’s view “A Sign-Seeker” “beautifully articulates both a scientific piercing of veils and the thwarted energy of spiritual or spiritualist vision” (203). The critic refers to Hardy’s illustration in *Wessex Poems* that “emblemizes this doubled seeking in drawing the stars and a huge comet in a dark sky.” The speaker spends nearly half the poem on completed apprehensions of the phenomenal world, in many tones, then slightly more than half the poem on noumenal imaginings (203). Barbara Hardy’s focus here is on the poetic imagination; however, her statements may also refer to the fact that Hardy uses a kind of “double

vision” in this poem which testifies on its behalf to the fact that the concept of the self is not fully integrated. The speaker is left seeking between two realms that claim him—the empirical and the spiritual.

A closer analysis of the poem uncovers the eye-catching frequency of several verbs that imply perception—“I mark,” “I see,” “hear,” “I view,” “I have seen,” “I witness”—however, these words that relate to sight do not generate the impression of “insight.” The persona has actively participated in the joys and sorrows of the world, but neither the “old prophesies” nor the passing time has guided him to a “sign” he may trust: “Those sights of which old prophets tell,/ Those signs the general word so well,/ As vouchsafed their unheed, denied my long suspense” (22-24). The language of the whole poem signifies a failure to locate a sign; every utterance represents the lack of a conscious force in nature.

The poem is rich in images of natural phenomena; however, the speaker fails to come to an understanding of the machinations of the universe, to discover the “origin” of existence. It is beyond his “scope.” The language of negation that Hardy disperses throughout the poem indicates his failure in reaching the logos, the point of reference he was seeking as well as his isolated existentialism. Obviously, the poem is anti-Romantic in the sense that the persona fails to achieve a state of union with fragments of the physical world and beyond it. Here the poetic persona is doomed to see only the natural phenomena itself. He cannot transcend them, thus, he is doomed to the world of shadows in Platonic sense. In the absence of the transcendental signified or any substitute for it, he cannot reach any form of the signified. In other words, the traditional unity of man and nature as the signifier of God or any substitute like the One, fails, as the signified is no longer at work. He is to look for an anchoring point in the realm of the signifiers.

In Romantic poetry, the poet can suffer in a dire form of pessimism but there is the underlying belief that he is not imprisoned within the world of the signifiers. He may not transcend them, time to time, as he cannot activate his creative powers. However, he has this solid belief and hope that this transcendental realm is there beyond the

signifiers/natural phenomena. In Hardy's poetry one cannot see this hope and belief. However, one feels obliged to underline the fact that despite the absence of hope and belief, he still has the desire to achieve contact with the transcendental world. This contradiction can be explained by referring to Derridean explication of the logos and logocentrism. In Hardy, we see the locus of the logos as empty but he still retains his logocentrism which implies the overwhelming desire for any form of logos. As in the case of Modernists, he acknowledges the empty locus of the logos but he cannot extinguish his desire to find a substitute. Thus, the attempt to denominate, to name, to metaphorize, to signify, to sign-see, can be explained as the willing attempt and even the possibility to communicate things, even when they are absent or missing. This effort to build a harmonious bond between the signifier and the signified is in fact the whole summary of the history of the metaphysics of presence, and implicates any form of idealism. According to Derrida, "logocentrism is *also*, fundamentally, an idealism. It is the matrix of idealism. Idealism is its most direct representation, the most constantly dominant force. And the dismantling of logocentrism is simultaneously—a *fortiori*—a deconstitution of idealism or spiritualism in all their variants" ("Positions" 51).

The "sign" in the poem "A Sign-Seeker" does not reside in the physical or the metaphysical realm. Neither the teachings of the traditional religion nor the old myths can provide the answer he is looking for. Chronological time and mythical time are referred to in the poem but Hardy destabilises their sequencing by frequent reversals and shifts in between: "And hear the monotonous hours clang negligently by" (4); "sights of which old prophets tell" (22); "Read radiant hints of times to be" (39). There is actually a speaker who is constantly time-conscious and death-conscious. He has experienced everything that human limitation has allowed him to experience—the linear progression of day-time ["the noontides many shaped and hued" (2), "the monotonous hours clang negligently by" (4)], the daily course of the sun ["the evening bonfires of the sun"(5)], the changing weather and changing seasons ["The eyeless countenance of the mist/ Pallidly rising when the summer droughts are done" (7-8)], loss and sorrow ["Death's sudden finger, sorrow's smart"

(19)], the constant intercourse of the states of life and death [“–All the vast various moils that mean a world alive” (20)]. In the view of Mahar, Hardy is not renouncing his belief in an antecedent being—he is affirming his dualism. No truth will free him from his temporal perspective, no whisperings will "open out the limitings" of a circle in which beginning and end are always one and always separate (Mahar 319). Yet the suggestion that the response he seeks might be a "warning," and the rhyme of "whisperings" with "limitings" almost implies that if the Word did come it might be too sufficient, the perfect rhyme of "dust to dust," the collapse of "limitings" to a final limit, the collapse of time to an ending that cast no shadows: "When a man falls he lies" (319):

And panted for response. But none replies;

No warnings loom, nor whisperings

To open out my limitings,

And Nescience mutely muses: When a man falls he lies. (45-48)

In the last stanza, the speaker can come up with no logic, and no “logos” he can trust. It becomes evident that the signified he is trying to pinpoint is beyond human language, it is extralinguistic. The “sign” which is supposed to be inscribed in language, is textual, and at the same time non-textual. It is both inside and outside the structure. It cannot be pinned or nailed down because like the logos, it is only a *trace*; it is a non-origin, non-locus. “But none replies” to him, because all the signifieds of the anthropocentric world are mute, musing, neither “warnings” nor “whisperings.” In Neoplatonic sense, he cannot achieve contact with whatever is there beyond empirical nature. “None” in the last stanza is ambiguous; it is impossible to say if its referent is an animate or inanimate being. It may stand for the desired human contact, contact with nature, with the physical or the transcendental. Shortly, it carries in itself implications of humanization and dehumanization. However, the word “none,” at the same time, signifies the linguistic rupture in the human discourse. Looked from a Derridean angle, it refers to the missing, evacuated signified. The poem's ending justifies it with the dubious “when a man falls he lies,” a possible wordplay, a pun that parodies the limitation of human condition and the

limitation of human discourse itself, its self-referentiality—when language “falls, it lies,” too. Language “lies” because contradiction and paradox are indispensable to human discourse. In a world without logos, where the signifiers are left without signifieds, language dissolves into itself.

3.1.2. Hardy's Problematization of the Metaphor and the Metaphor as an Act of Dissemination

The nature of “metaphor” itself implies imprecision. In its simplest definition, a metaphor is a comparison between two dissimilar things. However, the act of forcing two dissimilar poles into a comparison and similitude is a violent act, and this implies, to some extent, destabilization of meaning. Rainer Emig argues that the metaphor and metonymy, two figures of speech, represent imprecision and instability (161). He compares metaphor, metonymy and the symbol as poetic devices. A symbol is by its nature a compound signifier like the metaphor, but one that—unlike the metaphor—transfers and locates meaning directly from one signifier to another. It manages to stabilise the flow of signification at least to some extent. The symbol, therefore, becomes a more reliable device than metaphor and metonymy, the first necessarily imprecise, the second one unstoppable in its repercussions. Moreover, a symbol is always part of a symbolic system which adds further stabilising weight to a construction employing it (Emig 161). In Emig's view, Modernist poems tend to present more metonymic than symbolic structures. Hardy's poems may not be seen as dominantly metonymic, but bear witness to the more frequent use of the metaphoric than the symbolic structures.

Hardy is a poet who can transcend the metaphoric and the figurative nature of poetry in some cases. Some poems by Hardy have an extraordinarily prosaic and conversational nature, and seem to replace the story-telling act, almost approaching free verse. They are largely epigrammatic and anecdotic. Above all, Hardy likes to experiment with form and content. Many poems by Hardy echo moments from his

novels, and many speakers are reminiscent of memorable characters from those novels. He inherits material and wisdom peculiar to the Wessex folklore. Douglas Dunn, similarly, writes about the multitude of Hardy's story-poems and emphasizes that:

a poet's 'narrative art', especially that of a poet like Hardy, who excelled in the novel and shone in the short story, by itself introduces a constant possibility of fiction. Real persons and real events may well be changed to a lesser or greater extent by the poet's psychological momentum—'inner themes and inner poetries'—and by a need to re-experience the lived, which may be, according to the fact, imperfectly re-created (from the point of view of the prosaic), but which turns into perfect poetry. (151)

Dunn's emphasis is on the possibility and tendency of poetry to merge with fiction, in the poet's attempt to recreate an experience or impression. However, the anecdotic and prosaic style of Hardy also foreshadows the emergence of the Modernist mode of writing on the ground that such kind of writing announces the break with the traditional norms of form and content. It marks also the transition into a new mode of poetry, which, as mentioned in advance, Rainer Emig also defines as more characteristically metonymic than metaphoric. However, this is not the only reason why I am referring to these narrative poems, whose nature is evidently prosaic. Prose is an easier way to hold the signifier and the signified together. The linguistic sign is always more reliable and more stable in prose in comparison with verse. This corresponds to the Modernist poet's eagerness to create precision and exactness through focusing on the image and the object in question. As mentioned in advance in the interview with Derrida, he points at the self-subversive nature of literature and especially of Modernist literature. Consequently, the Modernist poet's positioning is also an escape into the more confident waters of free verse, metonymy, and prose. It is the effort to articulate the logos through a less condensed language, but at the same time it is the realization of its impossibility.

In many individual collections of poems by Hardy, it is possible to come across poems which narrate a story of local colour. Some of them dramatize sad stories of lovers who do not reunite; some of them satirize human follies. Their common point is the act of story-telling. Their colloquial and prosaic style leave one with the impression that they are composed in order to create fiction rather than poetry, the fiction of a great familial, communal and personal heritage. The lyrical quality of these poems is felt between the lines; the verse appears to comply with the conventional meter and rhyming. However, the metrical and rhythmic quality of these story-poems is almost artificially achieved at the presence of an evidently prosaic, narrative language. That is to say, Hardy creates verse through the language of prose, rhyme and rhythm through dialogising and narration. One such poem, "By Her Aunt's Grave," exemplifies Hardy's experimentation with form and content. The result is an epigrammatic poem which ridicules human relationships. The poem also represents the aforementioned tension between prosaic and poetic language:

'Sixpence a week', says the girl to her lover,
'Aunt used to bring me, for she could confide
In me alone, she vowed. 'Twas to cover
The cost of her headstone when she died.
And that was a year ago last June;
I've not yet fixed it. But I must soon.'

'And where is the money now, my dear?'
'O, snug in my purse... Aunt was *so* slow
In saving it—eighty weeks, or near.'...
'Let's spend it,' he hints. 'For she won't know.
There's a dance to-night at the Load of Hay.'
She passively nods. And they go that way. (*CP* 417)

Hardy distrusts human fidelity; death is the only reality. Attachment to permanent and meaningful human emotions is illusory and futile. The poem appears to have a semantic clarity and exactness in its tragic irony. The girl betrays her aunt's last wish and instead of spending the money on the headstone she requests to have after her death, she breaks the law of loyalty and dispenses with the money at her will to go to a dance ball with her lover. The irony is intensified with her remark that she was the

only one her aunt confided in. Hardy's position is not imposing or judgmental here, but only ironic. It is life's whim to continue; nature has its own laws operating. Every human feeling is doomed to end, but bondage to material objects may be equally foolish. With the physical body that decomposes and becomes the mark of a change in state, spiritual and moral norms also tend to transform themselves. Life does not always present too many possibilities. One is sometimes either doomed to live with memories of the past or seize and enjoy the moments of active participation in life. Hardy withdraws into anonymity and a distance here in this poem. His only responsibility is to tell the story itself. The frequent use of prosaic tags such as "says the girl," "she vowed," "he hints," and the combination of direct and indirect speech interchangeably, leaves us with the impression that Hardy creates fiction, prose, rather than verse. He does not judge, does not reprimand; he does not even intend to focus on every individual line, phrase, utterance, but simply conveys one of these little sad stories and ironies of life. What the poet intends here cannot be finally formulated; however, Hardy evidently violates the norms of poetry. The utterances become more prosaic than metaphoric although there is end-rhyme in some apparent scheme. In its own way, such kind of experimenting with language is a challenge to conventional poetic forms. Hardy's seemingly arbitrary breaking of the lines only to come up with a pattern in rhyming, imposes itself on the construction of the overall poetic discourse. The metaphoric composition is in a way sacrificed for the sake of the prosaic utterance. The poem almost approaches the borders of free verse and its prosaic nature leaves one with the feeling that one is reading a piece of fiction rather than something written in verse. This reveals to a certain degree the inclination toward Modernist sensibility because Modernists pioneer the use of free verse and of the distanced, dislocated poetic voice.

"In the Study" (see app. 3) is a similar example because Hardy again employs a partly prosaic language whose function is to narrate an impressive story rather than compress human emotions within the compact language of poetry. Although Hardy always revealed a preference and fondness for the traditional verse forms, this does not stop him from experimenting with language. The poem largely displays lines,

which, rhymed and unrhymed, tend to achieve the transmission of the story itself rather than stress and concentrate on the individual words. The first stanza of the poem concerns the situation of a “thin-faced lady” whose “mute” awaiting of a purchaser who would buy the books she inherits from her father may partly release the financial predicament she is in. The narrator in the poem speaks of the woman as a type of a “decayed gentility” that will eventually have to compromise family heirloom in order to sustain her livelihood. Although the narrator never tells what they are, the purchaser “can guess” “by some small signs” “that she comes to him almost breakfastless” (4-5). The lady has to cope with her financial hardships but has to pretend that she simply intends to create some space for her artistic tastes and decorate the room in accordance with it. Her smile must be artificial, because she smiles “as if necessity were unknown,” because she “hopes” she does “not err” (6) while she is waiting for the purchaser, and the amount of the books she is going to dispense with will be enormous. Her bitterness is intensified by the words: “though it irks/ My patience to offer them” (10-11). Her father's books are so much “in the way,” and she hopes to make her rooms more “smart” and spacious:

And lightly still she laughs to him,
As if to sell where a mere gay whim,
And that, to be frank, Life were indeed
To her not vinegar and gall,
But fresh and honey-like; and Need
No household skeleton at all. (17-22)

The tragic irony in the poem reminds us that individuals will have to learn one day how to walk off the things they probably cherish most in life in order to cope with hardships. The poem metaphorizes the rigours and challenges in life as “vinegar” and “gall,” and personifies “Need,” as the “skeleton” of the household. The figurative and metaphoric elements are at work; however, Hardy's transitions from one type of rhyming to another (such as from “aa bb” to “abab”), shows that the poet intends to convey the impression of the immediate moment in the easiest and most unrestricted way rather than accentuate the effect of comparison. He does not put special stress on

the figurative aspect of the poem; actually, he achieves to build the figurative, the metaphoric within the more prosaic and verse-less, meter-less, irregular poetic utterances. Because of the internal irregularity and metrication in the poem, Hardy approaches the borders of free verse, and by the dramatic personae he employs, he assumes the positioning of a poet who “tells from distance,” who is a mere observer.

When poetry gets rid of the hegemony of the metaphor, tends toward free verse and metonymy, focuses on the image or the impression itself, it may mean that the Wordsworthian model has left the scene and the Modernist style has taken over. In Derridean terms, as in Freud, the metaphor stands for condensation whereas the metonymy for displacement (Spivak xlvi). The less metaphoric and figurative language becomes, the more liberated the linguistic sign appears to be. There is a focus on the phonetic signifiers because they seem to fulfil the role of those instruments which make the whole attention gather around the image, the object. In this sense, for Derrida, the metaphor bears in itself a logocentric quality because it imposes a kind of a similitude. As early as 1873, Nietzsche described metaphor as the originary process of what the intellect presents as “truth.” (Spivak xxii). In the opening section of *Of Grammatology*, Derrida states: “by alluding to a science of writing reigned by metaphor, metaphysics and theology, this exergue must not only announce that the science of writing—grammatology—shows signs of liberation all over the world, as a result of decisive efforts” (4). In other words, the metaphor has reigned in the Western metaphysics for centuries, and now it is time for Poststructuralism to overturn it. In the Preface of *Of Grammatology*, Spivak discusses:

The text is not unique (the acknowledged presence of polysemy already challenges that uniqueness); the critic creates a substitute. The text belongs to language, not to the sovereign and generating author. (New Criticism, although it vigorously argued the self-enclosure and “organic unity” of the text, and indulged in practice in the adulation of the author, had a sense of this last insight in its critique of the “intentional fallacy.”) Derrida, questioning the unity of language itself,

and putting metaphor under erasure, radically opens up textuality.
(lxxiv)

“Curiously enough,” according to Spivak, “deconstructive criticism must take the 'metaphoric' structure of a text very seriously. Since metaphors are not reducible to truth, their own structures 'as such' are part of the textuality (or message) of the text” (lxxiv). That is to conclude that metaphors are not the bearers of truth, no matter how inevitably mankind tends to metaphorize discourse. As this present study will expose further in this chapter, the metaphor in Hardy is not the bearer of truth either, it is perhaps only a small bit of the “truth,” in its adventurous voyage toward the reality of *différance* and *dissemination*. When metaphors are multiplied or pluralized, the effect would be no different; the signifieds would still be inaccessible.

An early agnostic poem, “Hap,” (1866; *Collected Poems* 9) exemplifies Hardy's attempt to make a point of reference through multiple metaphoric structures and to denominate a “transcendental signified.” In the poem, the persona reflects on the pains and sufferings that mankind has to endure in life and the possible causes for those pains. The poem is cast in the form of a sonnet, beginning with the word “if,” which establishes the state of uncertainty at the very beginning:

If but some vengeful god would call to me
From up the sky, and laugh: ‘Thou suffering thing,
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!’

Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed (1-8).

Evidently, the poem presents semantic contradictions. Is God vengeful or not? Do we only suffer or occasionally experience blisses? Who is responsible for human suffering? Is it God or some other force? The fact that the poem begins with the hypothetical “if” intensifies the contradiction, but at the same time justifies the failure of locating a point of reference.

In the sestet, the speaker answers: “But not so.” He assumes to have come up with some sort of an answer to his previous contradiction. However, the answer “but not so,” does not resolve the uncertainty. If God were a cruel God who only took sadistic pleasure from human suffering, they would not be able to enjoy the occasional “blisses about” their “pilgrimage as pain.” “But not so” appears to intensify the ambiguity; God is neither cruel nor protective. Even if God exists, he may be simply indifferent, passive, and amoral:

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
-Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan....
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain. (9-14)

Robert Gittings speaks of the “flaws” in Hardy's poetry in general, and states that although there are “fine moments in nearly every poem by Hardy,” his inexperience at the early stages of his poetic career stands out (128). For example, “And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan” is a line not only “clumsy” but also “obscure—one has to substitute 'in place of' for the word 'for' to make a sense of it” (128). Other critics and researchers, too, have pointed out Hardy's syntactic experimentations. However, many have probably failed to see it as a problem of Poststructuralist philosophy of discourse rather than as flawed, inexperienced or clumsy syntax. Howard Baker, on the other hand, states that Hardy probably appropriates this poem from Swinburne for its “familiar lurid effusion about gods' mockery at man's misery,” and Hardy criticises that very deliberately with a credible coherence, whether or not we agree with his conclusions (139). Baker emphasizes that in this poem, Hardy progresses toward truth, which for him was inevitable: “This settling down to truth, which runs through the early lyrics, is always accompanied by the entrance of such homely concreteness of metaphor as the sun and rain above” (140). According to Baker, Hardy “shakes himself free from familiar half-truths and settles himself upon the hard truth” (139-140).

Dennis Taylor argues that the speaker in the poem hopes to discern a reality that stands outside all assumptions of archaic order (*Hardy's Literary Language* 300). But he remains trapped in the language of personifications (“dicing Time”), equivalences (“for gladness casts a moan”), and cause-effect (“How arrives it?”). “Hap” tries to name a reality beyond God; but the names found for this new reality—Hap (“arch.”), Casualty (“obs.”), Doomsters (arch.)—illustrate the anachronism in which the search for understanding is caught (300-301). Trying to express that reality, the “nothing that is” which undoes rational expectations, he must use Casualty in a grammatical form which contradicts its meaning: “Crass Casualty obstructs the sun” (301). It seems that by pointing at the problematic nature of the signifiers, Taylor would agree that there is no reliable signifier in human discourse in the ultimate sense. In Derridean sense, tension is inherent in our discourse. Finally, James Persoon is probably in the same line as Taylor. He maintains that “the giving of human qualities to impersonal forces, which is next to impossible to avoid once he chooses to dramatize those forces, suggests that language is fighting Hardy” (67). But these disconnections between language and metaphysics may also be seen as Hardy fighting the conventional associations of language (67). Within a Derridean frame, this fight testifies to the inability of the words to exhaust meaning. By giving those abstract forces a metaphoric life, “to obstruct, and to cast and to strew,” Hardy undercuts “the metaphysics of the poem” (64). It hardly matters whether Hardy is or is not aware of this contradiction between language and metaphysics. In either case, states Persoon, we have an example of words asserting themselves in an almost sacramental way, creating meaning in a way that crosses the intention of their user. In this way, there *is* ironically a “Powerfuller than I” for Hardy to look to (64).

While Baker argues that Hardy expresses the hard truth and not the half-truth, he is correct, but at the same time when considered in Poststructuralist terms, reaching the Truth through poeticising may also be very difficult to achieve. Take the expression “how arrives it,” for example, which is syntactically ambiguous, contradictory and polysemic. “How come joy lies slain?”, or “how does god's will arrive upon us?”, “How does it even happen?”— These suggest a vain attempt to hold on to some

deterministic belief that everything happens for a reason, independent of human will. What is more striking is the disruption of parallel logic: “joy lies slain” is more unexpectedly located in the same line as “but not so,” which rather makes a more affirmative implication that God might not be that vengeful after all. Therefore, the syntax of Hardy seems to accord a state of ambiguity and contradiction. The signified may be considered evacuated because various metaphors/ personifications, all capitalized, are ascribed to signify the driving force behind nature—“Crass Casualty,” “Purblind Doomsters,” “Dicing Time”—however, none of the metaphors individually appears to fulfil this function with exact precision.

The grouping of these multiple metaphors in the poem may be attributed to the poet's attempt to denominate a “space” or a “force” which will be the projection of a divine interference in the human universe. Actually, these metaphors may be phonetic signifiers that strive to designate the same signified, but the act of using too many metaphors itself implies the impossibility of its finalization. The speaker is making a reference to transcendental ambiguous “spaces.” Capitalization is used for emphasis, a technique which Hardy frequently employs but the capitalized metaphors are in sharp contrast with the signifier “god,” which is written with lowercase “g.” “God” in lower-case letters is made more pacified, maybe even inferior against the backdrop of the accidental powers that dictate over this world.

On one level of reading, “Crass Casualty” and “Dicing Time” stand for the random chances and coincidences that cause “pains” and “blisses” for human beings. Time is personified as a gambler who throws dices only to “cast a moan” and it is “Crass Casualty” that “obstructs the sun and rain.” These “Purblind Doomsters,” or half-blind powers, are unfeeling executioners that work haphazardly. However, “casualty” and “time” appear to refer to the ambiguous powers which cannot be ultimately signified—god, fate, accidents, time, loss. The “logos,” the “centre” in the poem is eternally shifting in meaning, circling back to haunt the poem's semantic integrity. Hardy's god may be the “centre” here, but a “centre” that is always “elsewhere,” as Derrida mentions in “Sign, Structure, and Play” (1966). There is never a fixed point of reference, the structure is continually shifting, the “centre” is

not the “centre.” For Derrida, the transcendental signified is absent or evacuated but still functions because it is part of the human consciousness that creates it. In “Hap,” the transcendental signified is partly constituted by a group of signifiers, metaphors, and its presence is acknowledged through human suffering and experience. In the Heideggerean sense, the signifier “god” is put under erasure, its presence and absence are simultaneously acknowledged through the acts of abstraction and concretization.

The final contradiction in the poem that threatens to collapse its meaning arises from juxtaposing “blisses” with “pain” unexpectedly. “Blisses” seem to be out-of-place, and alien to a poem whose dominant mode from the very beginning is “sorrow,” “loss,” and “moan.” “Blind fate” and “Crass Casualty” cause rare “blisses,” but apparently we will see that “joy lies slain.” However, since the poem posits the word “if” at the very beginning, the sense of ambiguity and uncertainty persists. The poem still presents a logic of its own and justifies its ambiguity while at the same disrupts its scheme of logic. With one single problematizing word—“if”—Hardy violates the metaphysical oppositions and crosses over the boundaries between dualities—belief and non-belief, happiness and sorrow, God and humanity, nature and man.

Hardy's multiple metaphors that hint at the absence of the logos may be observed in another agnostic poem—“Nature's Questioning” (see app. 4). The phonetic signifiers are at work, but the signified is inaccessible. Hardy tries to articulate the operations of the universal design, the logos. However, the inflation in the use of metaphors and personification creates semantic ambiguity and contradiction. The result is not polysemy, but “dissemination” because independent of the fact that each stanza is dominated by a signifier, the overall meaning of the poem is diffused. In three consecutive stanzas, Hardy poses questions which indicate the attempt to rationalize the irrational but fails: “Has some Vast Imbecility,” (13) “Or come we of an Automaton,” (17) “Or is it that some high Plan betides” (21).

John Paul Riquelme claims that Hardy assumes an anti-Romantic position here. Hardy's ambiguous use of language, his figures of speech that involve voice, face

and negation, connect him with poets like Yeats and Eliot (205). Certainly, they represent Modernist poetry with its linguistic imprecisions. The poem's status as a naturalistic and anti-Romantic poem, therefore, uncovers linguistic contradictions; a less mimetic discourse.

J. Hillis Miller views Hardy's persona as someone who watches from a distance, as "the spontaneous withdrawal of the mind to a position of detached watchfulness. Rather than choosing to lose himself in one or another of the beguiling forms of engagement offered by the world, Hardy, like many of his characters, chooses to keep his distance" (*Distance and Desire* 5-6). This alone implies to a certain degree a more impersonal positioning of the poetic voice peculiar to Modernists.

G. R. Elliott draws parallelism between Shelley and Hardy in this poem. He reads Hardy as Shelley reversed. For Hardy, as for Shelley, "the universe, outside of man, has neither hope nor memory; and human history has only a phantasmal meaning" (1190). This recalls the blank horror that sometimes confronted Shelley. However, Hardy differs from Shelley as a more distanced, dislocated observer:

In the relapses of his individualistic faith, he could not stay himself upon the profound meaning that there is in the painful story of human institutions and conventions: he could find there only a "chasm sightless and drear." In this respect, also, Hardy's case is the sequel of Shelley's. But he has none of Shelley's wailing lyric ardency. He scans the landscape with eyes accustomed to the gloom. Objects come out plainly enough in a sort of ironic twilight; and he watches them with an affectionate leer. (Elliott 1190)

Beside the ironic emphasis of the poem, we see that there is also a play in signification. When we cast a closer look at the poem, we see that Hardy's incongruities and obscure signifiers seem to dominate it. For example the title itself, "Nature's Questioning," is an example of amphiboly, according to Riquelme, an instance of language in which the meaning of individual words is clear but the

meaning of their combination is not (205). Hardy's title can mean both the questioning of nature by someone or something and the questioning that nature itself does of someone or something. This is an example of the genitive, or possessive, use of language in which subject and object are reversible (205). Furthermore, Riquelme identifies double meaning through the word "dawning" in the poem (206), and states that the use of personification, though it suggests the possibility for communication, suggests reversible relations; nature is presented as if it possessed a human consciousness like the speaker's (205). Riquelme identifies in the poem a "convoluted play and looping back of the language," and such extravagant linguistic effects are associated with later Modernist poets (206).

In the essay "Thomas Hardy and the Language of the Inanimate," Satoshi Nishimura refers to "Nature's Questioning" in terms of its tropic qualities. Nishimura explains that "the concept of divinity is inherently anthropomorphic, transcending the distinction between the literal and the figurative" (909). Moreover, the fact that the implications in the poem are ambiguous has something to do with its prosopopoeiac rather than metaphoric qualities. According to Nishimura, "the speaker uses the trope of prosopopoeia both to describe the objects and to permit them to speak, this process is further complicated by the fact that the speaker is also involved in it, addressed by and through the objects" (910). However, this "mutual personification" of the speaker and the objects creates an inseparable connection between them, and makes "Nature's Questioning" not an example of simple personification, but of the personification of personification. Nishimura, too, emphasizes the difficulty of signification and the unreliability of the figurative language in the poem:

"Nature's Questioning," then, questions rather than presupposes the cognitive reliability of language. It is important in this connection to note that the tone of the objects' speech is not assertive but interrogative, consisting entirely of questions, so that the figurative substitutions are not absolute. To put it another way, while the utterance uses the figures in an attempt to identify the unknowable, its

form implicitly acknowledges their representational provisionality.
(910)

My focus in this poem, however, calls to attention the idea that the plurality of metaphors for God signifies not only the absence of the transcendental signified but also an overall dissolution of meaning. The force behind nature, the logos, is a “Godhead dying downwards” (20), a “Vast Imbecility” (13), “impotent to tend” (15), an “Automaton” (17), “unconscious of our pains” (18), a “high Plan” (21) “as yet not understood” (22), of “Evil stormed by Good” (23). The use of capitalized words indicates the tension arising out of the attempted act of signification. The “logos” is a superior force with too many contradicting features—unconscious, indifferent, imbecile, mechanical, distant, but sometimes even benevolent. Every stanza seems to describe a different kind of God, but in every single stanza the internal contradictions cause incongruity. For example, a “Vast Imbecility” that is “mighty” and “impotent” at the same time, disrupts meaning by contrast, and the “Automaton” which is “unconscious” implies multiple forms of presence and absence—unfeeling, indifferent, passive, amoral, blind, or even dead, absent [“brain and eye now gone”(20)]. Among the elements that Hardy cannot define, there is the position of humankind. A case in point is “We the Forlorn Hope” (30) against “Achievement,” another ambiguous metaphor. These multiple metaphors cause inflation but do not reciprocate a polysemy; rather, they point to *dissemination*, a “spilling” of words over meanings. According to Derrida:

polysemia... is organized within the implicit horizon of a unitary resumption of meaning, that is, within the horizon of a dialectics... Dissemination, on the contrary, although producing a nonfinite number of semantic effects, can be led back neither to a presence, of simple origin ("*La dissémination*," "*La double séance*," and "*La mythologie blanche*" are practical re-presentations of all the false departures, beginnings, first lines, titles, epigraphs, fictive pretexts, etc.: decapitations) nor to an eschatological presence. It marks an irreducible and *generative* multiplicity. (“Positions” 45)

As mentioned earlier, Derrida explains that polysemy implies a finitude whereas dissemination does not. Meaning can never exhaust itself because the phonetic signifiers in the poem slide under the signifieds and become each other's supplements, traces. Polysemy allows us to choose among the possible semantic options, and partly to stabilize meaning, but *dissemination* is a process that destabilizes and stabilizes continually, like Derrida's deconstructive "jetty." Derrida maintains that deconstructionism "functions in a place which the jetty questions, and destabilizes the conditions of the possibility of objectivity, the relationship to the *object*, everything that constitutes and institutes the assurance of *subjectivity* in the indubitable presence of the *cogito*, the certainty of self-consciousness" ("Some Statements and Truisms" 371-72). Deconstructionism, at the same time, is a resistance that "institutes the consolidating and *stabilizing* structure of the jetty" (373). It constructs and fortifies theories, it offers thematics and theses, and it organizes methods, disciplines, indeed schools (373). In short, Derrida's "jetty," like his other key concepts such as trace, *différance*, and supplement, is a name for the strategy of Deconstructionism, which stabilizes and destabilises simultaneously.

Derrida's conceptions awaken parallel ideas about Hardy's writing. Hardy's use of multiple metaphors in his agnostic poems represents his attempt to stabilize meaning, to pin down the transcendental signified, but at the same time the very fact that they create ambiguity rather than clarity testifies to the fact that the end-result is semantic dislocation. It comes as no surprise that symbolic structures occur less frequently in those poems in comparison with metaphoric structures. The philosophy of agnosticism, by definition, implies uncertainty, and the linguistic convulsions of such discourse seem to arouse ambivalence rather than stability. Hardy's agnostic metaphors reciprocate and manifest the idea of dissemination in Derrida. Those metaphors also connote other key elements in Derrida, such as the "transcendental signifier/signified" or "transcendental contraband." The transcendental contraband is a pseudo-reference point which gains partial signification only by a continual deferral and *différance*. It is like a matrix of meanings. In *Glass*, Derrida gives its definition as follows:

There is no choosing here: each time a discourse contra the transcendental is held, a matrix—the (con)striction itself constrains the discourse to place the non-transcendental, the outside of the transcendental field, the excluded in the structuring position. The matrix in question constitutes the excluded as transcendental of the transcendental, as imitation transcendental: transcendental contraband. (244)

In a similar way, Hardy's metaphoric structures represent an internal conflict and tension that resist the process of stabilization of the signified, and extend the process of signification infinitely. Reminiscent of Derrida's technique in *Glass* and Hodge's interpretation of it (308), every metaphor in an agnostic poem by Hardy serves as a "contraband" to another metaphor in the poem, like a "second column" that is not really a dialectical contradiction, but like a subversive "running commentary," "like a foot-note" to the parallel, primary "text."

Another agnostic poem, "God-Forgotten," is typical of Hardy in its utilising a dialogised and conversational language (see app. 5). It exhibits a similar thematic development—a quest for a "sign" in an apparently God-less and "dark" universe—but the descriptive dynamic of signification is quite different here. First of all, there is no use of multiple ambiguous voices as in "The Subalterns," and there are no multiple metaphors for God as in "Nature's Questioning" and "Hap." The poem is cast in the form of an actual dialogue with the Almighty, who is personified as a whimsical and careless force whose only fault was that he lost interest in the human race he created, and turned a blind eye on its pains. Man, however, is typically personified as a universally suffering and feeble creature. The narrator is visiting God's "domain" in order to complain that he has abandoned the earth he created. Secondly, the poem seems to pinpoint a stable point of reference, i.e., the presence of God, because there is no question about the identity of the addressee. However, when looked at more closely, the poem plays upon images and utterances that result in semantic stability and instability simultaneously. God's responses to man appear to be dubious and unreliable. His presence is acknowledged, but at the same time this

sense of presence is challenged by the fact that he forgot to “care” for the human race. He abandoned his creatures, therefore, his absence is also acknowledged. This continual play upon the elements of “presence” and “absence,” in fact, prevents the finalization of the idea of a God-centred universe whose humankind may eventually identify a “sign” or a “token” of its Creator. The poem has an existentialist tone and logic as a whole, but the visual imagery and the ironic positioning of the “logos” foreshadow the evacuation of the “transcendental signified.” We are left again only with a cluster of signifiers, fluctuating between locating and dislocating, distancing and approximation, active speech and passive existence:

I towered far, and lo! I stood within
The presence of the Lord Most High,
Sent thither by the sons of earth, to win
Some answer to their cry. (1-4)

The narrator makes an imaginary voyage which is “towered far;” God’s residence is high up and very distant, too distant to overhear the “cry” of “the sons of earth.” The exclamation “lo!” implies immediacy and approximation, and serves to acknowledge the actual “presence of the Lord Most High.” However, the speaker is *sent* “thither,” a suggestion of lack of genuine personal will or of the attempt to universalize human grief. However, the utterance that the Lord is “thither” implies a Platonic, metaphysical division between the world of Shadows and the world of Ideal Forms. Such a concept of God is at the same time Judeo-Christian because God’s residence is in Heaven (“towered far”). Contradictorily, the residence of the Almighty is somewhere too far from the earth, but the presence of an omnipresent and omnipotent God (“one whose call/ Frames, daily, shining spheres of flawless stuff”) would have been otherwise felt everywhere, and mankind would not have felt abandoned by its creator. Therefore, the concept of God drawn by Hardy is both Christian/ Platonic and un-Christian, a status less easily definable.

In terms of the preceding dialogue with the Heavenly “logos,” the poem hints at the lack of real communication between the speakers. In psychoanalytic terms, there is

no intersubjectivity between them because the communication seems to be one-sided, fruitless and futile. The subject-object relationship is made less immediate and more dislocated because man has to “win” an answer, it will not be endowed to him so easily. Moreover, the idea of a passive, indifferent God is reinforced clearly in the following lines of the second stanza:

--"The Earth, say'st thou? The Human race?

By Me created? Sad its lot?

Nay: I have no remembrance of such place:

Such world I fashioned not." - (5-8)

The description of the divine ruler is anthropomorphic. God is not totally absent, but absent-minded and amnesic. He confesses to “recalling” his creation “dimly” but expects no sign of himself to be left on earth. It is a “semi-conscious” God who abandoned the human race because he “lost interest” in it as soon as he created it: “My aims therefor succeeding ill;/ Haply it died of doing as it durst?” (18-19). His losing interest in the world implies also his status as a whimsical, capricious God who simply overthrew the responsibility to care for his creatures. The word “haply” creates ambiguity; it contradicts the idea of a consciously created and eventually consciously deserted world. The implication is that even the Creation happened by chance and coincidence—Hardy's favourite theme. The “most high host” turns a blind eye on and gives a deaf ear to the cries of mankind [“For not a cry/ Of aught it bears do I now hear” (21-22)], but the “darkness” on earth may not be God's fault. Human race “used to ask for gifts of good,/ Till came its severance self-entailed” (25-26); in an indirect way, Hardy may be implying that human beings used to pray and believe, they used to turn to their Lord in moments of misery. However, they “severed” from him by their own will, a hint that their unhappiness might have been self-inflicted.

All these utterances in the poem modify and undermine its thematic unity, and consolidate his interpretation of truth which is based on the utter abandonment of man by a passive God. While human suffering might be the result of the Providence,

of cause and effect, of accident, it may be partly the result of human will. God's response to it is that "sudden silence on that side ensued,/ And has till now prevailed" (27-28). What really caused the disconnection with God is an obscure assumption, and the poem poses semantic ambiguity because it is not really decidable who abandoned the other first—mankind its God, by loss of faith, or God his mankind, by simple loss of interest. Thus Hardy plays upon signification by reversing the communicated messages of the two speakers. God is not totally blind and deaf; "all other orbs have kept in touch;/ Their voicings reach me speedily" (29-30). Hardy acknowledges the presence of the divine voice, thus subverting his own imagery of an indifferent, passive, even absent God. Furthermore, there are other Christian and Biblical connotations in the conversation between man and God. Man is making formal confession by beginning with the traditional "forgive me Lord," and God reproaches man because "thy people took upon them overmuch/ in sundering them from me," (31-32) associative of the forgiving but also punishing Catholic God. These utterances contradict the effects of figurations like "Vast Imbecility, impotent to tend," "Unconscious Automaton" which we see in "Nature's Questioning," or "Crass Casualty" and "Dicing Time" in "Hap." The Lord is even implied to be capable of compassion: "Deep grieved am I that injury should be wrought/ Even on so poor a thing!" (39-40). He would even send his "messengers" (43) to "mend" (41) the damage he caused by forgetting his people in "silent suffering" (38). If he had not mended his fault, it was because he "did not know." The poem's ironic ending, however, adds more to the inconsistent image of God, of the "logos." At the end of the poem, the narrator confesses that whenever he feels like turning to God in moments of need, he sees none of his messengers, it was "childish thought" (47) to believe him. Hope, however, never dies, contrasting the final ironic statement: "Yet oft it comes to me/ When trouble hovers nigh" (47-48).

All in all, the image of the transcendental signified in "God-Forgotten" is built along the poem by various contrasting and contradictory utterances, and the associations that are evoked in every stanza make the "logos" unstable, if not utterly absent. The very fact that "direct speech" is used in the poem makes the poetic communication

more immediate, but at the same time, more open to misunderstanding and disruption. The more God speaks, the more ambiguous a status he acquires. This is Hardy's way of destabilising meaning, by double voice or double vision, and this technique inevitably produces some amount of incongruity and instability. As long as the poetic voice (self) is split, there is always reason for more dislocation.

“God's Funeral” (see app. 6) epitomises Hardy's recurrent withdrawal into agnosticism and naturalism. J. Hillis Miller, too, writes of the disappearance of God in Hardy, and interprets the poem as one in which “God is killed by the attainment of that all-embracing vision which makes man a seer” (*Distance and Desire* 19). In a Derridean context, moreover, the semantics of the poem appears to be destabilized on account of its anthropomorphized and pluralized referents for the transcendental signified. The title immediately comes as a proof that Hardy imagines God as man-like or even man-made [“making our maker” (31)]:

I

I saw a slowly-stepping train --
Lined on the brows, scoop-eyed and bent and hoar --
Following in files across a twilit plain
A strange and mystic form the foremost bore. (1-4)

The opening lines present an ambiguous imagery that mingles associations of time passing (“slowly-stepping train), and mankind aging (“bent and hoar”). The referent for God appears to be located in the 4th line, “a strange and mystic form the foremost bore.” In this way, Hardy immediately foreshadows the fact that his transcendental signified will be evacuated or made more indistinct and unintelligible in the poem as a whole. The poetic persona bemoans his loss of faith as he is “stirred” by “contagious throbs of thought” and “latent knowledge” (5-7). He imagines himself in a long procession of participants attending the funeral of a man-made but mysterious God: a “fore-borne shape” (9) that “at first seemed man-like” (10) but then changed to “an amorphous cloud of marvellous size,/ At times endowed with wings of glorious range” (11-12). Hardy seems to confront the intellectual conflict of the

time—the conflict between evolutionist, empiricist assumptions of a God-less universe [“and feel a blest assurance he was there” (44)] and the Christian doctrine of Creationism with its insistence on the omnipotent and omnipresent driving force behind nature [“This requiem mockery! Still he lives to us!” (52)]. However, images of a man-like God are more insistently dispersed throughout the whole poem as in the examples we have in the 6th and 7th stanzas:

VI

'O man-projected Figure, of late
Imaged as we, thy knell who shall survive?
Whence came it we were tempted to create
One whom we can no longer keep alive? (21-24)

VII

'Framing him jealous, fierce, at first,
We gave him justice as the ages rolled,
Will to bless those by circumstance accurst,
And longsuffering, and mercies manifold. (25-28)

In contrast with the image of God in “God-Forgotten,” where the divine Lord resides “on high,” this poem introduces a god who is closer to mankind, a “man-like Figure” who is attributed human qualities—“jealous,” “fierce,” even “longsuffering.” Whereas in “God-Forgotten” we come across an amnesic, indifferent God who is given a human voice, here in this poem God never speaks because he is “dead” and the persona attends his symbolic funeral. In both poems, actually, God is anthropomorphised, though in different ways—in the former, God gets involved in a long dialogue with man, in the latter, he is directly described as someone with human shape. However, in both poems he is more or less “deceased,” “lost” to mankind, which, on its own behalf, is “tricked” (29) and “grew self-deceived” (30). Hardy cancels out the metaphysical opposition between imagination and belief—“And what we had imagined we believed” (32), by assuming that religious belief, like God, may

be a product of the human mind alone. The symbolic contradictions destabilize meaning: how can God die if he has never been born or has never lived; how can one lose something they have never possessed, even in their imagination? [“what was mourned for, I, too, once had prized” (56)]; if Hardy's “mangled Monarch” is a product of “our fashioning” (35), why is he still signified as a “strange” and “mysterious” being with “wings of glory”? (35) Hardy's persona is suspended between belief and disbelief, he cannot articulate with which pole he feels in more association—the believers or the non-believers. He assumes a status which is also suspended and deferred as he is “dazed and puzzled 'twixt the gleam and gloom.” Thus the ending of the poem appears to be both semantically coherent and incoherent: he follows the believing crowd, but only “mechanically”:

XVII

And they composed a crowd of whom
Some were right good, and many nigh the best...
Thus dazed and puzzled 'twixt the gleam and gloom
Mechanically I followed with the rest. (67-68)

Hardy's agnostic mind perfectly epitomises again Derrida's concept of the inaccessibility of the transcendental signified. By employing a continual dubiety and paradox, and by demystifying the image of God by making him man-like, amorphous, and then dead, he subverts one of the most long-cherished theological and teleological “centres” of human discourse—the Spiritual Father.

Finally, the image of God created in the poem “Self-Unconscious” (see app. 7) has something similar with the ones in “God-Forgotten” and “God's Funeral” in the sense that in all poems, the signifier God is clearly used to address a power beyond the capacity and understanding of man. Hardy does not prefer a wisp of multiple metaphors that actually deconstruct rather than construct the overall meaning. God's presence is acknowledged as the ultimate logos in all poems, however, as a signified, he is made unstable and unreliable. In “Self-Unconscious,” God does not engage in direct dialogue with man but manifests his presence through images of nature, past,

memory, which are only half-perceived. The title itself suggests a state of being unconscious; the speaker is seen while “watching shapes that reveries limn,/ And seldom he/ Had eyes to see/ The moment that encompassed him” (3-6). Hardy again chooses a narrator who wants to rely on his senses, but the “eyes” are only a metaphor for knowing, not knowing itself. Hardy's world of shadows, “shapes,” past memories or “reveries” immediately contributes to creating a realm beyond the empirical and the rational. This implies to a certain degree that Hardy challenges our sense of linearity as well. For example, J. Hillis Miller states that the poem dramatizes the “postponement of insight,” the “change from existential temporality to spatialized time” (*Distance and Desire* 198-199). In this context, it is possible to assume that in such a poem, the transcendental signified or the divine logos of the poem will be evacuated, or, at least, the process of perceiving it as a “rational/empirical” point of reference will be weakened.

Hardy's persona can detect the synchrony surrounding him and the harmonious flux in nature in the opening parts of the poem: (“Bright yellowhammers/ Made mirthful clamours,/ And billed long straws with a bustling air”) (7-9). According to Barbara Hardy, the “sharp visualization works from a point of view which is only imagined, not available in the past, a negative capability which responds fully to the world outside the self, and also to the self lost in reverie” (186). The speaker sees the nest-building birds, the sunny sea and the journeying sail as exhilarated, spring-like, but separate (B. Hardy 193). He does not say so, but there is a sense that the missed moment, long ago, was an experience of youth (B. Hardy 193). Though he follows the road of the birds, he is not really conscious of the beauty surrounding him, “alone, without interest there” (line 12). Hardy's naturalistic and anti-Romantic positioning is probably clearly suggested again in the poem because this flow in nature in its daily course does not seem to put into motion his imaginative powers. The idea of the self is unique—half-conscious and half-unconscious simultaneously. The journey he undertakes might be deliberately pre-planned or not, but the speaker finds himself again in a realm of signifiers which he cannot organize by any sort of principle. For example, he might spot in detail the birds carrying loads with their

bills but he might not be really “watching” or “seeing” them: “They sidled along the adjoining hedge; / Sometimes to the gutter/ Their yellow flutter” (15-17). Or he might be aware of “the smooth sea-line/ With a metal shine,” (19-20) but persist that “he would also descry/ With a half-wrapt eye/ Between the projects he mused upon” (22-24). The speaker maintains that he is only half-aware or half-concerned with his physical surroundings, words like “reveries” and “mused” contribute to developing a poetic self that is really “self-unconscious.” Naturally, with such a group of signifiers, the persona might be making a statement, if any, which we may distrust; whatever made him plunge in a kind of a day-dream may be a part of his past and memory. However, we may not trust his sense of temporality either because he “seldom had eyes to see the moment that encompassed him,” a curious implication of the merging of time and space.

In the light of all these signifiers, which lay out an undesired or unachieved connection between “the subject” and the One, one feels predisposed again to look for an absent/ evacuated signified. Contradictorily, the presence of the One is acknowledged through the “Earth's artistries” around him, but they are “dead now as sherds” and “all that mattered has passed away.” Destabilization and obscurity inevitably become central to the rest of the poem:

Yes, round him were these
Earth's artistries,
But specious plans that came to his call
Did most engage
His pilgrimage,
While himself he did not see at all.

Dead now as sherds
Are the yellow birds,
And all that mattered has passed away;
Yet God, the Elf,
Now shows him that self
As he was, and should have been shown, that day. (25-36)

Furthermore, the transcendental signified is intentionally articulated first, but “God, the Elf,” is made more intensely obscure and bleak, at least as much as the “specious

plans” that motivate and engage his pilgrimage, and as much as the image of “dead sherds,” that creates the impression of something shattered into pieces, something fragmented, without a focus. Thus the previously acknowledged presence of the One parallels unnamed “things” which cease to exist, which “pass away.” On account of human impediment implied, *seeing* is only a form of being “at a focussed distance,” and “such vision/ Is mere derision,” which he cannot “con” as a “whole:”

O it would have been good
Could he then have stood
At a focussed distance, and conned the whole,
But now such vision
Is mere derision,
Nor soothes his body nor saves his soul.(37-42)

The image he is trying to envision cannot be built by the senses that God, the Elf, entrusted him. He is only half-aware that “a thing was there/ That loomed with an immortal mien” (47-48). The *thing* becomes the signifier that testifies to the evacuation of the signified, and the status of ambiguity of this *thing* which he is seeking, persists. It both organizes and disperses all other signifiers that struggle to create a semantic conclusiveness in the poem. It organizes them because with such an ambiguous word, the “thing,” Hardy tries to reinforce the impression of something that has a lasting effect, something “immortal”—a memory, a moment, an act, or perhaps a human face that he wants to remember, cherish and fix. However, at the same time, the signifier “thing” disperses the semantic organization of all other signifiers related to perception, vision, knowing, seeing, even the immortal face of God, the ultimate logos in the poem. They are all probably merely an illusion, a fleeting reverie, a memory which guides him into a journey whose motivation is unknowable and uncharted. He momentarily anchors the presence of the logos, but then immediately discards it as a mere derision, as something that neither “soothes his body” nor “saves his soul.” He wants to believe in the permanence of certain human feelings, of something immortal and long-lasting, but concedes that he can watch them only from a “distance,” no matter how much “focusing” he does. Thus the poem paradoxically becomes both logocentric and otherwise, because stability is achieved only by in-stability, approximation only by distancing, consciousness only

by “self-unconsciousness.” Hardy transgresses the binaries again and leaps into a discourse which challenges both the linguistic and semantic consistency of the poem. As long as the *self* is fragmented, distanced, “self-unconscious,” the transcendental signified will have to continually flicker between absence and presence. Even if the *self* were conceived as a stable entity, as consciousness or as the product of a conscious act, it would be illusory; the very nature of the language of poetry would produce no univocity, no semantic integrity.

In conclusion, Hardy’s venture to rationalize a world which is evidently irrational and chaotic creates a constant tension and crisis of representation in his poems. Hardy comes up as a poet who curiously synthesizes the overtones of various philosophical understandings, which can even sometimes contrast with each other: empiricism, scientific determinism, naturalism, stoicism, and existentialist isolationism. The blending of these philosophical modes of thinking in his poems consolidates his position as an agnostic poet. However, agnosticism, in its turn is the best status that implicates the absence of the ultimate signified or a stable point of reference. This is the reason, too, why the metaphoric plurality of his agnostic poems gives way to destabilization rather than stabilization.

3.2. Self in Hardy—Unified and Fragmented

Hardy's sense of self is complex. It is partly unified and partly distanced or divided. It is not identified with either the empirical, Cartesian self, or with the post-Freudian, fragmented, multiple, modernist self. Rather, Hardy often employs a “double self,” articulated through double voice, double vision, and sometimes also utilizes “multiple selves.” These are presented through frequent use of dramatic monologues or dialogues. Very often, too, the poetic self is made up of voices rearranged in the form of echoes from the past.

Norman Page draws attention to some elements of language in Hardy's poems whose function is "to suggest that the poem is in the nature of a fragment rather than a complete entity, and that the reader has, so to speak, entered a discourse already in progress" (2006: 265). Words that imply questioning and speculating are the starting points Hardy moves from, and there are numerous poems that open with "When," "Why," "If," or similar gambits (264). Page's discussion reveals that Hardy frequently prefers "colloquial or conversational openings." Furthermore, Page refers to Hardy's uses of pronouns with no obvious referent, such as nineteen instances in poems beginning with "She" or "Her," fourteen beginning "He," fifteen beginning "You" and "Your," thirty beginning "We" or "Our," and fourteen beginning "They" (265). According to Page, in a strict sense:

the initial "I" might be said to be a pronoun without a clear referent, but except for a few ballads and narrative poems, and other poems where the speaker is plainly not the poet himself, most readers will probably be prepared to identify the first person singular in such poems as "The Impercipient," "The Darkling Thrush," and "I look into my glass" with the historical Hardy, and there is a sense in which his collected poems constitute an extended albeit somewhat fragmentary, autobiography, covering his life from infancy ("The Self-Unseeing," "Childhood Among the Ferns") through the pains of early love ("Neutral Tones"), and the friendships and infatuations of a lifetime, to the death of Emma and old age. The favourite "I," therefore, can be seen as the natural mode of the autobiographer. (2006: 266)

It seems that Page tends to identify the "I" in Hardy's poems mostly with the historical Hardy. However, one is continually reminded of Hardy's own claim in the prefaces of his poetry collections that the emotions he conveyed through his poems were "seemings" and "impressions" at particular moments in time, not necessarily his own emotions. Nevertheless, Page's analysis is still important here because it validates the idea that Hardy echoes the Modernist self and style because his poetry

appears to represent “fragments rather than complete entities.” Although there might be poems in which the speakers are unquestionably representing the historical Hardy, when looked at overall, they are not ultimately personal and subjective.

J. Hillis Miller, on the other hand, identifies no single self, mind or single consciousness in Hardy's poetry. As mentioned in advance, the major claim of Miller is that Hardy's work of poetry is “unmappable.” Miller identifies no *logos* in Hardy, therefore, according to Miller, the self in Hardy appears to be an indistinct concept as well. “Hardy', rather, is a sequence of disconnected evanescent persons. Each is called into being by the impression of the moment, then 'recorded' in a poem that personifies the impression. Each person then vanishes, never to return except when the poem is reread, or when the past impression is remembered” (*The Linguistic Moment* 281). Miller continues: “'Thomas Hardy' is not who he is. He is no one, no one but the vacant place, without walls, margins, or location, in which these fugitive persons take shape momentarily and then disappear” (281). For Miller, “the constant in Hardy's poems is their inconstancy” (290). He finds it peculiarly noteworthy that “fragmentation and a partial hanging together” is characteristic of Hardy (290). “Poems, moments of experience, states of mind, the self from one time to another, are for Hardy neither wholly disintegrated nor are they wholly integrated” (290).

One clear example for Hardy's distanced self can be identified in the poem “The Subalterns,” which was discussed earlier as representative of the evacuated signified. As in Miller's claim, the self is neither wholly disintegrated nor wholly integrated. In every stanza, the speaker seems to be identified as the poet in disguise talking to anthropomorphic natural forces. However, with every stanza, the poetic self/ the voice is made more passive and less reliable because of his status of subordination and weakness. Moreover, Hardy distances the *self* by dialogising the speech, by the use of passive voice and a lot of punctuation—quotation marks, dashes, and exclamation marks. “I heard Death say,” for example, implies a form of communication which is less immediate, more incomplete, and implies a more distant self because the ultimate force behind the human scene has not been articulated anywhere in the poem; there is no single signified/ *logos* but only

anthropomorphized voices—the sky, Death, Sickness, the North, which seem to speak on behalf of the ultimate force above nature. Paradoxically, the quotation marks in the poem imply a dialogised language, a conversation or a communication which actually does not impose itself as “intersubjectivity.” The voice of the humanized speaker is silenced, rendered rather passive: “we smiled upon each other then.” Simultaneously, Hardy uses the traditional end-rhymes, but they force themselves upon a conversational language, becoming imposing but alien, thus creating incongruity in the rhyming scheme. Hardy's use of broken language, his breaking the lines for the sake of construing end-rhymes produces even more tension. Almost reminiscent of Hopkins' broken language and sprung rhythm, Hardy's diction in this poem is quite violent and forceful. Eventually, in the light of a fragmented language, the concept of self cannot be conceived of as one fully integrated. These are some of the modernist aspects in Hardy, embodied in semantic complication caused by the linguistic instability and dislocated concept of the self.

Hardy's plural voices and perspectives challenge the unified and integrated sense of the *self*. As in “Subalterns,” he employs multiple visions in “Christmas in the Elgin Room” (see app. 8). The speakers are Greek gods in a British museum who have been cast into “exile” since the beginning of the history of the Christian West:

" What is the noise that shakes the night,
And seems to soar to the Pole-star height?"
 — " Christmas bells,
 The watchman tells
Who walks this hall that blears us captives with its blight."

" And what, then, mean such clangs, so clear?"
 " — 'Tis said to have been a day of cheer,
 And source of grace
 To the human race
Long ere their woven sails winged us to exile here.

" We are those whom Christmas overthrew
 Some centuries after Pheidias knew
 How to shape us
 And bedrape us
And to set us in Athena's temple for men's view. (1-15)

The gods identify themselves as “we” whom Christianity “overthrew” into exile. They are “captives” doomed to live in “blight.” Dialogised language helps to portray gods as anthropomorphized. They are capable of feeling, human-like, and lament their lost dominion and days of glory. Polytheistic and monotheistic religions are posed against each other. Moreover, mythological time is juxtaposed with Christian time. Christian time is embodied in the cheer of Christmas festivities, with the “clangs” and “bells” that “shake the night.” However, the ancient gods talk among themselves; there is no addressee who will render their communication two-sided. They are long forgotten and their faith is long dead like their headless bodies and torsos scattered in every corner of the museum.

Whether or not Hardy speaks on behalf of the Pagan gods is less significant in the poem. The poetic *self* is divided and fragmented by means of multiple voices, i.e., the gods who represent a point in history already lost to humanity. There are no human but humanoid voices in the poem. Hardy screens himself off by erasing the identity of the conventional unified poetic persona. This strategy does not erase his presence altogether but merely multiplies and disperses it. Thus Hardy transgresses his own logocentrism and overturns the metaphysical oppositions which seem to set up some coherent semantic or thematic outcome.

In fact, Hardy's poems do not usually present a coherent imagery that lays down distinctive metaphysical oppositions but still-to-come significations made up of delayed semantic particles. It has been already discussed that the concept of the self in Hardy is divided and unified, partly stabilized and destabilized, continually activated and pacified. It is not as plural and dissected as in Modernist poetry but bespeaks of the tendency of Modernism to fragment, ambiguate and dislocate. A look at the poem “Moments of Vision” (see app. 9) may justify my argument as well as highlight the conclusions made by J. Hillis Miller concerning Hardy's “unmappable *self*”:

That mirror
Which makes of men a transparency,

Who holds that mirror
And bids us such a breast-bare spectacle see
Of you and me?

That mirror
Whose magic penetrates like a dart,
Who lifts that mirror
And throws our mind back on us, and our heart,
Until we start? (1-10)

In the Platonic sense, the image of the “strange mirror” in the poem automatically undermines the conception of a unified, well-defined empirical self because the mirror generates a copy, a similitude of a “shadow,” which is already a replica of the ideal: “Why in that mirror/ Are tincts we never see ourselves once take” (13-14). Moreover, the demonstrative pronoun in the opening line (“that mirror”) immediately evokes the impression of distancing and dislocation. “Which makes of men transparency” (2) connotes a less concretised kind of self, although whoever “holds that mirror/ bids a breast-bare spectacle see” (3-4) of the speaker and a second companion. The image of the mirror creates obscurity and dubiousness; it is not possible to infer if it functions as a means of exposing their real, transparent selves, of making them confront their real visage or an illusory one. The word “transparent” serves as a way to weaken the idea of empirical perception but at the same time connotes something exposed in its purest, most genuine form, reinforced by the image of “breast-bare spectacle.” However, on the whole, the combination of empirical images of sight and vision (“see,” “spectacle” “like a dart”) with images of something half-perceived, (“transparency,” “magic” “strange mirror”) generate the impression of a *self* more transcendental, more unstable.

The poem complicates further the idea of self with the ambiguous pronoun “who,” which adds a dimension of meta-cognition. The force behind the mirror, that holds it and lifts it high-handedly before the eyes of the speaker, is mysterious and obscured, but at the same time anthropomorphized. When the mirror is lifted, the speaker is confronted with his “mind and heart thrown back on us.” Thus the mirror also creates an illusory realm for the speaker; when he does not watch his imaginary self in the

mirror, he has to encounter the issues of the mind and the heart [“these night hours of ache”(12)]. The pronoun “these,” however, implies more immediacy; so the ache and pain are real. In the last stanza, however, Hardy again plays with the idea of self by making it more plural, more multiple. He distances the speaking voice by generalising it to all human condition: “That mirror/ Can test each mortal when unaware” (16-17); and finally, by employing a third person personal pronoun: “Yea, that strange mirror/ May catch his last thoughts, whole life foul or fair/ Glassing it—where?” (18-20). The mirror becomes an obscure symbol at the end, indeed, maybe not even a regular symbol because it is impossible to pin down what it possibly stands for—the passing time, fate, life, God, chance, choice, consciousness, unconsciousness etc. This “strange mirror” has no underlying semantic conclusiveness; it possibly serves as Derrida's *différance*, or as a signifier with an evacuated signified, a moment of “vision” and “unvision,” a domain where the “symbolic self” merges with the “imaginary self.”

Derrida's idea of the self is not a fixed, stable concept, either. It is continually on the move, in process, like all other key concepts Derrida proposes—the logos, the signified, presence, *différance*, supplement, trace etc.. Some of the elements Hardy uses in his poems, such as “echoes,” “voices,” and “ghosts,” are examples of phonetic signifiers that have no absolute referents. Like Hardy's pronouns that have no definite referents, it is possible to assume that the speakers in his poems represent the poet's more complex idea of the “self.” For this reason, casting some light on the speakers in Hardy's poems may be an appropriate starting point for a deconstructionist analysis (though there is no such thing as a “starting point” in Derrida).

Derrida's key elements, coined as “trace,” “deferral,” and “*différance*” reveal his own stance against the metaphysics of presence—phonocentrism, logocentrism and linearity. Pheby explains above that Derrida's *différance* gestures toward the temporalization of language. *Différance* is not to be construed simply as a concept but as the “possibility of conceptuality, of the conceptual system and process in general” (“Differance” 140). *Différance* is, as Derrida observes, the condition for the

possibility of *any* discourse, and “can no longer be understood according to the concept of 'sign,' which has always been taken to mean the representation of a presence and has been constituted in a system (of thought and language) determined on the basis of and in view of presence” (“Differance” 138). In *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida clarifies further the status of *différance*:

Differance is not simply active (any more than it is a subjective accomplishment); it rather indicates the middle voice, it precedes and sets up the opposition between passivity and activity. With its *a*, *différance* more properly refers to what in classical language would be called the origin or production of differences and the differences between differences, the *play* [jeu] of differences. Its locus and operation will therefore be seen wherever speech appeals to difference.... *Différance* is neither a *word* nor a *concept*. In it, however, we shall see the juncture—rather than the summation—of what has been most decisively inscribed in the thought of what is conveniently called our "epoch": the difference of forces in Nietzsche, Saussure's principle of semiological difference, differing as the possibility of [neurone] facilitation, impression and delayed effect in Freud, difference as the irreducibility of the trace of the other in Levinas, and the ontic-ontological difference in Heidegger. (“Differance” 130)

Derrida's *différance*, therefore, should be taken as the possibility for communication which is only possible through a play of differences. *Différance* is never an empirical or phonocentric concept which can possibly identify the presence of a unified self or an ultimate signified. In the superstitious world of Hardy, *différance* is manifested through elements such as “echoes,” “voices,” “shadows” and “ghosts,” which suggest both absence and presence, life-in-death. They are the spaces that Hardy cannot ultimately define because they are part of a consciousness susceptible to experiences of transcendence and superstition. In fact, echoes are also “traces,” “deferred,” and “yet-to-come” of a would-be presence that is actually not

anthropomorphised. They reappear as bleak connections between past and present; thus, they also present themselves as a challenge to linearity. They are the false indicators of phonetic signifiers, which are “there,” partly perceived, but not attached to an empirical reality. Nevertheless, for the poetic persona, they transmit a reality of their own. Hardy's poems about the deceased Emma, for instance, articulate a tension between an empirical self and a realm of superstition. It may be assumed that Emma's ghost frequently occupies his world. However, in some poems by Hardy, it is difficult to decide if the attempted form of connection is inspired solely by Emma. Hardy's present is haunted by his past, but the transitions between the past and the present are not always necessarily linear. Therefore, the impact of the past is most vividly represented by motifs such as echoes, voices, shadows and ghosts; they constitute a challenge to phonocentrism and univocity; they are Hardy's symbols of “movedness,” continuity and *différance*.

Similar resonances may be spotted in the poem “The Voice” (see app. 10). It reveals how Hardy poeticises double voice and a dramatized persona. Hardy's frequent themes of death, loss, and sorrow recur in this poem. It is cast in the form of a “calling” from an unidentifiable realm and time, so it is a kind of anti-elegy. Hardy's modern sensibility reappears as he combines end-rhyming with inner-rhyming but in irregular lines. That is to say, he tries to squeeze the new content into old patterns. Thematically, the poem is interpreted as Hardy mourning for his deceased wife Emma. For example, Jahan Ramazani states that his melancholy is the manifestation of his sense of guilt in regard to their unhappy marriage. However, he transforms Emma through her death in his fantasy: “In death she can be changed, troped, turned; in death her objectionable self can be effaced; in death she can be remade as the poet preferred her, as she was in the earliest stages of courtship” (966). But this remains a fantasy. Trying to see her as she once was, when she would obediently “wait for me,” he dresses her in an “air-blue gown,” which dissolves into thin “air” in the next stanza, “his doubts send him into a vertiginous fall” (Ramazani 966).

In other words, Emma is a presence and a non-presence in time and beyond time; however, he cannot particularize the connection with her. He is in touch with the

wind only. The lost woman's voice appears as an echo from the past, but it is not her voice that is calling, it is only the wind, his past, memory. He takes the wind as the ghost's presence. The voices are never personified or humanized because they never respond.

Anne-Lise François presents a psychoanalytic interpretation of "The Voice," and remarks that "the strange mixture of concretization and abstraction defining habituation to a shared quotidian life is revisited and revived through the double movement of naturalization and estrangement" (75). Eventually, the call of the "woman much missed" continues to "companion" the speaker even as it has lost all power of personal address, its significance for him diminished and dissipated to little more than a birdcall among the wind and leaves. What François points here might be nothing less than the Heideggerean notion of Being's continual flickering between absence and presence or the Derridean concept of *trace* and *différance*.

T. R. M. Creighton suggests that Hardy is creating a kind of a grammar of grief in this poem because the syntactical complexities generally reflect confusion or distress (xii):

Saying that now you are not as you were
When you were changed from the one who was all to me,
But as at first, when our day was fair (2-4).

The word "wistlessness" is also a coinage of Hardy according to Creighton (xii). However, in Derridean terms, as well as in psychoanalytic terms, the interpretation would lead us to the idea that Hardy forces his way out toward Modernism, and the idea that linguistic crisis arises out of poetry's capacity to problematise "signs."

At the end of the poem, there is no relief, no consolation, no remedy, but Hardy's is not a polished, superficial melodrama. The poem appears to be Modernist in the sense that the persona cannot attach the self to a meaningful point of reference; nevertheless, he tries to create harmony in the poem. He feels through his senses certain irrational, uncanny vibrations in the air but they are impossible to rationalize.

They are beyond the grasp of language. He moves toward an empirical but unformulated realm of signification. Furthermore, he sees his past self through his present self, so the ambivalence is also recognized through the doubling of the self; thus, forcing the individual consciousness into a self-reflection. This doubling creates distancing, a less unified sense of the self. The voice of “the woman calling” dissolves into a “wan wistlessness/ Heard no more again far or near?” (11-12), like the transcendental referent which he attempts to address through an indefinite moment in time—an echo. The referent is “deferred,” like an echo from the past. There is no intersubjectivity but only a state of suspended consciousness. The echo serves as *différance* because *différance* has the function of both delaying and differing. *Différance* marks a deferment in time and a differentiation of distinction in space (Pheby 58).

In the poem “The Haunter” (see app. 11), Hardy again challenges the phonocentric narrative by employing a ghost-persona that is supposed to personify the deceased Emma. Whether or not the speaking voice is feminine can be never wholly stated except maybe in the last octave when the lines tell of “all that love can do” (30). The visit of Emma's ghost is the most immediate inference that claims to enact a semantic coercion in the poem. However, the narrator is unreliable, in the sense that she never achieves the desired contact with the natural world, and never interacts, even in terms of transcendence, with the man in question. On the other hand, she calls herself a “faithful phantom” (15), which is a metaphor that dispels the dual relationship of presence and absence. The ghost fails to contact the physical, empirical world of the lover but exists in his past memories, and, like a faithful wife, acknowledges her presence by the very act of frequent “haunting” and visitation:

Yes, I companion him to places
Only dreamers know,
Where the shy hares print long paces,
Where the night rooks go;
Into old aisles where the past is all to him,
Close as his shade can do,
Always lacking the power to call to him,
Near as I reach thereto!

What a good haunter I am, O tell him,
Quickly make him know
If he but sigh since my loss befell him
Straight to his side I go.
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. (17-32)

Hardy's poetic persona, in a way, assumes the role of a female ghost-persona who tries to "exist" in the memory of the male lover as in "Ah, Are You Digging on my Grave?" In a similar pattern, the addressee is absent, the communication mute and incomplete. The whole poem is again a self-reflection which proves that the status of the subject, of the poetic self is largely disabled, weakened. The self is problematized by being positioned in an ambiguous space between transcendence and non-transcendence, afterlife and this-life. The ghost sets herself free only when "his fancy sets him wandering" (3), but is a passive listener because she "cannot answer the words he lifts me—/ Only listen thereto!" (7-8). However, by way of their past, memory, she accompanies him everywhere, where only "dreamers" roam. In short, Hardy's concept of the self is problematized in "The Haunter;" not only because it is a ghostly voice that speaks the language of desire and yearns for intersubjectivity, but also because it is a feminine voice, which Hardy, by abandoning the male, poetic ego, can only acknowledge through memory or aesthetic imagination.

Hardy's partly unified and partly dislocated sense of self may have been portrayed also in the poem "Before and After Summer" (see app. 12). The poem simultaneously represents Hardy's existentialist isolationism, intensified by the language of negation. Instead of "echoes" and "voices," the poem exemplifies an evacuated point of reference, this time through elements such as "half-transparent blindness," "blankness," and "shadows." Simultaneously, the poem represents Hardy's challenge to linearity because the phonetic signifiers fail to present themselves as the referents of a rational and an empirical temporality. Thus the self is distanced and moves continually between indeterminate slices of temporality.

Barbara Hardy argues that in the poem, the pause between the two stanzas acts as a structural symbol and the numeration added by the poet marks out a space, a gap between the stanzas (214). Barbara Hardy points that “the thresholds of time are cruelly marked as the speaker first ignores the present in February in anticipation of spring and sun, and looks back at the happy summer whose passing he never noticed, the suns he missed or mis-imagined. He saw them, indirectly, through his winter anticipation, compounding the gap and the missed moment” (215). Hardy remarks that this “simple, enigmatic poem registers a moving failure to catch and keep the present moment and its momentary happiness. It also makes a complex memory of anticipatory hope, enacting time limits for the poet and narrative limits for the reader” (215). And “the absence in the centre, between the stanzas, creates the energy of frustration of an act of imagination, an act which summons a deep melancholy for an untold story” (B. Hardy 215). She maintains that “Hardy uses his poetry in ways that require the reader to experience checks, halts, gaps, limited access and impassable thresholds, and question the conventions of completion” (217).

Barbara Hardy's remarks actually lead to the realization that the poem presents a challenge to formal convention and concept of linearity as a whole. It captures one's attention that Hardy utilises a language of negation, too, that represents the persona's failure in building a connection with the external world through the senses. He is again “looking” but not perceiving. At first glance, the poem suggests a longing for lost happiness. However, the spatial and temporal imagery in the poem is dislodged between his past and present self. The persona is awaiting Summer, putting up with the “wintry winds” and “half-transparent” late snows. However, when Summer is gone and October comes, he feels as the bird, disguised, lost in the shadow of a pine tree. The persona is as “mute” and “blank” (15-16) as the bird, much like the pacified and evacuated linguistic sign in the poem. The idea of partly “overshadowed,” disrupted self is developed through the partly linear and non-linear concept of temporality. The shifts between past and present seem to be linear; however, the sudden leap in time into the near past is not compatible with the chronological sense

of time in the poem ["For those happy suns are past" (17)]. He patiently waited for the summer, but the coming of October, and the blankness and muteness that followed upon it rendered summer insignificant. The listless existence of the persona is underlined through the listlessness and blankness of language, of the linguistic sign. Thus the poem emphasizes its anti-Romantic mode of expression, but at the same time points to a dislocation and distancing of the concepts of self, time and space. The use of the pronoun "one" in "one puts up with anything" (2) in the first stanza suggests a more generalized, universal concept of the self, but the belated use of "I" at the end of the second stanza also points to the fact that the poet creates a bleaker, less reliable, distant self. Finally, the echo in the previous poem "The Voice" is now replaced by the "shadow," the shadow of something "half-transparent" (9) or a "there"ness (13) that is *not*, but is only a *trace*.

Hardy's partly unified, partly fragmented self makes his poetry less personal and subjective. Modernist poetry advocates a more "objective" and "impersonal" positioning of the poet; this becomes a characteristic feature that culminates in the works of Eliot and Pound. There is no longer a predisposition to the semi-divine, semi-prophetic ecstatic voice of the Romantics. Hardy shares this touch of the "impersonal" with the Modernists; he achieves that status thanks to his technique of "double vision." It obscures and undermines the unified concept of the self, which is actually not a concept but "conceptuality" in Derrida's discourse. The self is divided, more or less, if not totally lost and mired in a world without "logos," without a "sign." Take the poem "At the Piano," (see app. 13) for instance, where Hardy's voice is less strictly defined, less prevalent, and the self is much more a concept/conceptuality observed from aside.

First of all, the poem represents what Hardy always used to claim about his poems, being merely "impressions" and "seemings." There is a voice in the poem that claims a status of its own. However, the poetic voice is made almost prosaic, and the poem, like a painting, is a moment in time that freezes and moves simultaneously ["As a spell numbed the scene" (14)]. The narration is made more impersonal by means of an isolated, distanced presence that merely observes a woman playing the piano, and

a man who is watching her. The voice that narrates the impression of the moment may belong to the man himself. However, there is also the impression that he is being observed from aside, by a presence, a voice, independent of the couple. Moreover, there is the image of a “cowled Apparition,” a Phantom that “hid nigh.” “Time” is personified too, and “laughs awry,” an implication of the lack of a harmonious temporality, a unison between past and present. The apparition is an ambiguous image as well because it is impossible to decide if it represents death that will break them apart, the “bale” or the estrangement that the couple suffers from, their lost love, or any other source of anguish and unhappiness.

Furthermore, the absence of the personal pronoun “I” in the poem is not a coincidence. This choice of the poet renders the concept of the self more distant, more fragmented, more impersonal. The man's act of observing the woman is both conscious and unconscious. For a moment he plunges in a state of daydreaming, assuming the presence of an “apparition,” a “phantom” to overtake the scene. The music, the melodious notes of the piano, attach him to the present time, but at the same time transmit his wandering mind to an indefinite moment in the past or the future. Thus the poem's linearity appears to be broken again; Hardy's rational time is never all-too-rational. This is how Hardy also creates time-spaces. Time's linearity is disrupted because different impressions that enact their presence seem to occur simultaneously in different slices of temporality. That is to say, there is no parallelism between the reenactment of presence/consciousness and a particular temporal locus. In this way, Hardy creates the impression of time merging with space. In Derrida's discourse, this testifies to the dissolution of the time/space opposition, or the dissolution of the signifier into the signified and vice versa:

By leaving open this possibility—and it is inherent even in the opposition signifier/signified, that is in the sign—Saussure contradicts the critical acquisitions of which we were just speaking. He accedes to the classical exigency of what I have proposed to call a “transcendental signified,” which in and of itself, in its essence, would refer to no signifier, would exceed the chain of signs, and would no

longer itself function as a signifier. On the contrary, though, from the moment that one questions the possibility of such a transcendental signified, and that one recognizes that every signified is also in the position of a signifier, the distinction between signified and signifier becomes problematical at its root. (“Semiology and Grammatology” 19-20)

When the poem “At the Piano” is reconsidered, one realizes that it actually highlights Hardy's challenge to linearity and phonocentrism. This resistance to a rational, empirical concept of temporality is intensified by means of a suspended consciousness and a distant “eye,” which sees and “sees not.” Human consciousness is suspended between a present which causes “bale” and a happier past which is recalled with “sighs.” He is intimidated by the shadow of the phantom, but contradictorily, the man sees “no monition,” no warning of the impending loss that awaits the couple. Like the music notes in the air, the man is making a “mental stray,” with the thought of better times, free of pain. These may be substituted by his memories in the past or hopes for future happiness. The persona mainly sees his present self through his past self, and vice versa. This, in turn, implies a self which is both unified and fragmented, a peculiarity that links Hardy with later Modernist poets.

“The Wind Blew Words” (see app. 14) is another poem that may well portray Hardy's problematized concept of the self. Hardy again destabilizes the self by combining various personal pronouns—I, Me, thee, his, it—thus it becomes difficult to nail down which utterances really represent the feelings of the speaker, and which utterances concern the “seemings” and “impressions” of a speaker-outsider, an observer. The concept of the self is fluid and shifts continually: “The wind blew words along the skies,/ And these it blew to me” (1-2). The speaker imagines himself to engage in a dialogue with nature, the wind. Nature is a source of knowledge, but knowledge is incomplete. The narrator realizes that everything he sees in nature, the trees, the animals, the other human beings who speak and do not speak his language are somehow part of him (“it is limb of thee”). However, the tree is a “troubled tree,/

Complaining as it sways and plies,” (4-5) “the creatures sheltering round—/ Dumb figures, wild and tame,” (7-8) the fellows “black, dwarfed and browned” (11). Though Hardy may be referring to various human races around the world, the word “dwarfed” is eye-catching because it may stand also for the feeble position of mankind against the role attributed to him in this life. As soon as he “lifts up his eyes,” he will realize that nature and all mankind share the same troubles and worries with the narrator. He might feel helpless, “pathetic,” for not being able to change the course of nature. G. R. Elliott, similarly, interprets the poem as “pathetic fallacy:”

Here is a real "pathetic fallacy": the poet extends his pity to Necessity itself. This confusion is unfortunately at the very center of his vision; and it excludes that Greek sense of Fate which rash admirers have discovered in his writings. The Thing that presides there, so impressively, is really not Fate, but Fate's ghost. It is a remarkably life-like ghost because of Hardy's classic constructive power. His devotion to simple, inclusive, and sombre design brings him close to the notion of Fate. But what his architectural sense demands, his humanitarianism denies. Viewing the universe as a single Being, he sympathizes with it too much to believe it capable of a really sinister policy. Inexorable deities are excluded. Often, to be sure, Hardy takes on the peculiar attitude of blaming God for human troubles while denying God's existence. But generally he likes to imagine for deity a sort of lackadaisical existence which has none of the potency of Fate, and which deserves far more pity than blame—he pities God's incapacity for pity. (1194)

Elliott's interpretation of Hardy's sense of God and Fate actually highlights the Poststructuralist challenge of the linguistic sign in general. The paradox and contradiction in Hardy's “communication” with the divine forces in fact pinpoint the evacuated transcendental signified in Derrida. Besides, the evasive signifieds in Hardy also evidence the disintegrity in the poetic self. The ghostly presence of the poem is not only God, but also the human *self*. It is inarticulate, incapable of

transmitting human consciousness into a connection with nature and forces beyond nature. So the “wind blew words,” into the face of man almost as if to mock his limited capacity. Hardy makes the speaking voice even more vague and unstable by a change of personal pronouns: “pathetic Me,” “I moved on,” but “in all *his* huge distress”:

I moved on in a surging awe
Of inarticulateness
At the pathetic Me I saw
In all his huge distress,
Making self-slaughter of the law
To kill, break, or suppress. (13-18)

By shifting from “me” to “his,” he obscures the speaking voice, and puts it at a distance in the face of such powerful urges: “to kill, break, or suppress.” The law of nature is cruel, the “pathetic Me” can only respond with a symbolic “self-slaughter” of the law, as well as of “self-slaughter” of language. Ironically, and paradoxically, the *self* is rendered utterly helpless—in terms of dealing with nature’s laws, and at the same time, in terms of dealing with the oppression of language. The *self* suffers from “inarticulateness,” even the wind is capable of articulation (“the wind blew words”) whereas the persona is not. Hardy’s naturalism is not an obstacle to see the poem as a semantic challenge—Nature seems to exert a capacity for “speech” whereas man does not; still, everything in nature is also part of him, a “limb,” a “frame” of his own suffering.

“The Clock of the Years” (see app. 15), similarly, illustrates the convolution of contradicting elements—a clearly conveyed theme, a dislocated metaphoric construction, and a partly disrupted linearity. This poem appears to be more mimetic in the sense that Hardy chooses to convey a more obvious and well-formulated end-message: it is better to cherish the happy moments with the ones we have loved and lost than to wish to revive those happy moments and to assume that their loss is the worst thing that can happen to us. There might be a disclosure of a fatalist point of

view—"to mar the ordained" (31), a possible reference to a God-centred universe with things pre-ordained. Moreover, the poem's sense of temporality appears to be smoothly linear although it is reversed, moving back in time. Basically, the persona wishes to travel back in time to be able to encounter once more the woman he loved. In the flashback, Death appears as a status undesirable, something he wishes to ward off. The image of the woman he lost becomes younger and younger, but diminishes until she becomes a point in time and then ceases to exist. The narrator complains that he was deprived of his last memory attached to her "mien" and confesses that she is now really dead since her memory has been erased forever. This thematically designed poem, however, still bears certain characteristics that pinpoint semantic contradiction. Although the linguistic crisis does not seem to operate strongly in this poem, the choice of images that resist phonetic signification is still at work. Time is personified by means of dialogised language; therefore, it is partly rendered anthropomorphic. Simultaneously, Time is an obscure metaphor—it is both humanized and dehumanized because it is represented as a "spirit" that communicates with the poet. "Time" has the capacity to reverse things and to command over them. "Time" can be a metaphor in itself, but a metaphor that overlaps with other possible referents—fate, God, the ultimate truth, God's universal design, predetermination, linearity, or the power of order against chaos. This time, Hardy does not employ multiple metaphors to designate one signified. However, the dominant signifier of the poem—Time—still appears as an incomprehensible metaphor because of the multiple referents it generates. In other words, Time, as a figure of speech exceeds its conventional signification and merges with other significations to highlight the agnostic status of the poet.

The double perspective in the poem, achieved through dialogising and impersonation of the superior forces in nature, in fact, serves to uncover the poet's unstable position between the rational and the irrational, the transcendental and the non-transcendental, being and non-being. That is to say, the poet employs a distanced self and a distanced voice which, nevertheless, achieve somehow to converge into semantic unity, a clear thematic idea. Reminiscent of the "upholstery buttons" in Jacques Lacan, the

linguistic friction seems to be overcome by the narrative characteristic of the poem and its anecdotic style. Here, the technique of narration functions as an upholstery button. In Lacan, as mentioned earlier, it is the “anchoring point,” or, *point de capiton*, by which the signifier stops the otherwise endless movement of signification. Its diachronic function puts a halt to the otherwise endless process whereby the signifier refers to another signifier (54). The “upholstery buttons,” or the moments when absolute truth can take the form of full speech, however, should be always considered temporary in Lacan. Derrida distrusts such conceptualization because of the discontinuous character of human discourse, and proposes the term *différance* instead, which he finds more secure. Just as there is no dialectic differentiation between full speech and empty speech, there must be no differentiation between thematic unity and linguistic unity. “The Clock of the Years,” therefore, appears to communicate a thematically well-formulated idea, but one that can be only communicated through the playfulness of a slippery language and an unreliable speaker. Therefore, thematic and linguistic unity can never constitute a coupled opposition. If they co-exist, that would be only a proof of the validity of *différance*; that is to say, they would be only each other's supplements. If one cannot speak of linguistic integrity or stability in a poem, is it really possible to claim that there is a thematic unity? It would be absurd, because there is no possibility of making a clear-cut distinction between denominations such as semantic, linguistic, or thematic. This would only make one fall into the trap of metaphysical presuppositions.

In the way Derrida makes no distinction between empirical (worldly) life and transcendental life, there is no reason why we should take the empirical self and the transcendental self as binary opposites. Derrida states in *Speech and Phenomena* that “the (transcendental) ego is not an “other.” It is certainly not the formal or metaphysical phantom of the empirical ego. Indeed this leads us to take the ego—as absolute spectator of its own psychic self—to be but a theoretical image and metaphor” (Introduction 12). Therefore, the elements on which I put special emphasis—echo, shadow, ghost, memory, voices from the past—do not have to be

taken necessarily as the “other,” or, as the anti-thesis of the empirical self. Rather, they should be taken as “traces,” “supplements,” *différance* and “deferral” of anything other than themselves. These key elements in Hardy become the icons in the challenge to phonocentrism, thus, metaphysics of presence.

3.3. Structure and Language in Hardy—Irony and Language of Negation as Destabilising Elements of Discourse

During the discussion of “self” in Hardy's agnostic poems, it has already become obvious that in the analysed poems, semantic dimensions of key concepts like the signified, self, structure, textuality, temporality and space intermingle. This highlights the fact that viewing those poems in a Deconstructionist light inevitably produces similar and at the same time contrasting impressions. None of the key concepts analysed seems to be external to the others; they are substitutive with each other. In one poem by Hardy, it is possible to observe several elements that make the poem eligible for Deconstructionist reading. This does not suggest that the poems are interwoven thematically. On the contrary, it suggests that whatever deconstructive position is assumed, one will come to realize that the poems themselves are subject to continual semantic interpretation and they are a proof of the instabilities of language. Derrida never makes a distinction between language and thought. Language pre-exists, so does everything else that can be inscribed in language and by language.

Derrida's approach to language mainly implies a continual reversal of the metaphysical oppositions. This is his most distinguishable strategy but Derrida does not even accept the term “strategy” for his practice. In his paper “Signature Event Context,” he develops a definition suggesting that Deconstructionism identifies opposition in which one term is placed above the other, such as when speech is placed above writing. The strategy of deconstruction is to turn the value judgments upside down so that the inferior ones come first. The goal is not to assert a new

hierarchy but to undermine the old hierarchy in a general displacement of concepts following from the reversal of the hierarchy (Stocker 107). Therefore, the same strategy should be followed while discussing textuality.

Critics have agreed on Hardy's uniqueness of style. It is generally defined as idiosyncratic, a foregrounding of the modern sensibility in Hardy. This idiosyncratic style actually implies that some linguistic tension is discernible; its result is ambiguity, obscurity, or diffusion of imagery. As Rainer Emig has frequently stated—the collapse of symbolism in Modernist writing is heralded by the tension which is caused by the discrepancy between the external, physical reality and the internal reality of the poet, in his attempt to verbalize a transcendental experience. In other words, the attempt to represent a transcendental and extralinguistic experience and squeeze it into limited human language inevitably leads to incongruity. Emig claims that the texts with Modernist tendencies are characterised by “abstraction, obscurity and a multiplicity of perspectives which, when combined, leave both the established forms of realism and the unreal, but still coherent, imagery of symbolism behind” (1). Emig refers to certain reliable indicators like unexplained allusions, obscure and often “non-literary” language, and the disintegration of coherent narratives and settings into startling and apparently unrelated images (1). Some of these characteristics, mentioned by Emig, apply to Hardy. His agnostic poems, especially, appear to epitomize exactly this discrepancy between the attempt to articulate a space which is inarticulate, and the reality of the limited or inadequate human discourse.

Miller claims that for Hardy, “no unit of life can be either wholly detached or wholly assimilated” (*The Linguistic Moment* 290). He also asserts that “the incoherence derives from certain properties of language. For Hardy, between the intention and the deed, between moment and moment, between the self and itself, between mind and landscape, falls the word. This descent of the word is the linguistic moment in Hardy” (290). According to Miller, “signs have a coercive effect;” it is the “power of language or of signs to be generated in the first place and to go on functioning” (290). Miller asserts that for Hardy, language and signs have a “curious power to

generate themselves, to proliferate or disseminate themselves according to a self-perpetuating power of iteration. This happens without the direction of any conscious mind or will. Minds intervene only later on as recipients of signs that are already there” (303).

Similarly, for Jacques Derrida, language is necessarily material, contextual, and intersubjective (Stocker 86). It cannot be within consciousness in any kind of primary way. We have inner states of consciousness which contain linguistic meaning. However, they only have meaning as the kind of thing which can be communicated. Communication is not reliable, but there is no language without the possibility of communication (86). That is to say, discourse is deferred and incomplete, but there is always the possibility of partial, segmented communication.

In conclusion, contradiction and linguistic tension are inseparable from Modernist writing. Emig announces the collapse of symbolism in Modernist poetry, Miller points to the *dissemination* of the linguistic sign in Hardy. However, in terms of Derridean thinking, language always communicates certain bits of meaning, though discourse is always deferred and partial. There are two characteristic features in Hardy that expose the problem of structure—irony and language of negation. It may not be possible to put a limitation to the elements in Hardy which require to be treated by means of Derridean jargon; nevertheless, irony and negation in Hardy largely highlight the play in signification and the instabilities of poetic discourse.

3.3.1. Irony as a Destabilising Element

Irony is a figure of speech that Hardy frequently employs in his poems. His existential isolationism appears to be the only status allowed to him against the irrational workings of the universe. Hardy's pessimism is contrasted and at the same time harmonized with a sense of irony, even a playful kind of black humour. To some extent, irony stabilizes textual meaning because it requires some kind of a statement, a position, a stance. At the same time, irony destabilizes meaning because

it implies something other than what is being intended or expressed, not necessarily the opposite. Similarly, Emig argues:

The removal of textual identity on to the same plane as allusions is characteristic of modernist poetry. It is usually in a rather helpless fashion called irony. Although the textual identity appears destabilised—which in turn leads to a decentring of the texts which offers new opportunities for the authority of statements—a textual identity remains nonetheless, and one that is even more powerful than the firm voice of the readerly texts. Irony always requires a point of view. (147)

My emphasis on irony and humour in Hardy, however, intends to explore how Hardy transgresses his own binary oppositions while at the same the poetic voice remains intact in the poem. If we take irony and humour as both stabilizing and destabilizing elements, Hardy's agnosticism is challenged and justified at the same time. Simultaneously, irony in Hardy also distances him from the Romantic tradition. Riquelme holds this view when he refers to a poem like "Nature's Questioning." In Hardy's use of personification, the critic identifies the destabilizing effect of irony and playfulness of language. Nature's "chastened children" are "faces dulled" by a teacher who "cowed them" (206). The incongruity embodies itself in Hardy's joke about personification's humanizing aspect. There are no jokes in, say, Wordsworth's use of this poetic trope. Hardy's humour causes dislocation, since the humanized "flock" turns back into something less than human (Riquelme 206).

Linda Shires, similarly, points that irony in Hardy is a sign of the gap for knowing, and states that "the not knowing, the awareness gap, articulated in Hardy's lyrics can occur between human and God, human and nature, human and human, or among temporal or psychic selves within one human being" ("And I Was Unaware" 36-37). According to Shires:

Often in Victorian literature, such a gap of knowledge, as in the dramatic monologue, or in the relationship between teller and tale in prose fiction, exists due to authorial use of situational or verbal irony. Rhetorically, irony is a deliberate dissembling to intensify meaning or effect. When irony is employed, for example in a dramatic monologue like Robert Browning's 'My Last Duchess' or in the narrator's attitude towards Amelia Sedley in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, there is an implied judgment. While Hardy is quite attuned to modes and moods of irony, and draws on them when he needs them, the gap of knowing to which I refer is not of that type. It is precisely a kind of shoulder-shrugging, one that has no fixed or final judgment to withhold or offer. Hardy employs tragic irony, including not only the suffering of individuals in an uncaring universe but also the irony of a situation offering the chance for commentary, but without a speaker willing to deliver. ("And I Was Unaware" 36-37)

In fact, Linda Shires' remark here overlaps with my presupposition that irony in Hardy does not associate a state of certainty, but a state of suspense and incompleteness, of motion and becoming. The function of verbal and situational irony in Hardy, like the metaphor and personification, is to create an indefinite space for the lyric "I" and transcend the binary opposites of logocentric thinking. For instance, the poem "Ah, Are You Digging on My Grave?" (see app. 16) lays bare the poet's challenge to phonocentrism and metaphysics of presence. It is a memorable poem where Hardy's tragic irony and black humour become figures of speech that expose the "already-present" linguistic and semantic rupture. Ramazani calls it a "mock-elegy" whereby "Hardy's obsessive elegizing distinguishes him from materialists who forsake the dead because of their uselessness," but at the same time he utilizes Emma's death by poeticising it (957). Howard Baker sees it as "a grotesque and beautiful and jarring poem" as "an example of Hardy's peculiar capacity for an irony that both shakes and strengthens the feelings" (140-141).

More than anything else, the poem contrasts Hardy's alleged pessimism with his ironic playfulness. It explores the theme of "life after death" through a parody of human relationships. Hardy's bitter humour serves as an instrument that undermines the poem's metaphysical oppositions. The persona, a deceased woman, speaks from the afterlife or beyond the grave. Her realm is a transcendental one; however, she "overhears" voices from the so-called physical world, which are in fact absent and prove to be her own voice. Even the voice of her pet dog is questionable; it may have remained mute from the very beginning. The whole dialogue with the dog might be a self-reflection though the dog is anthropomorphised. In this sense, her pet does not really represent the anthropocentric world to which she belongs no longer.

She is desperately longing for some kind of a connection with the human realm. However, the world she left after death operates simply by fleeting and temporary principles. Human feelings like romantic love, familial love and even hate fail to signify meaningful "centres" of truth. Her loneliness in the grave has long started even before she died—an unfaithful husband who does not "plant rue" (2) on her grave, an enemy who thinks of her as no more "worth her hate" (17), a family who thinks that "no planting flowers" (10) can release "her spirit from Death's gin" (12). The visitor turns out to be her pet dog, simply looking for a proper place to bury a bone in case it gets hungry around the area. The irony of the situation is intensified by the fact that the dog is there by pure chance or coincidence. The only actual voice that pretends to provide an answer is a non-human voice, personified. The fact that even her pet dog's visit proves to be simply a random chance suggests that she already experienced spiritual death while she was alive, however, she was not aware of it. The death-in-life and life-in-death correlations reside together in the poem. The physical world she already left provides some evidence about the transitory and fleeting nature of human emotions; they die out irresolutely, too.

Hardy's persona encounters an equally painful reality—the inevitable decomposing of the body after death and the inevitable forbearance of the unreliability of all human feelings. Loneliness and forgetfulness are the only by-products of human existence, either in the physical world or in the afterlife. There is in fact nothing to

long for in the human world that is not already a primal, unconscious human fear or instinct. This seemingly pessimistic theme, in fact, contrasts sharply with Hardy's playful and ironic language. It is more like a ridicule of human fear than an elegy. As mentioned earlier in a quote by Sheila Berger, Hardy is not solely a pessimist, but an existential isolationist. There is a sense of existentialist isolationism here because the ironic and playful language of Hardy undermines the impression of absolute pessimism. Thus, the life/death dichotomy also dissolves itself, ceasing to be a metaphysical opposition. Life and death are the “supplements” of each other, the “traces” of two human realities which seem to complete, and at the same time negate each other.

In the same way, the absence/presence dichotomy seems to dissolve itself through the interchangeable use of voice and silence. The voice does not stand for presence or intersubjectivity; the woman's voice finds no correspondent addressee. She might not be even speaking to herself; the whole poem may have been a self-reflection. Similarly, silence does not stand for absence—if the dog is mute, it is still there, making noise, digging, though its presence is not purposeful, intentional. The persona is abandoned by all signifiers of the empirical world, a world that appears to operate by mere chances and coincidences.

In this poem of Hardy, both the physical and transcendental worlds appear to be illusions—promised lands in which individuals will patiently wait for the reward—a lasting remembrance. This human signifier, however, proves to be unreliable, fragile and fleeting. Hardy makes it clear that it makes little difference if the individual is placed in a lonely grave or in a lonely world in which human endeavour and sacrifice produce no trace of intersubjectivity.

In “Ah, Are You Digging On My Grave?,”— which Hardy wrote after the death of his first wife Emma, the poet employs a dramatized persona and multiple perspectives. In this way, Hardy also distances the self and presents it again as a challenge to phonocentrism. The multiple voices that appear to be involved in some kind of a dialogue with the speaker of the poem turn out to be absent. She tries to

ensure the permanence of certain human relations, but they all prove to be temporary and evaporating. Once the object of love or hate disappears, the feelings attached to it are lost forever. Thus the poetic self is partly acknowledged and partly dispersed through the mourning and loss of those human feelings in the poem. The signifiers of the human world—love, hate, Christian morality, familial affection, remembrance—prove to be empty, they fail to bear in themselves a logic or to correspond to a reliable addressee. Like forgetfulness, they dissolve into a transcendental void of unidentifiable voices which turn out to be only self-referential, evacuated, like human language itself. In the poem, we hear the voice, the phonetic signifier and the source; the spirit is located in this world, not in the afterlife. But the spirit is immaterial, thus, this incongruity is an indication of Hardy's superstitious nature. As Sheila Berger states, he cannot be satisfied with cold, lifeless matter, and it is a fact that after Emma's loss he becomes more and more superstitious. In my discussion of the self in Hardy, it has already been stated that the voices from the past, the shadows, and the ghosts occupy his world, and not only present themselves as a challenge to phonocentrism but also to empirical, rational logocentrism.

My focus on the multiplicity of metaphors discussed up to now in Hardy's agnostic poems reveals a linguistic and semantic displacement in those poems. As with irony, there are very justifiable reasons why we should take the metaphor as a figure of speech that lays bare the problematic nature of the sign and of human discourse in general. The figures of speech themselves are a proof of the whimsical nature of language, of its openness to play and instability. For this reason Derrida pays a special attention to literary texts, to figurative language, to elements which usually do not capture our attention, but pronounce and enact their functions in the most unexpected ways. Spivak thus proposes:

If in the process of deciphering a text in the traditional way we come across a word that seems to harbour an unresolvable contradiction, and by virtue of being one word is made sometimes to work in one way and sometimes in another and thus is made to point away from the absence of a unified meaning, we shall catch at that word. If a

metaphor seems to suppress its implications, we shall catch at that metaphor. We shall follow its adventures through the text and see the text coming undone as a structure of concealment, revealing its self-transgression, its undecidability. It must be emphasized that I am not speaking simply of locating a moment of ambiguity or irony ultimately incorporated into the text's system of unified meaning but rather a moment that genuinely threatens to collapse that system. (*Of Grammatology* lxxv)

In “Ah, Are You Digging on My Grave?” the irony of situation does not merely point at a single moment of incongruity. Rather, it calls the whole system of philosophy behind it into questioning. It is impossible to decide if the poem should be taken merely as the product of an agnostic view of the world; rather, the poem presents itself as a challenge to logocentrism and phonocentrism as a whole because Hardy's ironic positioning threatens all its variable semantic and linguistic presuppositions. The ironic treatment of characterization results in the poet's transgressing his own binary and dual oppositions. Therefore, his ironic narration is not a single moment that calls upon particularity, but collapses its internal semantic structures altogether.

A well-known poem by Hardy, “The Ruined Maid” (see app. 17), for example, plays upon semantic coherence and does away with dual oppositions through irony. Robert Gittings calls it a “riotous excursion into rustic satire,” a poem which deals with a “familiar village-ballad” figure, “the seduced village-maiden, who has done very well out of experience” (128). The critic states that it is a delightful, successful, and light-hearted story-poem, since practically all the rest of his [Hardy's] poems at this time are in some way flawed, and their tone almost universally sombre (128). I do not intend to engage in a detailed analysis of the poem here, for there have been numerous interpretations of the poem offered by different critics up to now. My focus is on the title, on the ironic emphasis of the understatement of the word “ruined.” Obviously, it is the signifier that undermines the semantic unity in the poem because for Hardy as well as for the reader the signified is unstable, if not even

undecidable. We come across the word “ruined” in the title, and also in every single stanza in the poem. In the dialogue between the two female speakers in the poem, it is possible to recognize a number of binary oppositions that decipher the class system of the time, issues of feminine conduct in the Victorian society, differences in the way of life, education, culture and discourse. Melia, “the ruined maid,” is implied to have sacrificed her chastity in return for material gains, a comfortable life, expensive clothes and jewellery. Her friend, on the contrary, is a country girl who encounters Melia in town and is amazed at the way she has evolved from a back-breaking working life in the country field (“tatters,” “socks,” “potatoes,” “megrimms”) to the status of a sophisticated urban lady (“fair garments,” “bracelets,” “feathers”) (*CP* 158-159). Melia, not without sadness maybe, responds with frankness: “that’s how we dress when we are ruined” (8), “some polish is gained with one’s ruin” (12). She possibly moved up the social ladder at the cost of her virtue, her feminine dignity and became a “fallen woman,” a subject sensational enough for the Victorian society. Hardy exposes the social hypocrisy of his time, and lays bare the fact that the women of his time were given little chance; they were either expected to perform painful work and suffer various hardships, or they had to compromise their feminine integrity and innocence. In either case, it is difficult to decide which woman in the poem is more “ruined,” “the raw country girl” or Melia, the supposed-to-be fallen woman. The irony, intensified by the repeated use of the word “ruined,” points at dissemination; the signifier slides under the signified, or evacuates it by giving birth to numerous semantic associations, all of which are undecidable. “Ruined” may be the country woman who has to cultivate the land for a living, “ruined” may be the “fallen” woman who is forced to choose a life that sacrifices her respectability, “ruined” may be any woman who has to subdue her will for the smallest comfort in life, but might not her male companion be ruined, too? They are all part of a system which they cannot change without compromising their free will, a will which is never free, actually, be it male or female. Thus the title of the poem becomes its greatest irony and its greatest mystery, and thus Hardy transgresses the metaphysical oppositions which one tends to identify in the poem. The signifier “ruined,” becomes too heavy a burden for the signified and sets itself free from it. This is probably how

Hardy deconstructs through poetry, how he violates the margins and the dominant codes of his time. He puts them into question, but retreats without judgement.

Another ironic and humorous poem, “At the Altar-Rail,” (see app. 18) is an example of Hardy's “satires of circumstance.” This poem of irony of situation opens with the amusing exclamation: “My bride is not coming—alas!’ says the groom” (1). The prosaic language of the poem intensifies the effect of the irony of situation intended. Its comic narration centres on a groom who is abandoned by his bride at the altar. His naïve outcry and innocent waiting [“Ay, she won me to ask her to be my wife--/ 'Twas foolish perhaps!” (7-8)] are contrasted with the woman's free-spirited and independent response to the situation. An Eve-like temptress, she seduces him at a dancing ball and obtains his agreement on marriage. However, after convincing him into it, she sends him a telegram in which she announces her reasons for not coming to her wedding. She gracefully thanks him for the proposal and states that she is used to her “swift, short, gay life” (12):

*“It's sweet of you, dear, to prepare me a nest,
But a swift, short, gay life suits me best.
What I really am you have never gleaned;
I had eaten the apple ere you were weaned.” (11-14)*

Whether the woman is a modern individual who enjoys being single or a promiscuous “Biblical” courtesan who “had long eaten the apple” makes little difference here. She refuses to abandon her life and become the lawful wife of the young man who appears to be a farmer. As an individual, she represents a challenge to patriarchy which stereotypes women as longing for “a nest.” She may be simply a prostitute who convinced a young and inexperienced man into marriage during a drunken night. In an ironic light, however, the poem reverses the expectations of the reader by presenting a riotous, free-spirited female individual who subverts the imposed order of things.

Hardy goes beyond the female-male dichotomy by refusing to address the woman as the immediate, sole victim of social propriety manifested through the bond of marriage. With the choice of a female character who subverts the discursive norms and codes of a predominantly androcentric human civilization, Hardy challenges the logocentrism of the conventional Victorian society. In other words, he undermines the imperturbable dominant discourse of Victorianism by identifying some paradigms considered unprivileged, and by relocating them from the margin to the centre. The ironic play of language overturns the phallogocentric social constructions of Victorian discourse. In this way, he nullifies all the significations of the logos and deconstructs the conventional nominalism of his time. In short, irony and humour in this poem destabilize the metaphysics of presence of the Western civilization foregrounded through one of the most accepted social institutions—marriage.

Hardy's agnostic/ ironic outlook on life, however, resists the formulation of coherent and ingrained systems of thinking. If the institution of marriage and the patriarchal nominalism of the Victorian conventionalism are undermined and rebuked in one individual poem, they may be ironically reintroduced and recaptured in another, as the subsiding elements of everyday life. If attention is to be paid to a poem like “In the Room of the Bride-Elect,” one can realize that in comparison with “The Ruined Maid” and “At the Alter-Rail,” Hardy repositions his female characters in favour of the dominant patriarchal discourse. In “In the Room of the Bride-Elect,” the future wife expresses her regret for not having made the best choice for a husband and blames her parents for not exerting their more solid will upon her decisions. She hesitates before she takes a vow at the altar, and is horrified at the thought of marrying a man she barely knows and even barely likes:

'WOULD it had been the man of our wish!
Sighs her mother. To whom with vehemence she
In the wedding-dress--the wife to be--
Then why were you so mollyish
As not to insist on him for me!
The mother, amazed: 'Why, dearest one,
Because you pleaded for this or none!'

'But father and you should have stood out strong!
Since then, to my cost, I have lived to find
That you were right and I was wrong;
This man is a dolt to the one declined...
Ah!--here he comes with his button-hole rose.
Good God--I must marry him I suppose!' (*CP* 417)

This “satire of circumstance” plays with the idea of generation gap—when young individuals are left at their free will, they may get entangled in situations more undesirable than when they are forced to accept the will of their elders. The girl exclaims: “But father and you should have stood out strong!,” unconsciously re-enacting the sentiments of a conventional and conservative patriarchal society— young adults should fulfil the expectations of the older generations who advise them that they should acquiesce to the codes and norms by which they implement logic and order. Namely, the selection of partners for marriage should be left to parental will as parents know “best.” The bride-to-be simply overthrows her responsibility for making the right choice and blames others for her decision, feeling like a victim, like someone subjected to unfortunate turnouts. The mother figure is rendered more passive, too; she can only “sigh” for being “mollyish;” it is the father's final Word, the symbolic gesture of the Order that will reinforce and reinstate itself against chaos. Hardy plays a trick here, though. He retreats without judgment, and lets the “irony of situation” fulfil its work. The female narrator in the poem seems to re-enact the discourse imposed by social convention, but ironically, still, the whole family seems to be its victim. Whoever made the final decision, father, mother, or daughter is of little consequence; the bond of marriage is both desired and unavoidable. It is a social and economic construct that has to exert its power over individuals, as the fundamental element of order against chaos. However, at the same time, marriage is a risky game, a trick of nature, probably, which has to be taken as the outcome of the possibility of chance and coincidence, of blind error which seem to dictate over human life and over the world of Hardy. The “Immanent Will” in Hardy's world may never be wholly human-oriented and human-motivated, indeed, but its operations, though rooted in chance, will eternally confirm and reaffirm themselves through the signifiers of the human discourse.

It is not a coincidence that Hardy's "satires of circumstance" are frequently inspired by some unusual, subversive, and interesting female characters. These story-poems of Hardy are fashioned in such a way that the woman becomes the centre and outcome of his ironies of situation. In both his novels and poems, Hardy employs subversive female characters that are marginalized, oppressed and pigeon-holed by social conventions. The likes of characters such as Tess or Bathsheba and other heroines may be spotted in several poems from different collections by the poet. They are powerful and independent women who try to deal in their own terms with a largely phallogocentric and oppressive society. However, though Hardy sympathises with women and with the oppressed ones in general, women are not treated in the same fashion in every ironic poem. Sometimes they are depicted as victims, and sometimes as powerful but destructive individuals who sacrifice their innocence for the sake of their passions. However, his women are always subversive, either as victims or destructors of social order. "The Vampirine Fair" (see app. 19) is such a narrative poem in which Hardy introduces a greedy and ambitious female character who exploits a man of fortune. She benefits from the man's obsession for her and exhausts all his financial resources, thus emasculating him to the point he commits suicide. She is a married woman, whose husband, Gilbert, is away in India, and becomes the object of the interest and desire of this prosperous man who falls for her at first sight:

Gilbert had sailed to India's shore,
And I was all alone:
My lord came in at my open door
And said, "O fairest one!"

He leant upon the slant bureau,
And sighed, "I am sick for thee!"
"My lord," said I, "pray speak not so,
Since wedded wife I be." (1-8)

Hardy is playing with the traditional image of the woman in the Victorian society. Since her husband is away, she is "all alone," with a stress supposed to represent the woman as weak and vulnerable without her male companion. "My lord" does not

refer to her husband but to the lover, the man whose mistress she will become eventually. The irony is clearly connoted: she again submits to male power and dominance, but denounces the marital bond through which she has vowed obedience and loyalty. She refuses the suitor first, but eventually becomes his mistress and moves to his estate since her “lord grows ill of love” (20). When the day comes and Gilbert returns home, the lover has to compensate for the shame and the loss he had caused to them:

So when my lord flung liberally
His gold in Gilbert's hands,
I coaxed and got my brothers three
Made stewards of his lands.

And then I coaxed him to install
My other kith and kin,
With aim to benefit them all
Before his love ran thin.

And next I craved to be possessed
Of plate and jewels rare.
He groaned: "You give me, Love, no rest,
Take all the law will spare!" (41-52)

Day after day, like a vampire, she drains him out of money and estate, before “his love ran thin.” Years pass and she manages to make a fortune and store “a goodly hoard” (54) while her lover is reduced to poverty and beggary. He calls himself a “ruined man” who was deceived by her innocent looks:

"I hardly could have thought," he said,
"When first I looked on thee,
That one so soft, so rosy red,
Could thus have beggared me!" (61-64)

The irony of situation is built upon the deceptive image of the woman. The man is seduced and bewitched by her blushing cheeks and innocent looks but she causes his ultimate decline and death. The beauty of the “vampirine” is associated with innocence and purity rather than viciousness and voluptuousness. This image of the

woman is subversive. However, her virginal, rural beauty causes the final ruin of her beloved. He shoots himself one Sunday morning with a gun and before he dies, she proposes to “restore” all the things she took from him:

"Live, my dear lord, and much of thine
Shall be restored to thee!"
He smiled, and said 'twixt word and sign,
"Alas - that cannot be!"
And while I searched his cabinet
For letters, keys, or will,
'Twas touching that his gaze was set
With love upon me still.

And when I burnt each document
Before his dying eyes,
'Twas sweet that he did not resent
My fear of compromise. (73-84)

She repents for “wrecking” him so and after his death she even wears a “mournful gown” (93). When the grief and mourning are over, she eventually reunites with her husband and joins him to live in a “dashing town” and a “dashing style” (95-96). Although she enjoys her new life and comfort [“And dine, and dance, and drive” (98)], she would “give her prettiest emerald ring” to “see her lord alive” (99-100). She occasionally leaves a flower on his tomb on “hunting days”:

And sometimes say: "Perhaps too late
The saints in Heaven deplore
That tender time when, moved by Fate,
He darked my cottage door." (108)

The finale of the poem is ironic altogether. First of all, she relegates the tragedy to some kind of a twist of fate. Their encounter with the lover might be a coincidence or destiny. However, her manipulation of her male companion(s) is wittingly committed—she is motivated by her own greed and ambition. Secondly, since the two males are subjected to her own will-power, she emasculates both; they are symbolically castrated and sacrificed on account of her destructive feminine passion. The vulnerability of the feminine psyche in the beginning of the poem underlined by

“all alone” is reversed and subverted at its end—she makes her brothers rich and promotes her husband while she financially ruins her lover. In fact, she symbolically castrates all her men. Their lives are organized and dispensed at her own will and whim.

At last, however, though Hardy’s ironic play of language avoids moral judgments, it establishes some kind of a balance between the ambition for material gains and genuine romantic love. He subverts and decentres “the woman” as a concept, as an object of male desire, by way of ironic compromise, and also by reconciling genuine human emotions. The woman in the poem regrets her doings. It is too late, however, to undo the damage. Though completely ruined, the lover releases his last breath in front of her, forgiving her for all she did to him, and dying in her hands. When she moves on with her life, she proves to be a survivor. She challenges the male-dominated world around her, reverses the order in her own way, but falls prey to her own ambition, only to lose the only man she loved. Therefore, the image of the woman that Hardy builds throughout the poem is not finalized; a woman can sacrifice innocence and simultaneously retain her innocence despite her passion. The image of the man is not finalized either, it is played upon as well. As the symbol of power and order, man is represented as vulnerable and as subject to destructive feminine passions. By way of irony, therefore, Hardy again subverts social constructs and transcends the traditional symbolic associations of male and female dichotomies.

In conclusion, as an agnostic poet, Hardy's challenge is not apparently directed only toward the pillars of theological, ideological and religious social constructs; his scepticism must encompass a larger scope of signification. All social institutions and formations must be questioned and put under erasure because Hardy's agnosticism exceeds dialectical formulations. Signifiers such as religion, faith, nature, science, class, love, the woman become lonely signifiers because their semantic targets are continually shifting—Hardy assumes no static and judgmental positions when he narrates life. His ironic tone is an outcome of his agnosticism, and it is an epitome of it at the same time. Thus irony both stabilizes and destabilizes meaning-construction; its contradictory workings seem to operate on the level of individual poems as well

as when poems by Hardy are taken as a whole. Like the metaphor, irony becomes a figure of speech that signifies the problematic nature of the linguistic sign.

3.3.2. Hardy's Language of Negation as a Destabilising Textual Element

As stated earlier, Hardy's world is a world which is both rational and irrational. It is rational in the sense that Hardy strives to remain a positivist throughout his life. It is irrational in the sense that he cannot make sense out of the chaotic machinations of the universe. Therefore, his world is metaphysical in the sense that it recreates tensions between opposing forces—past and present, love and loss, voice and silence, presence and absence, subject and object, God and man, nature and God, reality and fantasy, etc. However, at the core of Hardy's linguistic attributes as a poet, there is always a sense of semantic subversion and destabilization.

Sheila Berger, accordingly, points that in the irrational world of Thomas Hardy, a sense of contradiction—unresolved tensions, incongruity, ambiguity, ambivalence—rests at the core of his writing: particularity versus abstraction, belief versus scepticism, mythmaking versus material reality, change versus stasis, imagination versus fact (Preface xiii). Hardy's impressions, unexplained and unsystematized, emerge spontaneously and chaotically; they change, disappear, reappear, to create reality. His writing displays a mind indeterminate, a sensibility in conflict; then Hardy, too, is in process. He is more irrational than rational. As Hardy has once pointed out in *Life*, “my own interest, lies largely in non-rationalistic subjects since non-rationality seems, as far as one can perceive, to be the principle of the Universe;” by using the dramatic method, Hardy depicts his philosophy as “only a confused heap of impressions, like those of a bewildered child at a conjuring show” (qtd. in Berger 4).

If Hardy's agnosticism is accepted as a blend of empiricism, determinism, scepticism, and fatalism, then his agnostic view would partly imply the dissolution of a number of binary oppositions. However, within Derridean frames, what matters is to show

how those binary oppositions subvert, undermine each other infinitely, while at the same time it is necessary to show how those dualities function in human discourse and ideological codification. As Derrida stated, Deconstructionist criticism was a continual play of signifiers, and any attempt at textual interpretation must avoid privileging any of the coupled oppositions which will result in the anchoring of meaning or locus. However, meaning cannot be anchored because there is no origin that pre-exists all other origins. Hardy reveals these tensions of language even when he seems to construct a point of meaningful reference.

Peculiar to Hardy's idiosyncratic language is the poet's use of negation. What strikes one's attention, hereafter, is not only the thematically developed subjects of loss, longing, and nostalgia that engulf the writing of Hardy. One may even establish a link between Hardy's language of negation and his alleged pessimism or existentialism. What is more important here is that the verbal uses of negativity in Hardy's poetry may be taken as a challenge to the dual dynamic of presence and absence, being and non-being. This aspect exactly is a challenge to phonocentrism and metaphysics of presence because language of negation ceases to be the other leg of the dual opposition, the opposite of the language of affirmation. Derrida's key concept of *différance* is functioning here again, and announces the erasure of all metaphysical oppositions one may think of:

Hegel's critique of Kant would no doubt also hold against Husserl. But this appearing of the Ideal as an infinite *différance* can only be produced within a relationship with death in general. Only a relation to my-death could make the infinite differing of presence appear. By the same token, compared to the ideality of the positive infinite, this relation to my-death becomes an accident of empirical finitude. The appearing of the infinite *différance* is itself finite. Consequently, *différance*, which does not occur outside this relation, becomes the finitude of life as an essential relation with oneself and one's death. The *infinite* *différance* is *finite*. It can therefore no longer be conceived

within the opposition of finiteness and infinity, absence and presence, negation and affirmation. (“The Supplement of Origin” 102)

Therefore, one is made to grasp the fact that Hardy's language of negation is not presented in direct opposition to key elements that may constitute the opposite leg of the dual relationship—such as affirmation, positivity or presence. Rather, it signifies a less clear-cut space or domain articulated by his poetry. It is one of the elements that positions Hardy as a Modernist, too, because a unique and idiosyncratic style is more associated with the non-traditional than the traditional. In support of this view, Norman Page presents a detailed focus on the first words or opening lines in Hardy's fiction and poetry, and emphasises that “Hardy's ways of opening a work of fiction lean towards the traditional and the conservative, while the ways of opening a poem are often original, innovative, and—to make use of an epithet with a peculiarly Hardy resonance—idiosyncratic” (“Hardy’s Poetic Thresholds” 262).

While Page captures our attention by pointing at the colloquial and conversational nature of Hardy's language, he mentions “a different kind of colloquial opening,” “represented by a group of poems in which the first word is 'Yes' or 'No’” (264). Whatever the significance of the contrast may be, while there are seven instances of poems beginning with “Yes,” there are thirteen that start with a negative word of one kind or another ('No,' 'Not,' 'Nobody,' 'Nothing') (264). Hardy's is so often a poetry of absence, disappointment, and loss that these negatives come as no surprise, and a poem sometimes seems to take its origin from the sad reflection that something is not: “Nobody Comes,” like “A Broken Appointment,” is about a hoped-for event that does not happen, while another kind of failure is the starting point for “Places”: “Nobody says: Ah, that is the place...” (264).

Hardy's language of negation also includes “nonce” and “coined” words. Hardy reintroduces dialect and archaic words and invents new and unexpected linguistic patterns. His use of language of negation and elements like “nonce” and “coined” words may be taken as a challenge to conventional Victorian norms as well as to phonocentrism in general. Hardy's language of negation is contradictory; it is not the

opposite of the affirmative. It produces ambiguity, violence, stress, and corrodes the effect of univocity and semantic integrity.

Dennis Taylor points out at several examples of the same nature. “Nonce” presumably marks the outermost limit of dictionary acceptability, before the word drops off into the unmarked ocean of coined and unregistered words” (*Hardy's Literary Language* 156-167). The Oxford English Dictionary defines a “nonce” as a word which is apparently used only for the nonce. Hardy is the only one cited for ten nonce words: *dolorifuge* (pain-killer), *mechanize*, *miles-off*, *reflectious*, *unbloom*, *unfulfill*, *unsight*, *untouched* (trans. vb.) (sic), *unvision*, *wardenry*. Three other Hardy words are “poet. Nonce”: *inbe*, *waying*, *weedery*. According to Taylor, for Hardy, “nonce” would seem to mean newly created (157). Hardy often coins a new word out of a rare or archaic word, i.e. *armembowments*, *breath-shotten*, *life-shotten*, *chancefulness*, *crumb-outcaster*, *green-rheumed*, *half-wrapt*, *high-doctrined*, *out-arted*, *unilluded*, *untroubulously*, *updrave*, *upthroated*, and *wistlessness* (158). “Coined” words are not recorded in the dictionary; the OED defines “coined” as meaning “fabricated, deliberately invented, and made up.” Taylor emphasizes that Hardy probably contains more unlisted words than any other writer (158). All these examples enlisted by Taylor, in fact, prove that the oddity and idiosyncrasy in the language of negation in Hardy bear witness to the violation of the linguistic sign.

Hardy's language of negation works on several levels. On one hand, it represents the gloom in his world, the distanced, detached eye with which he compiles his “impressions” and “seemings.” On the other hand, it verifies striking instances of the evacuated signified and, in general, the destruction of the coupled oppositions. A poem that represents Hardy's use of double perspective and language of negation is “The Impercipient” (see app. 20). Riquelme indicates that this poem illustrates Hardy's modernity in its use of the negative through the prefix “im-,” to present a diminution of consciousness (208). The word *impercipient* implies the loss of a faculty that makes us human. Riquelme, in short, sees the poem as anti-Romantic in its language of negation and refusal of consolation. Although the speaker is a “gazer,” he cannot perceive the “glorious distant sea,” but only hears the wind in the

trees. Sight and sound cannot provide comfort and consolation to Hardy's poetic speakers (Riquelme 208). This constitutes a challenge to empiricism, too. Similarly, J. Hillis Miller indicates that "for Hardy there is neither a transcendent nor an immanent conscious force sweeping through nature and expressing itself there. He laments his inability to see nature as a religious man or a romantic poet would see it" (*Distance and Desire* 86).

Barbara Hardy believes that as an agnostic poet, "Hardy constantly images the spiritual world but its presence in his poetry is proposed as something imagined, not asserted as something believed" (202). Disbelief is not caused by ignorance of belief's advantage. Hardy sometimes writes from a feeling for a supernatural object of desire, though this is more likely to be a ghost than a god (202). In his lyrics, states the critic, "Hardy also records the phenomenology of disbelief, explicating his lack of faith almost as flexibly as George Herbert dramatizing varieties of religious experience." Hardy did not always write at the imaginative pitch of "The Impercipient" and many of his dialogues with God and monologues of God are stridently polemical, but his best poetry of noumenal imagination is not only in richly emotional and argumentative forms but is aware of imaginative adventure (B. Hardy 202). These statements of the critic actually reinforce the idea that although Hardy the poet desires a contact with a reliable transcendental sign, he does not pretend to have found or achieved it.

In terms of language, the poem displays destabilizing effects which highlight the sense of lack of semantic conclusiveness, a characteristic also seen in Modernist poems. The poem deconstructs itself by presenting elements that generate dislocation, distancing and decentring. Indeed, the poem reveals that although the phonetic signifier is present, the signified attached to it remains unavailable and inaccessible. In Derridean terms, the signified is transcendental, but functions in the same way as the Christian theological discourse does. Although the poem justifies Hardy's sceptical outlook on the Christian narrative, the poem, nevertheless, abundantly employs sensual and perceptual elements that are articulated by means of

Christian terminology. This anticipates Heidegger and Derrida's idea of continual flickering between absence and presence.

Moreover, the language of negation in "The Impercipient" represents the disruption of the dual opposition of presence and absence, and states of "being" and "un-being." However, the negativity of language in the poem is not in direct opposition to the language of affirmation or appropriation. To some degree, there is inflation in the act of dispersing images of sensual and perceptual effort—the poet is a "gazer" (19) not simply an onlooker, he does not simply listen, but hearkens, i.e., "harks" (21). This implies the speaker's intentional effort at joining the collective act of "perceiving." The use of exclamation marks accentuates the degree of the effort to denominate the so-called divine presence. However, the resulting irony underlines the failure of this act as well as blurs the distinctions between the opposites—gazing and not perceiving, listening and not hearing. These faculties prove to be limited in the collective experience of joining the "band of believers" (1), but still persist in terms of a personal endeavour.

While the Christian believers are described as a "bright believing band" (1), the persona is an "outcast" (2) among them. To him, their faith appears as fantasy. "Why always I must feel as blind/ To sights my brethren see" (9-10). His failure to participate in their joyous encounter with the divine presence is an act of demystification of God's voice. The divine voice that they hear, for him, turns out to be just a wind-swept pine rolling toward his feet. The curious blend of images from the empirical and transcendental worlds subscribe to an agnostic point of view in the face of an indifferent universal presence which refuses to "speak" to the persona. He assumes a modest attitude while trying to ascribe meaning through observation; he calls himself "blind," "impercipient," "outcast." This appears as assumed modesty, however. His shortcomings in the act of perceiving, ironically distinguish him as someone special at the same time. He simply prefers to "unbe;" however, this may not imply his wish to cease to exist. "Unbe" appears to be an ambivalent word that leads to polysemy. It may be an act of abandonment, of denial, of refusal, but even of acceptance. He may be trying to indicate that he would simply refuse to be one of

them, to feel like one of the believers. The abrupt ending of the poem reinforces the amount of irony: "Enough. As yet disquiet clings/ About us. Rest shall we" (31-32). He cannot find tranquillity and consolation in the act of believing; however, his restraint in the act of passive disbelief appears to be more comforting.

The inaccessibility of the transcendental signified here is suggested in the lines: "O, doth a bird deprived of wings/ Go earth-bound wilfully!" (29-30). The persona will find sufficiency in the contention with the physical, though hostile world, rather than pretend to attach "wings" which will remove him into a level of divinity. That is to say, he is content to remain on the level of the signifiers. Therefore, the ambiguity and polysemy of unusual words like "impercipient," "unbe," "infelicity," "disquiet" become examples of language of negation, so peculiar to Hardy. This language of negation, nevertheless, does not merely constitute the opposite of language of affirmation, but something in-between, a kind of a linguistic play, moving "to-and-fro." "Unbe" is not in simple opposition to "be," and "impercipient" is not in simple opposition to "percipient" because these dualities simultaneously contain each other in terms of the mutual dispersions of meaning. The irregularity of the lines creates a further tension although the end-rhymes and half-rhymes indicate the poet's aim for univocity. As a result, the poem becomes the domain of ambiguity and irregularity, both in semantic and phonetic terms. The persona's act of "sign-seeking," or his attempt to assign a locus of meaning, is evasive, but the "logos" functions through the earthly sufferings and "joys that he cannot find."

Similarly, the poem "The Shadow on the Stone" (see app. 21) exemplifies Hardy's language of negation as a space of indefiniteness and uncertainty. This type of negative language implies transgressing the boundaries drawn by binaries and dualities. Just like his language, Hardy's mind is situated between belief and non-belief, in some obscure space between the rational and the superstitious. As has been seen up to now, Hardy's mind can never be indubitably only positivist and empirical. It is filled with speculation and sometimes sensation, adorned with ghosts, shadows, echoes and voices from the past and the afterlife. In this particular poem, "shadows"

again occupy the narrator's immediate world. As if preparing us for an unusual encounter, the poet chooses a setting whereby we see a "Druid stone/ That broods in the garden white and lone" (1-2). The setting opens up as a mythical and mysterious location, and anticipates something irrational to take place. The speaker assumes that there is a figure of the lost and beloved one behind him, but he does not look back lest he confirms its absence. There is "no sound but the fall of a leaf," and the "shifting shadows" (3) only create the impression of a presence, a ghostly one. The negative language employed in the poem suggests that Hardy is transcending the binary oppositions by locating the mind, or the consciousness in an obscure area. Moreover, the language of negation implies open-endedness, lack of finitude because the lines toward the end of the poem, ["I would not turn my head to discover/ That there was nothing in my belief"] (15-16) imply a state or an act that has not been totally articulated and completed. The speaker resists the urge to turn and see that the presence of the woman he was imagining is absent. Instead, he chooses to "unvision a shape which, somehow, there may be" (19-20). He slowly moves away, "his head unturned" (24) to make the moment last in his imagination. The special emphasis on "unvision" and "unturned" is achieved by playing with words; however, his choice of words creates the impression of a deliberate action and simultaneously of an action which is performed unwittingly. All in all, in this poem, he seems to have a direct but illusory contact with the undefined signified. The visual image—the signifier is missing. Time, space, memory and consciousness dissolve in a mystic realm of shadows, of an illusory presence only half-perceived. The linguistic sign becomes incoherent because the signifier slides under the signified. The language of negation violates the metaphysical oppositions but does not create a third space or a third category. Derrida, too, practices this strategy in his works. When he subversively interprets Hegelian dialectics in *Positions*, he means exactly this transgression of the binaries:

...it has been necessary to analyze, to set to work, *within* the text of the history of philosophy, as well as *within* the so-called literary text..., certain marks, shall we say..., that *by analogy* (I underline) I have

called undecidables, that is, unities of simulacrum, "false" verbal properties (nominal or semantic) that can no longer be included within philosophical (binary) opposition, but which, however, inhabit philosophical opposition, resisting and disorganizing it, *without ever* constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of speculative dialectics (the *pharmakon* is neither remedy nor poison, neither good nor evil, neither the inside nor the outside, neither speech nor writing; the *supplement* is neither a plus nor a minus, neither an outside nor the complement of an inside, neither accident nor essence, etc.; the *hymen* is neither confusion nor distinction, neither identity nor difference, neither consummation nor virginity, neither the veil nor unveiling, neither the inside nor the outside, etc.; the *gram* is neither a signifier nor a signified, neither a sign nor a thing, neither a presence nor an absence, neither a position nor a negation, etc.; *spacing* is neither space nor time; the *incision* is neither the incised integrity of a beginning, nor of a simple cutting into, nor simple secondarity. Neither/nor, that is *simultaneously* either *or*; the mark is also the *marginal* limit, the *march*, etc.). ("Positions" 42-43)

Even by using the term "simulacrum" here, Derrida sheds light on his own strategy of Deconstructionism, on his own positioning. In this paragraph, he does not prefer a term such as "similitude" or "resemblance," for instance, but he uses a bleaker, a more evasive term like "simulacrum." He maintains that the history of philosophy and even of the literary text can no longer rely on the long-cherished binary opposition although it still does organize and disorganize it. Derrida thus refers to his own key terms such as the *pharmakon*, the *supplement*, the *hymen*, the *incision*, *spacing* etc., in order to illustrate how he goes beyond the dialectical approach which also implies a "third category," also known as the synthesis. Derrida is not seeking a synthesis; otherwise, the act of interpretation of truth would become limited and finite. Derrida states that the "Hegelian idealism consists precisely of a *relève* of the

binary oppositions of classical idealism, a resolution of contradiction into a third term that comes in order to *aufheben*, to deny while raising up, while idealizing, while sublimating into an anamnestic interiority (*Erinnerung*), while *interning* difference in a self-presence” (*Positions* 42-43). He maintains that the only way to go beyond this classical idealism is the practice of Deconstructionism:

I fear, precisely, that the category of "negation" reintroduces the Hegelian logic of the *Aufhebung*. It has happened that I have spoken of nonpresence, in effect, but by this I was designating less a negated presence, than "something" (nothing, indeed, in the form of presence) that deviates from the opposition presence/ absence (negated presence), with all that this opposition implies. But this is too difficult a problem to take at the words of a letter. In the same sentence, do you think that *body* and *matter* always designate nonpresences in the same way as *other*? No more than it is a form of presence, *other* is not a *being* (a determined being, existence, essence, etc.) (“Positions” 95)

Derrida obviously repositions the binary oppositions of presence/ absence, position/ negation, affirmation/ negation because they all implicate the affirmation of the metaphysics of presence. In the same way, Hardy's language of negation does not result in a synthesis, a third space or a third category, but implies a signification continually in progress. Moreover, Hardy's language of negation is not only a proof of his transgressing his own dualities. This peculiar linguistic negativity in Hardy lays bare and reinforces another fact in his poetry—the awareness of the missing logos, or the evacuated transcendental signified.

Two other poems exemplify this assumption— “The Temporary The All” and “The Rambler.” “The Temporary The All” (see app. 22) illustrates Hardy’s recurrent theme—chance and coincidence as the elements of chaos against order, temporariness against permanence. However, as mentioned above, its language of negation does not represent the workings of a dichotomy; rather, a temporization, a deferment; Hardy appears to engage in a process of an ongoing meaning making:

Change and chancefulness in my flowering youthtime,
Set me sun by sun near to one unchosen;
Wrought us fellowlike, and despite divergence,
Fused us in friendship.

"Cherish him can I while the true one forthcome--
Come the rich fulfiller of my prevision;
Life is roomy yet, and the odds unbounded."
So self-communed I. (1-8)

In every stanza of the poem Hardy employs at least one negative signifier. As the poem progresses, the status of the negative words becomes more and more indistinct. In line 2, "unchosen" implies "without free will;" we seldom choose our companions in life. It is "change" and "chancefulness" that overturn our "previsions" while we still wait for "the true one." However, in line 7, the speaker remarks that life's "odds" are "unbounded," we may still obtain true friendships and suffice with the ones that we encounter without intention. "Unbounded" connotes unlimited possibilities, however, the persona's exclamation "So self-cummuned I" in line 8, generates contrast; the speaker has not found the "true one" yet, "self-communed" implies lack of intersubjectivity, a one-sided utterance. Hardy ironically juxtaposes a sense of optimism and a sense of loneliness. There is no verb in the line; it is impossible to determine if his self-absorption is a position in the past or at present.

In the third stanza, the status of the female companion is one of imperfection:

'Thwart my wistful way did a damsel saunter,
Fair, albeit unformed to be all-eclipsing;
"Maiden meet," held I, "till arise my forefelt
Wonder of women." (9-12)

Though the lady he meets puts an end to his youthful "wistful" ways, she fails to become the woman of his dreams, the accomplished individual he was expecting; "fair" but not perfect ("albeit unformed to be all-eclipsing"). He is not in love with her, but she sustains his "wonder of women," nevertheless. The sense of temporariness and contradiction develops through "tenements uncouth I was fain to

house in” (14) and “let such lodging be breath-while” (15). In the following stanza, “Truth and Light outshow; but the ripe time pending” (18) embed another obscurity—the concept of time is delineated as “pending,” “intermissive” when combined with “outshow,” a rare word. “Outshow” may be taken as a word of negation, but it is not in direct contrast with “show.” Rather, it may signify the delayed effect of the narrator’s expectations for “high handiwork,” for “Truth” and “Light” because they are inaccessible to him. Thus his “onward earth-track” is “never transcended” (23-24), neither by “Fate” nor by his “own achievement” (22). The poetic self is not considered holistic either; “thus I ... but lo, me!” in line 20 signifies a state of inarticulateness, a failed attempt to denominate a stable self, within “the temporariness of all” things.

Similarly, in “The Rambler” (see app 23), the language of negation leaves us with the impression that the act of signification is incomplete and deferred; the temporariness of things in nature is equally emphasized. Even the title attracts attention as Hardy’s symbol of linguistic play:

I do not see the hills around,
Nor mark the tints the copses wear;
I do not note the grassy ground
And constellated daisies there. (1-4)

As in “A Sign-Seeker,” the verbs that represent perception are articulated in negated form. Clearly, Hardy’s tone is very un-Romantic and naturalistic again. He cannot achieve the desired contact with the divine presence and remains encapsulated in his empirical world:

Some say each songster, tree and mead--
All eloquent of love divine--
Receives their constant careful heed:
Such keen appraisal is not mine. (9-12)

However, the final stanza captures our attention, with the unexpected “And now perceived too late by me” in the last line. This utterance contrasts the whole tone of negation in the poem by putting emphasis not on the impossibility of the act of signification but on its deferment and delay. Paradoxically, the line may be taken as the persona’s potential chance for achieving the desired contact with nature—the “love divine” (10):

The tones around me that I hear,
The aspects, meanings, shapes I see,
Are those far back ones missed when near,
And now perceived too late by me! (13-16)

As seen in the poems above, internal contradiction and postponement of meaning are part of the Hardy-esque utterance. In his agnostic world, the divine logos is not ultimately absent, but inaccessible, incomprehensible. In terms of Derridean Deconstructionism, Hardy’s words of negation signify temporariness, movedness, something delayed, in process or still to come. They represent Hardy’s evacuated and disrupted linguistic signs, and reveal the fact that the signifiers slide under the signifieds to exchange roles. Language of negation is a means of transcending the binary oppositions. This free play of signifiers also testifies to the act of *dissemination*; words cannot wholly contain the meanings in themselves, the signs can signify only by a partial communication of truth.

It may be helpful to refer briefly once more to the poems “Hap” and “A Sign-Seeker,” because these poems present many elements that can be interpreted in deconstructive terms. It has been discussed earlier that “Hap” employs a language that challenges all preconditions of logic. Its personifications and metaphors for abstractions constitute a radical challenge to phonocentrism. Hardy’s preference for a language of negation may be interpreted in Deconstructionist terms, i.e., as the attempt to drift away from conventional norms, or as the confrontation with the fact that in a chance-directed universe, the only way to utter the “hard truth” is through such kind of language. “But not so,” says the poet in “Hap,” and when he raises his

question, he makes an unusual emphasis: “Why unblooms the best hope ever sown?” Robert Gittings remarks that Hardy “did not regard the prefix 'un' as implying a negative modification of the original word, but as the complete negation of it, and therefore, an entirely separate word” (127). “Unblooms” in the poem is used in the sense of “never blooms” (not of having bloomed and then having ceased to bloom). According to Gittings, such expressions (unblooms, unknowns) of Hardy are probably used to achieve an effect of tenderness and brevity in his verse, and to avoid a Tennysonian lushness so popular at that time (127).

“A Sign-Seeker” is actually Hardy's own challenge to logocentrism and phonocentrism. The poem has been discussed previously in terms of the evacuated “signified” in Hardy's world. It may be discussed further in terms of Hardy's challenge to linearity and rational logic. Beside these components, Hardy's use of language of negation also captures the attention. This technique enables him to blur the lines between the metaphysical oppositions that govern the traditional reader's interpretation.

One is constantly made to witness that Hardy's negative language does not merely highlight his status as an existential isolationist, just as it does not represent his pessimism. My argument is that the language of negation in Hardy mainly represents his failure, wittingly or unwittingly committed, to locate a “transcendental signified” that will organize the whole poem's semantic components and reintegrate them into an eventual end-message. His language of negation makes the metaphysical oppositions even more indistinct. It produces the effect of a linguistic “black hole,” an indefinite and inarticulate “linguistic space” that is not in simple opposition to language of affirmation but becomes its *différance*:

But that I fain would wot of shuns my sense--
Those sights of which old prophets tell,
Those signs the general word so well,
Vouchsafed to their unheed, denied my watchings tense. (21-24)

“Unheed” is a rare word, and it destabilises the meaning of the line in this particular stanza. It may suggest negligence, carelessness, lack of attention, insensitivity, indifference etc.; however, when combined with “vouchsafed,” the meaning is even more ambiguous and obscure. It is not absolutely clear whose “unheedfulness” the narrator implies. The speaker would gladly give up on his rational “senses” and would exchange them for the “sights of old prophets,” for the “signs of the general word.” He would give ear to things which do not give shape to his beliefs—the religious teachings and the conventional social norms and codes—if he only could find the trace of the sign he was looking for. He would deny his “watchings tense,” i.e., he would “vouchsafe” and accept their precepts. But while “unheed” may be attributed to the old religions and the general creeds because of their insufficiency, it may be ascribed to the narrator himself, who already admits lack of knowledge:

Such scope is granted not my powers indign...
I have lain in dead men's beds, have walked
The tombs of those with whom I'd talked,
Called many a gone and goodly one to shape a sign,

And panted for response. But none replies;
No warnings loom, nor whisperings
To open out my limitings,
And Nescience mutely muses: When a man falls he lies. (41-48)

The last stanza of the poem utilises the most negative language that implies lack of knowledge or limitation of human capacity. The narrator sought an answer from the living and from the dead (“lain in dead men's beds;” “walked the tombs of those with whom I'd talked;” “called many a gone and goodly one to shape a sign”); however, “none replies.” “Nescience” is the last negatory word in the poem that obscures the signification—while it may be taken shortly as “lack of knowledge,” or “ignorance,” the range of other semantic possibilities is quite extensive. Hardy personifies “Nescience,” which “mutely muses,” but is not dead or absent. Human capacity for knowing is suspended between partial knowledge and partial ignorance. The only interpretation that can be derived from the last line is that the “linguistic sign” falls silent, mute, or “is lying.” All in all, the language of negation in “A Sign-Seeker”

establishes neither a state of absolute denial of human lore, nor a state of a self-assured coherence between the “signs” of human science and their referents. The only end-message of the poem unfolds mankind's continual quest for truth, which is located within and outside the fragile and slippery language of the feeble human consciousness.

Agnostic poems like “Hap,” “A Sign-Seeker,” “God-Forgotten,” “The Impercipient,” and “Self-Unconscious,” discussed above, display the same tendency in Hardy—they employ a language of negation and point at the absence of the transcendental logos (“But not so;” “but none replies;” “Nay: I have no remembrance;” “Why joys they've found I cannot find;” “while himself he did not see at all”). The greatest proof is the poet's crossing over the thesis/ anti-thesis dichotomy and his invoking a sense of temporariness and discontinuity—ambiguous spaces, temporalities, selves, consciousnesses, and presences, never absolutely logocentric, never utterly coherent. Therefore, there is a close connection between Hardy's poetic style and Derrida's key concepts that problematize the discontinuity of all metaphysical presuppositions. Hardy signals the forthcoming Modernist mode of expression which seeks to establish a unifying principle but fails in the act of its accomplishment. The linguistic crisis that ensues upon the internal tensions in the poetic diction draws Hardy away from his Victorian and Post-Romantic predecessors.

3.4. Hardy's Concept of Time—A Challenge to Linearity

3.4.1. Space-Time/ Time-Space/ Spacing

The idea of the linear progression of time is the remnant of the Western history of metaphysics and especially of the Enlightenment project with its emphasis on the rational mind, linearity and the Cartesian self. Derrida's Deconstructionist theory, as a challenge to the metaphysics of presence and the dominant epistemology in general, is also a challenge to linearity in the time-space continuum. In many poems by Hardy, temporality is not a straight line; rather, it is more web-like, forth, back

and sideways. As a whole, Hardy's poems display a partly linear, and a partly discontinuous sense of time. In other words, a frequent pattern, though not a dominant motif in Hardy's poems, is the combination of diachronic and synchronic time. One critic that acknowledges such a pattern in Hardy is Dennis Taylor, who argues that his poetry is a reflection of both the present and the past, and the fact that he employs words from many historical periods renders Hardy's language deliberately heterogeneous (*Hardy's Literary Language* 275). There is also a view which sees Hardy's sense of temporality as both linear and orbital. The poet used the term "looped orbit" in 1922 in "The Apology to the *Late Lyrics*":

But if it be true, as Comte argued, that advance is never a straight line, but a looped orbit, we may, in the aforesaid ominous moving backward, be doing it *pour mieux sauter*, drawing back for a spring. I repeat that I forlornly hope so, notwithstanding the supercilious regard of hope by Schopenhauer, von Hartmann, and other philosophers down to Einstein who have my respect. But one dares not prophesy. Physical, chronological, and other contingencies keep me in these days from critical studies and literary circles... Hence I cannot know things are going so well as I used to know them, and the aforesaid limitations must quite prevent my knowing henceforward. (*The Complete Poems* 562)

It may be difficult to draw a wholesale conclusion about what Hardy believes in terms of temporality and human history. However, from the poet's suggestion above, one is likely to consider that Hardy feels the strange vibes of recent history; things are not as he used to see them, that he knows for sure. Whichever direction human evolution takes might be a very complicated matter, but the poet's personal history somehow merges with universal or communal history in the most unexpected ways. In the same way, Hardy's poetic evolution cannot be considered solely linear. In the words of J. Hillis Miller, Hardy's conception of time is "unmappable," too; like the poet's idea of the self, of presence, of consciousness, of the linguistic sign, it is never all-too-rational, never solely concentric.

In the view of Ellen Anne Lanzano, this kind of an understanding implies that time in its orbit is partly linear in its elongated trajectory, representing the long slow movement of life with a predictable future (“Chronicles of Love” 79). However, a sudden dramatic disruption of the “now” brings back the beginning of things, as in the Romantic tradition. In Lanzano's view, Miller interprets Hardy's concept of time as linear. Miller claimed that Hardy “saw time as a pattern of space, seeing it as determined to follow just the sequence it does follow” (*Distance and Desire* 200). However, I tend to assume that Miller might be suggesting something other than mere linearity, a kind of a merging of time and space; in fact, a “time-space,” a disruption of a metaphysical presupposition. In *The Linguistic Moment*, Miller discusses Hardy's version of temporality and proposes that “once more, as in Wordsworth, Shelley or Browning, space becomes time, or time expresses itself in what appears to be a spatial image” (311). “Time for Hardy, ..., is the medium of necessary discontinuity. Space, in the literal sense of a landscape, a map, a book of musical compositions, or of poems on sequential pages in *Late Lyrics and Earlier*, is the realm of juxtaposition, or continuity (Miller 274). “This curious incompatibility of time and space makes possible those 'chance little shocks' produced by the accidental juxtaposition of spatial records of diverse times” (Miller 274).

Consequently, Taylor, Lanzano and Miller mark out views, all of which may be justifiable. However, Miller's suggestion requires seeing some poems by Hardy as more mimetic in terms of spatial continuity and juxtaposition. In terms of temporal patterning, however, linearity and continuity are not at hand. When considered as a whole, Hardy's poems cannot be simply picked up and piled under a particular grouping, even thematically. However, in Hardy's poems about Dorset, one is likely to realize that Dorset becomes a kind of a pattern, a space-time for the poet, notwithstanding the fact that such kind of a pattern allows only a temporary centrism. Hardy's concurrent synchrony and diachrony, his combination of present, past, mystic and mythic time, and his sudden leaps and shifts between these, suggests a greater challenge to linearity. It is necessary to remark that possibly Taylor, Miller and Lanzano's views of temporality in Hardy do not have to be taken as either

contradictory or agreeable. Even if there were no dissent between critics, it would not change the fact that analyses and discussions are never closed-ended; Hardy continues to provoke and puzzle.

Lanzano observes further that for Hardy, “purely rational time offers a limited vision, especially when viewed in contrast to using mythic time as reality's gauge—by thought, emotion, and memory—in a personal sense of history” (“Logic and Unreason” 16). She concedes that “pure rationality would dictate the total absence of religion, but because an unexamined sense of the historical past enslaves us, we duly intone the meaningless recitation of outworn creeds” (16). Lanzano claims that Hardy's verse “narrows its context from the cosmic to the specific and personal, 'time' is subsumed in the simultaneity of space-time in the psychic landscape of his love poetry, corresponding to Michel Foucault's 'analytic of imagination' as a positive power to transform the linear time of representation into a simultaneous space” (17). In other words, in Hardy's poetry, temporal priority is a given. In Hardy's philosophical verse, time is merely the movement between two points, and the world is a waning reality in between (18). Thus Lanzano emphasizes Hardy's willingness to imagine time and other forces allegorically in his philosophical fantasies, which prepares us for his retreat from determinism (“Allegories of the Temporal” 40).

Structuralism claims to be neutral with regard to metaphysics, but it is full of metaphysical assumptions. It places space above time, because it presumes that literary texts can be analysed in terms of atemporal patterns rather than in the unfolding of narrative over time (Stocker 356). In Derrida, space loses its priority and merges with time to become space-time. Actually, Derrida's alternative key term for this kind of merging is “spacing.” As mentioned in the earlier sections of this thesis, “spacing” is neither time nor space. It is the closure of the binary opposition of time and space:

Since the trace is the intimate relation of the living present with its outside, the openness upon exteriority in general, upon the sphere of

what is not "one's own," etc., *the temporalization of sense is, from the outset, a "spacing."* As soon as we admit spacing both as "interval" or difference and as openness upon the outside, there can no longer be any absolute inside, for the "outside" has insinuated itself into the movement by which the inside of the nonspatial, which is called "time," appears, is constituted, is "presented." Space is "in" time; it is time's pure leaving-itself; it is the outside-itself" as the self-relation of time. The externality of space, externality as space, does not overtake time; rather, it opens as pure "outside" "within" the movement of temporalization... "Time" cannot be an "absolute subjectivity" precisely because it cannot be conceived on the basis of a present and the self-presence of a present being. Like everything thought under this heading, and like all that is excluded by the most rigorous transcendental reduction, the "world" is primordially implied in the movement of temporalization. ("The Voice That Keeps Silence" 86)

If we take the poem "The Self-Unseeing," as an example (see app. 24), we will see that the disruption of chronology parallels the disruption in the persona's imminent perception of the world around him. At the same time, the lack of a unified self, the dislocation and distancing of the self in its turn implies that the sense of temporality cannot be perceived as continuous but discontinuous. Space loses its priority and merges with time. The poem becomes an example for Hardy's idea of "space-time" and Derrida's "spacing."

According to Linda Shires, the poem presents a scene of family life, usually taken as that of Hardy as a child, with his father playing his violin, and his mother sitting before the fire ("And I Was Unaware" 39). The teller returns to the house in which he lived as a child. But that house is much changed. Even the door by which one used to enter is now walled up, as if to show that the way we approach the past from the present itself inevitably changes over time (39).

However, above all, the poem employs an ambiguous self, which is made complex by distancing and appropriating. The frequent repetition of “here” implies imminence and appropriation (*CP* 166-167). “There” implies distancing and a kind of self that is merely an observer in isolation. As mentioned before, Hardy denies that the narrators/speakers in his poems represent his historical self; this is why he calls such moments of observation “seemings,” “impressions.” Quintessentially, the speaker in this poem is merely an observer from a distance although he recollects fragments of history that take place “here.” The lover has suffered, and is still suffering from the greatest impediments of death—remembrance of past memory, loss, and separation. The poem's instrument is double vision and double-consciousness. The speaker both assumes the status of an outside observer and at the same time seems to identify himself with the male character in the poem who also “observes” the woman sitting at the fire. In W. E. B. DuBois' description, “double-consciousness emerges from having to see oneself through the eyes of another, for which one's own self-awareness is partially out of reach, together with a striving against that doubleness” (Martinot 128). Martinot traces the trajectory of the Derridean trace in W. E. B. DuBois' description. In the Derridean context, to see “oneself as the object of a structure of domination through which one is seen is to think that structure as the trace before the object one apprehends oneself to be for it, thus already doubling one's self-awareness as a person” (Martinot 128). In the same way, the subject in the poem has to think of himself as what he is *in* and *through* the eyes of the Other. In the poem, this doubling of self, of consciousness, of vision develops on the plane of synchrony and diachrony, simultaneously.

By a number of pronouns that change abruptly and by sudden shifts in the verb tense Hardy disrupts linear temporality. “Here is the ancient floor,” but “here was the former door.” “She sat here” is contrasted with “he played there,” both in past tense. The persona recollects happy moments that happened in the past, but the change from the pronouns “he” and “she” to “I” and “we” suggests double consciousness and a jump into a more complicated, obscure kind of temporality. The “I” and “we” imply more immediacy, but words like “childlike” and “dream” challenge the sense

of univocity in the poem. Clearly, the persona moves to a less defined time-space which may have happened sometime in the past, or existed only as a fantasy in the lover's mind. According to Levinson, the adjective "childlike" sharply pinpoints the split identity of an adult, as if the narrator now, at the moment of narration, is childlike and dreaming (572). "The dreamed family, which includes his young or former self, are looking away from the dreaming self. They are turned in on the charm of their own suspended world" (572). Levinson concedes that what had seemed like a poem that represents the narrator's failure to achieve the self-integration and self-recognition definitive of Romantic and even modern lyric somehow becomes a poem that fails in just that way, and, a poem that makes the reader fail too (572).

According to Levinson, spatial referencing is as murky as temporal referencing. Levinson believes that the poem really challenges our sense of temporality and space, so she asks:

Is the speaker inside the house looking around, or outside, indicating the interior? At the end of the poem, we would very much like to know whether the unseeing took place in the past—thus, a poem about the (or "a") failure of family life, or, about a congenital defect of human consciousness, where seeing is always only an effect of retrospection. Or, is the blindness a present and poetically enacted failure, in which case the poem reflects (as well as reflects on) a failure of imagination. (571)

"The Self-Unseeing" gives no markers even to guarantee that the scene is a mental landscape (Levinson 571). For all we know, this could be an actual revisit of a childhood home, with "that day" referring to the day of the visit. With the uncertainty arising from the statement, "here was the former door," the mind snags on that clause, for it should have run, either, here *is* the former door, or, here *was* the door (571). By combining two pasts ("was" and "former"), the line in effect shadows the given scene (where ever and whenever that was) with an earlier one, prior to the time

of remembering, prior even to the narrator's attachment to the place, thus making the picture independent of the mind that had seemed to generate or at the very least contain it (Levinson 571-572).

Thus Hardy disrupts the time-space continuum in this poem; his “looped orbit” does not move simply to and fro between past and present, but rather between memory and fantasy. The lovers had already fallen apart, they “were looking away,” they had experienced death-in-life even before physical death broke them apart. The poem is not simply a recollection of past memory, but rather a suspension of temporality, a day-dreaming at an indefinite point in time—distant past, recent past or present. Barbara Hardy suggests that in the poem one may “grasp a future memory of a present happiness, but we are nearly always looking away” (192). “But there is in this poem a newly accrued creative impulse, a gain of distances, which grasps the significance which would have been incompatible with the past creative unselfconscious joy” (192).

Hardy's notion of looped orbit probably finds expression also in the poem “A Sign-Seeker,” as discussed earlier, because it symbiotes linear and mythical time. In the beginning of the poem, all verbs that indicate sight and vision are used in the present tense. In the third stanza, the persona switches to “I have seen,” to suggest moments in the past. Then again he switches to present simple by the indications “I witness,” “I learn.” In the following stanzas, there are implications of mythical times, of old religions, but also moments when the persona hopes to meet “phantom parents” who will whisper “Not the end!” “These tokens claim to feel and see,/ Read radiant hints of times to be--” suggests a jump into the future, accordingly. Therefore, the poem does not follow a linear trajectory but shifts between present, past, distant past, fantasy, afterlife, future and finally to the present again in the last stanza of the poem. The persona overhears “the monotonous hours clang negligently by,” but at the same time, he learns “to prophesy the hid eclipse,/ The coming of eccentric orbs;/ To mete the dust the sky absorbs,/ To weigh the sun, and fix the hour each planet dips,” implications of a more cosmic time. The lines gain the status of a poem that opposes

the traditional view of temporality, i.e., gains a status as a Post-Romantic and Post-Victorian poem.

Even if one distinguishes a temporal pattern in Hardy's poetry, it is seldom identified in rationalist or deterministic terms. William P. Morgan, for example, claims that in "Poems of 1912-13" Hardy seems to display a temporal model. According to Morgan, in this elegiac work, Hardy reveals some kind of a pattern. We may not generalize this to all the poetry of Hardy, but Morgan's study provides an insight into Hardy's conception of time and structure. Morgan suggests that Hardy's twenty-one poems in the collection are organized according to a temporal model. He argues that this model recalls the three periods in the relation of Hardy and Emma. These three periods of time are the *distant past*, the time of courtship and romance in Cornwall; the *recent past*, the painful and frustrating years of married life in Dorset; and the *present*, a time of acute awareness of death, of regret, and almost of despair, and finally of reconciliation ("Form, Tradition and Consolation" 496). Within the sequence, the periods of time are arranged to provide a five-part linear structure—a movement from *recent past* to *present*, then from *distant past* to *recent past* to *present* (496-97). The temporal model which informs this double perception is a model for the whole experience as it exists in memory—as a tenuous combination of emotional pain and intellectual consolation (497). Morgan argues that such sequence and pattern exist in the poem "The Going," (see app. 25)² which epitomises the structure of the whole collection although the same model cannot be seen in each individual poem within the collection (497-499).

Despite the fact that Morgan's research marks out predominantly a linear time concept in this specific collection by Hardy, the arrangement of the poems is not solely chronological. That is to say, there is a pattern recognized but that pattern simultaneously combines synchronic and diachronic segments of temporality. As Morgan concludes about Hardy's elegiac poetry:

² For an extensive analysis, see William W. Morgan's article "Form, Tradition, and Consolation in Hardy's *Poems of 1912-13*" in *PMLA*. 89: 3. (1974): 496-505. JSTOR.

...It is an appropriate expression of the late Victorian or early Modern consciousness. Without a transcendent God, Hardy and his contemporaries were left with only their own intellectual and emotional lives for consolation. Faced with his acute awareness of time and the wreckage of the older systems of thought, Hardy did the only thing he could do: he reordered time in the world's memory, creating in the process a logic of grief for his godless universe. ("Form, Tradition, and Consolation" 504-505)

That is to say, Hardy rearranges and reorders time as if to unveil his reaction to the haphazardness of the universe, and to announce the closure of "old philosophies" and equations. But the closure is not the end, time's circles will sometimes repeat, but in unfamiliar and renewed patterns. As in "Evening Shadows" (see app. 26), the "Pagan mound," like the shadows of the chimneys will continue to cast its shade upon the greensward, as if it will outlast and outlive everything else—the Christian faith to which it lost its supremacy and the speaker's short-termed life in the world: "And nothing says such shade will spread around/ Even as to-day when men will no more heed/ The Gospel news than when the mound was made" (10-12). Moreover, Morgan's argument about the temporal pattern in this specific collection of Hardy is important because it brings back Rainer Emig's statements about the double nature of Modernist poems which tend to organize around an organizing principle and yet, at the same time, are marked out with a disruption on the level of the signified, structure, and linearity. As mentioned earlier, there is a sense of structure in Hardy although it is ruptured. A similar disruption is achieved on the level of temporal perception, both synchronic and diachronic, if we are to take into consideration Morgan, Lanzano, Taylor and Miller's claims. This alone enables us to situate Hardy between a mimetic and non-mimetic tradition, between Victorianism and Modernism.

3.4.2. Dorset as an Upholstery Button (*Point de Capiton*)

Hardy's poems about Dorset constitute the most thematically unified fragments in his poetry. Semantically, they are consistent and coherent partly because Hardy's sense of history and time is seen to have developed through certain recurrent patterns. In other words, Dorset poems are the most representational and mimetic because the messages and emotions conveyed in these poems are more easily distinguished, and they appear to be more obviously resisting the incongruities and instabilities of language. Dorset stands for Hardy's childhood and youth, the more harmonious and cadenced segments of his life. His hometown represents those moments in the poem when the meaning can be partly and temporarily pinned down, as suggested by the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Moments in the Dorset landscape are Hardy's "upholstery buttons," the moments of "truth" flickering through continual appropriation and distancing, hosting momentary coherent bits and fragments of language. Although linguistic discordance is the least discernible in the Dorset poems, Hardy's unique sense of time is still noteworthy—it becomes necessary to analyse and look more closely at what Lanzano might have meant by "partly linear and partly orbital" concept/ conception of time.

Lanzano suggests that Hardy's poems of Dorset celebrate the cyclic patterns of life, which are but only a pale reflection of the temporal homogeneity of the love lyrics where the past, present, and even future are reciprocally assimilated ("Chronicles of Earth" 75). In Deconstructionist terms, it is possible to infer that Dorset constitutes his effort to assign a locus, a pattern or a unifying principle. The Dorset man is the link between ancient and modern culture, a part of each and belonging wholly to neither, he is mankind remonstrating with a time-locked world ("Chronicles of Earth" 44). Dorset time is the interior of Darwinian time, states Lanzano. The erosions, the coincidences, the chance catalysts to disaster or survival are now made the facts of personal history in the peasant life of Hardy's region. The stories told to him by his relatives, particularly by his mother Jemima Hardy, scattered the seeds of fatalism across the surface of his consciousness. Wessex is a private county with a personal landscape vast enough for the poet to observe a "pattern among general

things,” a phrase used by Samuel Hynes (qtd. in Lanzano 46). The pattern in Hardy's fiction, as well as his poetry on Dorset, may be said to be that of a series of events distributed over a linear space that represents the time-line of a person's life and of the life of the community (46).

In Poststructuralist terms, however, time and temporality should be put under erasure (*sous rature*). Spivak interprets Heidegger's concept of "time" as something that "needs to be explicated originally [einer ursprünglichen Explikation] as the horizon for the understanding of Being" (1). However, Heidegger does not find the meaning of being in temporality. In comparison with Heidegger, Derrida seems to cross out time even more effectively "through the Freudian suggestion that time is the discontinuous perception of the psychic machinery" (Spivak 1). Moreover, according to Derrida, "there is not a single signified that escapes, even if recaptured, the play of signifying references that constitute language" (*Of Grammatology* 7). This comes to mean that as a signified, time/temporality is also liable to the play of signifiers. Without doubt, Derrida sees linearity as a metaphysical presupposition:

As for linearism, you know very well that it is not my strong point. I have always, and very precisely, associated it with logocentrism, phonocentrism, semantism, and idealism. Not only have I never believed in the absolute autonomy of a history as the history of philosophy, in a conventionally Hegelian sense, but I have also regularly tried to put philosophy back on stage, on a stage that it does not govern, and that the classical historians of philosophy, in the university and elsewhere, have sometimes judged a little difficult. ("Positions" 50)

Once we accept linearity as an element of logocentrism or phonocentrism, we will realize that Hardy's concept of temporality actually disrupts metaphysical positioning. The merging of personal and communal history in his poems, of cosmic time and worldly time represents a challenge to linearity. Hardy's poetic epitome of space-time is a register of temporality that drifts away from the status identified as

synthesis in the dialectical approach. Dorset appears to be the key element here as it becomes the symbol of Hardy's "space-time." In Lacanian sense, Dorset is the *point de capiton*; however, in Derridean sense, Dorset should be taken as *spacing*, or the subversive role of poetry against the rationalist/ empiricist conceptions of temporality.

Dorset is the cradle of poetic inspiration for Hardy. It has been mentioned earlier that it represents the more coherent and happy moments of the poet. For example, Stinsford and Mellstock refer to the earliest years of Hardy. Mellstock, a small cottage at Higher Bockhampton, about two miles east of Dorchester and now also a National Trust property, was Thomas Hardy's childhood home. His heart is buried close by in Stinsford Churchyard (<http://www.thewordtravels.com/thomas-hardy-and-dorset.html>). Stinsford Church and Hardy's cottage are featured in *Under the Greenwood Tree* and such poems as "Domicilium," "The Self-Unseeing," "Afternoon Service at Mellstock" and "Voices from Things Growing in a Churchyard" (<http://www.thewordtravels.com/>).

"Afternoon Service at Mellstock" (see app. 27) has one of those Dorset settings which embody a more coherent, mimetic texture. The semantic integrity and the concord in the diction are eye-catching. Almost reminiscent of Wordsworthian style that echoes the unison and harmony with nature, the poet recollects happier and more careless moments from youth, while reciting "one-voiced" psalms and tunes, "watching the elms and rooks, watching the clouds and the breeze" (5-6) and "swaying like the trees" (8). The regularity of the lines, the rigorous construction of end-rhymes, and the poetic refrain cohere with the idea of a more cadenced concept of temporality, reinforced by the "drowsy calm" (1) in the afternoon service at church and the rhythmic tunes of the psalms. However, Derrida emphasizes that no matter how much congruity we strive to achieve in language, it is always open to "play." Take the word "mindless," for example. It might signify the "careless," "carefree" moments the narrator spent with his peers, as well as the ironic suggestion of the times spent in a passive, lethargic and sluggish state without much questioning about life. A slight disruption of time's linearity is achieved by skipping from past to

present tense as in “Though I am not aware/ That I have gained by subtle thought on things” (10-11). Hardy's speaker implies that the poem is actually a self-reflection by which he tries to identify his present self through his past self. It seems that there is not only disruption of time's linearity but also of parallel logic—what he “gained by subtle thought on things” is equally faint and unspecific. The narrator may not have questioned the religious practices he had been part of, but he may have had his inner tumults, “subtle thoughts on things” that he was not able to put into words yet. The dichotomy of time and space has to dissolve into a more evasive signifier—time-space. Since temporality appears to be non-linear because the speaking voice is identified simultaneously in the present and in the past, the bonding instrument of the moment narrated in the poem is spatial, i.e., the landscape of Dorset. In this way, time merges with space by abandoning its margins of identification. In Derrida's grammatology, in fact, all binary oppositions have to dissolve into *différance* because the function and outcome of *différance* is to invite us to “undo the need for balanced equations, to see if each term in an opposition is not after all an accomplice of the other” (Spivak lix). Thus in *Positions* Derrida remarks:

At the point where the concept of difference intervenes... all the conceptual oppositions of metaphysics, to the extent that they have for ultimate reference the presence of a present, ... (signifier/signified; sensible/intelligible; writing/speech; speech [parole]/language [langue]; diachrony/synchrony; space/time; passivity/activity etc.) become non-pertinent. (“Semiology and Grammatology” 29)

With logic similar to the dissolution of the binaries in terms of *différance*, the time-space continuum may be symbolically broken or intervened through multiple voices, selves and perspectives. For instance, Hardy employs multiple voices and visions in the poem “Voices from Things Growing in a Churchyard,” (see app. 28) dislocating the unified poetic self and redistributing it by means of various narrators, male and female, young and old. The poem presents signifiers of life and death, and an organized rhyme scheme such as aa bb cc dd ee ff etc., but the fact that the speakers are multiple foreshadows the Modernist subjectivities. Moreover, the voices that

Hardy employs as the personae speak from the afterlife, which constitutes a challenge to our sense of history, external reality, and synchronic time as in the refrain: “All day cheerily/ All night eerily.” Hardy's recurrent topic of a present haunted by a past, by memory, is dramatized through the individual stories of each speaker. At the same time, while they speak, they epitomise the “metamorphosis into new forms of life, rather than the successful obliteration of their lives” (Miller, *Distance and Desire* 225). Miller ascertains “the irony of a speech of the speechless, of consciousness of the unconscious” (225).

The poem itself appears to be mimetic because each individual story in the poem has integrity and unity in its overall presentation. There is also a linear progression of time because the symbolism of the cycle of human life is gradually revealed in each stanza. The poem opens with the story of a little girl, then progresses through the voices of adult men and women, and the last individual story belongs to an old squire. Temporality appears to be both chorological and non-chronological. Some of the graves are very old (“Hence more than a hundred years I spent”), and some are still fresh. However, they are all gathered in one single location for their timeless rest—the churchyard. Hardy leaps into a mythical, cosmic time, which transcends human understanding of temporality.

Each individual story in the poem corresponds to certain human feelings articulated in a synchronic progression of time. The characters may be merely generalizations, or they may belong to the Dorset landscape, where Hardy grew up listening to many interesting stories and tales that reflected its folklore and heritage. These individual characters and the stories attached to them are the constants in the poem. They represent the so-called *upholstery buttons* in Poststructuralist terms because they carry their truth in themselves, and they are part of a heritage that is long cherished and transmitted from generation to generation. Each story inspires different human experiences and emotions which may be generalized to all humankind.

John Powell Ward remarks that Hardy likes to play tricks with language in a more diffused way (1993: 66). Ward points that the poem has a short line—“Sir or

Madam!”—which is repeated in every stanza as refrain, and is addressed by each dead person to the graveyard visitor in turn. But in the final stanza, that narrator uses it impersonally himself: “—And so these maskers breathe to each/ Sir or Madam! ...” A small ironic counterpoint is achieved; and such techniques enable some small emphasis change, or a new small insight, in each case (Ward 66). Can this “diffusion” of language, Ward mentions, actually signal also a “small” rupture in signification? The poems discussed earlier in this study shed light on its probability.

The poem tends to be organized in linear terms by beginning the narrative with the story of the young and recently deceased ones and completing it with the almost ancient old man's speech. We travel back in time in a line, but only to confront utterances that cannot be organized around a single principle. Thus the multiple voices and selves from diverse fragments of time and history where the spatial element is one joint location, represent a deferral in signification, therefore, a disruption of time and space continuum leads into a new “evasive scheme,” space-time:

If the space-time that we inhabit is a priori the space-time of the trace, there is neither pure activity nor pure passivity. This pair of concepts—and we know that Husserl erased one with the other constantly—belongs to the myth of the origin of an uninhabited world, of a world alien to the trace: pure presence of the pure present, that one may either call purity of life or purity of death: determination of being which has always superintended not only theological and metaphysical but also transcendental questions, whether conceived in terms of scholastic theology or in a Kantian and post-Kantian sense. The Husserlian project of a transcendental aesthetics, of a restoration of the “logos of the aesthetic world” (*Formal and Transcendental Logic*) remains subjected to the instance of the living present, as to the universal and absolute form of experience. It is by what complicates this privilege and escapes it that we are opened to the space of inscription. (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 290-291)

For Derrida, actually, there is no “originary” time and space because it would imply being entrapped in the present. That is why he uses the term *space-time* instead, and sometimes *spacing*, in order to articulate time's becoming-spatial or space's becoming-temporal (*temporalizing*) (“Differance” 143). Consequently, although the individual stories within the poem in question tend to be spatially coherent in terms of narrative technique, the poem plays with our sense of temporality. In other words, it produces a “crisis in temporality,” if not necessarily a crisis in representation, which are actually only each other's *différance*.

Sturminster Newton is another Dorset spot for Hardy which testifies to a happier and more joyful past. Between July 1876 and March 1878 Thomas Hardy lived at Riverside Villa, just outside the town. This was the happiest period of his marriage, and here he wrote *The Return of the Native* (1878) and several poems, such as “Overlooking the River Stour” and “On Sturminster Foot-Bridge” (see app. 29) relating to the view, the river and the Mill walk (www.thewordtravels.com/). There are such patterns and textures in “On Sturminster Foot-Bridge” that evoke a eurhythmic, pastoral, coherent time and synchrony with nature:

Reticulations creep upon the slack stream's face
When the wind skims irritably past,
The current clucks smartly into each hollow place
That years of flood have scabbled in the pier's sodden base;
The floating lily leaves rot fast. (1-5)

Time is represented as linear, fluctuating with the natural course of living things visible everywhere. The linear concept of temporality is given through the images of nature, such as the stream, reticulations, the current, the flood, and the wind. The verbs are chosen in accordance—creep, skim, scabble, float, cluck; they connote the monotonous passage of time. The poem predominantly looks mimetic; however, as stated before, Hardy's sense of time is actually both linear and non-linear. For example, “the years of flood” connote mythic, or a more cosmic sense of time here because they “scabble” things more permanent, less fleeting, contrary to the

“floating lily” that “leaves rot fast.” The only element that attaches the poet to the present is the image of the woman who appears under the roof every midnight like a “lattice-gleam.” The image of the female enlivens the “moaning” midnights with her permanence. Thus the combination of different segments of temporality shows that in this poem time is not ultimately linear, but more like “orbital” because it makes conjectural jumps into past and future.

Similarly, the poem “Overlooking the River Stour” (see app. 30) arouses a sense of ambiguity and incompleteness despite the lyric utterances that articulate the speaker's emotions. According to Barbara Hardy, Hardy sometimes presses with Coleridgean — and indeed Wordsworthian — power and meanings, on visual excess, as in “Overlooking the River Stour” (186). However, she also states that the poem exemplifies Hardy's use of “silence” as a subject, as he does in many poems about “limits or barriers, where characters do not communicate, or where they do not see or understand every aspect of an experience or a time or a place” (211). Barbara Hardy claims that in the poem,

... the reader is presented only with the judgement. Having been made to concentrate like the speaker, on the incised scene outside the window, she is confronted by an absence of specification, and is in exactly the same position as the speaker has been, though without his knowledge. It is a poem which seems to offer conclusion, but denies access. The denial is not just a tease, because it gives the reader an experience of exclusion. (212)

This interesting dynamic in the poem, mentioned by the critic, may have been achieved by the use of a diction which suggests a sense of harmony and synchrony with nature. However, at the same time, there is a sense of an incomplete human communication. For example, the repetitive lines in the first three stanzas create the impression of something durable, continuous, and fluctuating: “above the river-gleam” (2), “planing up shavings of crystal spray” (7), “... and the mead/ dripped in monotonous green” (17-18). The swallows fly as if drawing the “curve of an eight,”

another element that hints at the never-changing, smoothly running course of time. It may also refer to circular time as it is not in a straight but in an endlessly flowing line. The repetitions in the first three stanzas, however, may also suggest linguistic tension which may have arisen out of the difficulty in verbalising the emotions of the speaker. Repetition (refrain) always creates more rhythm and harmony in the poetic diction; at some point it replaces the internal rhyme, which, along with the end-rhyme, dominates the natural progression of a conventional poem. However, the obligation to repeat, simultaneously, points to the lack of signifieds, or the fact that they are evacuated. On the level of semantics, the persona is understood to be watching segments of nature through his window while it is raining heavily, “Through the pane's drop-drenched glaze” (21); however, behind his back in the room there might be something, an imagined or actual presence, which he does not wish to confront. For this reason he does not turn his back, but persistently continues to “gaze” at things outside. The emotion conveyed in the poem is characterized by sadness or disappointment, and there is an unavailing attempt to escape those feelings through the canorous, coherent passage of natural time:

And never I turned my head, alack,
While these things met my gaze
Through the pane's drop-drenched glaze,
To see the more behind my back . . .
O never I turned, but let, alack,
These less things hold my gaze! (13-18)

A special moment that captures our attention in this poem is the repetitive use of the word “gaze” in the last stanza. The “gaze” might be taken as a substitute for the Cartesian self, i.e., the rational perception of the physical world through the senses. However, paradoxically, the things that belong to the external world “met his gaze,” i.e., he may not have been watching them intentionally; they just meet his eyes, coincide with the moment he turns his back on the presence inside the room. However, the speaker intently watches outside because if he turns his back, he will “see the more behind” it. In other words, the “gaze” assumes the status of an activity

which is not completely deliberate whereas “seeing” the presence inside the room acquires the status of actual confrontation or possibility for communication, which he wants to avoid. The gaze implies a pensive mood while seeing implies a real experience and emotion. When compared with the verbs related to “seeing” and “perception” in other poems by Hardy, such as “A Sign-Seeker” or “The Impercipient,” which always point at a missing/ evacuated signified, here, on the contrary, the verb “see” becomes a *point de capiton*, or “upholstery button” because we can temporarily attach meaning (a signified) to the word “see” in the last stanza. He does not desire the emotion that he will have to confront if he turns his back, he does not want to see what he will see; therefore, he lets “these lesser things hold” his “gaze,” meaning that the things he sees outside are not really noticeable for him, the *gaze* is mechanical and purposeless whereas what he will see inside is a real impression.

Nonetheless, the poem suspends its overall thematic flow because the mysterious presence behind his back is never articulated. While it may be a human presence, it may be also a “shadow,” or a “ghost.” These elements frequently occupy Hardy's world, contribute to building a sense of ambiguity and challenge the metaphysics of presence. It is not possible to discuss the poem in terms of binary oppositions because the inside/ outside dichotomy is violated by means of other irrational, mysterious and inarticulated elements. The inside/ outside context might be clearly stated or differentiated in the poem, but as a whole, the act of “seeing” does not ultimately refer to the Cartesian self. The “gaze” suggests only a kind of monotonous but purposeless repetition, like the repetitive language of the poem, like the mechanical motions of the swallows or the falling rain. Repetition is disruption of linearity, but only in the sense of eventuating a partly circular progression of time/space, of self-referentiality or something coming only to itself. Space and time are divided only by *différance*; they do not constitute a metaphysical opposition. *Différance* means transcending the present, making everything temporal:

"To differ" in this sense is to temporalize, to resort, consciously or unconsciously, to the temporal and temporalizing mediation of a

detour that suspends the accomplishment or fulfilment of "desire" or "will," or carries desire or will out in a way that annuls or tempers their effect. We shall see, later, in what respects this temporalizing is also a temporalization and spacing, is space's becoming-temporal and time's becoming-spatial, is "primordial constitution" of space and time, as metaphysics or transcendental phenomenology would call it in the language that is here criticized and displaced. ("Differance" 136)

In other words, Hardy creates a notion of time-space in the poem, not in the sense of a coupled opposition but in the sense that neither time nor space can be considered as distinctly identifiable. Time seems to be like a frozen moment inside the room whereas outside the window it is undisturbingly fluctuating in repetitive patterns. The mysterious presence in the room is denied access and confrontation. The emotion attached to this act of refusing to "see" is the *point de capiton* because the emotion is acknowledged; however, it is in fact temporary and fleeting, too, because it is never communicated to the addressee.

"Domicilium" (see app. 31) is commonly known as the earliest poem by Hardy. James Persoon, however, claims that Hardy may have disguised the real date of composition of this poem; he "ghostwrote" his biography and "was capable of creating misleading evidence" (81). Persoon refers to Peter Casagrande who has suggested that "the poem which Hardy claimed as his 'earliest known production in verse,' is probably a much later fabrication, at least in part, to make him look like a boy-genius, a young Wordsworthian original." Brian Green has argued even more forcefully that "Domicilium" evidences the mature Hardy, that "far from being consciously-imitative-neo-Wordsworthian," it is "deliberately modified para-Wordsworthian" (qtd. in Persoon 81).

Such propositions expose risks when one intends to undertake a reading of the poem, from indefinite vantage point, deconstructive or otherwise. This problem of anachrony should be taken into consideration when applying a conventional/

thematic reading of the poem. However, a Poststructuralist reading would necessitate unveiling the instabilities and incongruities of language. Regardless of all these, “Domicilium” is one of the most mimetic poems of Hardy, whether or not it was written as a tribute to his Romantic predecessors. Barbara Hardy assumes the poem to have been written when Hardy was only sixteen, and argues that this passionate poem of place has a “remarkable coolness, a fullness of objective registration” (151). “Its tranquilly moving blank verse, fullness and detail, leisurely scrutinizing and parenthetical style, obviously reminiscent of ‘Tintern Abbey,’ or rather of its slow-paced introductory section before the lyrical narrative becomes fully personal and passionately charged” (B. Hardy 151). In other words, as in a Romantic poem, the narrator looks back on his childhood and his family history with a feeling of happiness, contentedness and tranquillity. Images of wild nature combine with the impression of smoothly flowing passage of the years. The idyllic and pastoral descriptions in the poem suggest no obvious tension or discrepancy between sign and meaning.

Dorset, in this poem, appears to be a *point de capiton*; the semantics of the poem seems to be undisturbed and unharmed from the beginning to the end. The linear temporality and the synchronic progression of time cohere with the natural course of the rural Dorset and the lush beauty of the countryside. Dorset landscape gives inspiration and consolation to the speaker. Language does not seem to claim any form of incongruity or instability. However, the very nature of poetry, the language of figuration is always open to polysemy or double meanings. Even in this early poem, (if we accept so) Hardy's language of negation can be spotted: “and such hardy flowers/ As flourish best untrained,” “Heath and furze/ Are everything that seems to grow and thrive/ Upon the uneven ground;” the images somehow associate the historical Hardy, the “untrained hardy flower” that always walked upon “uneven ground,” like the country house and the Dorset he used to live within—“wild,” “uncultivated,” whose trees “obscured the passer-by.” This “earlier” poem differs from others, particularly from the agnostic poems of Hardy because the images and signifieds in the poem cohere more with each other. Still, the language of negation in

the poem, and the implication that Hardy will deviate from the traditional way to follow his own, foreshadow his emergence as a modern poet of a post-Darwinian world.

In the light of the poems discussed in the last section above, it is possible to conclude that Hardy reveals different approaches to the conceptions of time and history as he assumes philosophical positions somewhere between rationalism, determinism, and agnosticism. Derrida deconstructs the linear understanding of temporality because “the metaphysical character of the concept of history is not only linked to linearity, but to an entire *system of implications*” (teleology, eschatology, elevating and interiorizing accumulation of meaning, a certain type of traditionality, a certain concept of continuity, of truth, etc.) (“Positions” 56). As it has been explored above, temporality in Hardy is an element that actually characterizes his modern poetic self. First, as in Modernism, Hardy's poetic voice is more distanced, more detached; even when he formulates his speaking voices, he rearranges his present self through his past self; the voices and visions in his poems are made multiple and dispersed rather than unified and compact. Second, like his partly unified and partly fragmented self, Hardy's concept of temporality is also both harmonious and disrupted. While in some poems we may come across a coherent and wholistic sense of temporality, in some other poems we observe partly linear, partly non-linear temporal structures that suggest sudden leaps into different slices and fragments of time and space. However, there is no governing pattern regarding temporality in Hardy. Consequently, Hardy's time concept proves to be unique; it wavers between past, present and future. It is a sign of lack of fixedness, centredness, of non-linear time progression and it also poses a challenge, in Derrida's words, to “an entire system of implications.”

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Hardy wrote a substantial amount of poems in the 19th as well as in the beginning of the 20th century. Although readers of poetry have often described him as a naturalist, a pessimist, a traditionalist, or even as a true Victorian, his poetry is heraldry of Modernism though he is not necessarily categorized in the modernist canon usually associated with poets like T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, or E. Pound. The discussion held on his poetry throughout this study makes it clear that he shares some characteristics peculiar to Modernist poets: ruptures in language, ambiguity, obscurity, a problematized concept of the self expressed through multiple voices and, the anxiety over the attempt to give sense to the external world. Hardy's poetry is both mimetic and non-mimetic. This characteristic of Hardy's poetry implies the presence of linguistic tensions and contradictions that appear in Modernist poetry in general. Hardy's poems present themselves as a challenge to phonocentrism and metaphysics of presence. The crisis of representation in Hardy's poetry testifies to his status as a threshold figure who nods toward Modernism.

This dissertation took as its starting point the assumption that Deconstructionism does not take relativism as a norm, that it does not contradict the idea that literary criticism is capable of making powerful assertions—significant reasons why Deconstructionism has been criticised in the past. This thesis tried to show that this is not the case. As Rainer Emig has once pointed out, art that is capable of “making statements” is important. Emig reminds that to set relativism as norm, or a nominalist world-formula is as dangerous as totalisation itself: “Exclusions and assertions will be made and have to be made. It is essential, however, to retain an awareness of these mechanisms and an insight into the—often missing or dubious—premises of one's concepts” (245).

In this light, Hardy's poetry, which is also "capable of making powerful statements," is partly mimetic. Even when it is most obscure, it manifests such human feelings and worldly pains which repeatedly reaffirm their permanence and persistence. Their permanence is evident even when they fall prey to the indifference of a hostile universe, equally persistent in its random and chaotic machinations. This chaotic and accidental universe of Hardy's testifies to the poet's attempt to denominate the ultimate "signified" by poeticizing language. However, as Derridean philosophy highlights, human language fails to squeeze in itself a transcendental reality, or any other reality which surpasses the capacity of language to "say the Word." This is why language is considered self-referential, which is the case in Hardy's poetry, too. Hardy's world is preoccupied with dualities, with tensions between rational and irrational forces, finitude(s) and infinitude(s). That is to say, Hardy's world is filled with many antagonistic elements; however, interpretation in deconstructive terms enables one to realize the fragility of their positioning.

In the words of Nishimura, the act of writing involves, for Hardy, not a representation of an existing reality with language, but using language as the medium through which to call a reality into being (911). Levinson would even characterize the mode of Hardy's poetry as "metaphysical rather than epistemological, which may be why it resembles both the pre- and post-modern genres" (574). When Hardy is approached in terms of the tensions created between a subjective inside and an objective outside, his concept of the *self* is self-disbelieving, questioning, at times frustrated, in a constant search for meaning in an irrational, hostile universe, in a realm of ghosts and apparitions, of voices echoing from the past, of personae "sign-seeking." Nevertheless, it is not a lost self, but a self that attempts to learn to contain the pain of the present and deal with the loss of the past.

Hardy actually reveals Modernist sensibility because a Modernist poet seeks to experiment with language and come up with unique poetic forms. However, the Modernist sensibility also implies a language that sometimes falls short in its efforts to go beyond the physical reality and articulate abstract realities. When the disintegrated, problematized self of the poet reveals tension in language, and when

the outside reality becomes incongruent with the inner reality of the poet, the result is ambiguity or abstraction. These elements are presupposedly the markers for the possibility for deconstructive literary criticism in Hardy.

One assertion that this thesis attempted to reintroduce was that Hardy's poems are not predominantly Romantic but anti-Romantic. In Hardy, contrary to Romantics, nature ceases to be a unifying principle, provider of truth. Hardy's voice differs from the poetic voice in the Romantic tradition, which is highly personal and subjective. There is no poetic ego that is sublimated in the ecstatic moment of transcendence, of becoming one with nature, with the deity, the "Oversoul," as in Transcendentalism. Hardy refuses to assume the status of a semi-divine, prophet-like voice. This dynamic does not apply to Hardy because he is never an "answerer," a "knower," a "percipient." On the contrary, he is the "impercipient" poet of the new epoch, "frail," "gaunt," and "small" (as in "The Darkling Thrush"); one who passes through "the coppice gate" into "gloom." Although his poems appear to be the reflections of personal experiences and impressions, Hardy construes a more complex idea of the self, which is indeed a challenge to the phonocentrism of the Romantics.

As a whole, Hardy's poetic language should not be considered fully representational because it reveals a problematic subject/object relationship. In almost all of his major works, Derrida implies that deconstructive criticism destroys the long-cherished metaphysical oppositions such as subject/object, internal/external, self/non-self. In the context of Modernist literature, one is to remember the fact that most Modernist poems employ unreliable narrators or personae. The language of Modernist poems exemplifies the "reality" of the modern man—fragmentation, alienation and emotional exhaustion. Hardy's narrators may not necessarily resemble the detached, utterly fragmented voices of Eliot, who sought a modern tradition with objective and impersonal narrative technique. However, Hardy's narrative echoes the modernist tendency that emphasises the rupture between the signifier and the signified, between subject and object. In the context of Poststructuralist theory, poetry's capacity to expose the discrepancy between the referent and the represented is noteworthy, and finds expression in the linguistic "crisis of representation" in Hardy's poetry.

Against the backdrop of Deconstructionist issues like the unreliability of the linguistic sign, of the subject-object dichotomy, and of the mimetic order of things in general, this research attempted to focus on Hardy's poetry as a poetry that reveals the Modernist crisis—a linguistic “play” manifested through contradictions and ruptures. It is in fact the poetry of a man who speaks up at times for the sense of loss, and at times in attempt to name a “semi-conceived” signified that could have assumed many different “supplements.” As mentioned before, there is no sufficient evidence why Hardy must be wholly identified with mainstream Modernist poets. Hardy could have remained a Victorian all his life, even at the last stage of his career, were it not for that social and linguistic transformation which overtook humanity at the turn of the 20th century. Evidently, Hardy adjusted to the new modern sensibility. In his fiction, the novel *Jude the Obscure* signalled the appearance of the modern Hardy in the most obvious way. However, his poetry had actually long foreshadowed the emergence of the modern expressive mode.

This study was built on a limited number of key concepts that helped establish the pretexts for a Deconstructionist reading, which, in its turn rested on the idea that Hardy's poetry echoed the Modernist mode of writing. At the risk of casting the chosen poems within the parameters of a thematic analysis, I intended to show how Hardiesque aspects such as agnosticism, double vision, language of negation, irony, and temporality challenged the logocentric and phonocentric nature of traditional poetry. It may be an equally justifiable claim to say that even if Hardy were not placed as a transitional figure, even if he were studied, say, in the margins of Victorian traditionalism or Post-Romanticism, Deconstructionist criticism would still work on those planes. As long as one is liable to recognize the inevitable capacity of language to undermine itself and spill over meaning(s), Poststructuralism works on every level. Where there is no unified self, there is no possibility for an ultimately unified and coherent language, for full speech or full human communication. The concept of the *self* in Hardy is not the all-preceding “origin” or “locus” around which other semantic compounds try to revolve. As Derrida maintains, “language precedes all,” and every utterance pertaining to assume the nature of human communication

through language is but a “trace,” *différance*, or “writing.” The *self* is not taken as the origin, but as arch-writing, like the rest of the key concepts this thesis explored—agnostic belief, language of negation, irony, and temporality.

Several agnostic poems of Hardy from his various collections have been referred to by some critics as Hardy's “god-poems.” I preferred to call them “agnostic” poems because the category “god-poems” implies a more organized, more coherent kind of grouping. As J. Hillis Miller claims, Hardy's world is a world without “logos,” many other critics concede that Hardy's world is a world without a God, which is contradictory in itself because it is impossible to verbalize the concept of God without a recourse to the signifier itself, without the assumption that his presence is as justifiable as his absence. In other words, it is the Heideggerean idea of meaning-construction as the continual flickering of absence and presence. In Hardy, the signifier “god” is put under erasure, but never considered totally absent. If the *self* in Hardy were unified and integrated, his poems would not be probably considered agnostic. Conversely, if he were not an agnostic poet, his perception of the self might have been unified and coherent, as in most of Romantic and Victorian poetry. Even Modernists strive to achieve an effect of coherence and principle. Like the Catholic Hopkins, Hardy would have had his moments of “inscape,” or “instress,” like the Catholic Eliot, he would have had his “objective correlatives,” like the gnostic Yeats, he would have recreated his multiple mythologies and dialectics, like Lawrence, he would have become one with the Pantheistic nature-gods. However, Hardy does not have such principles and philosophical reference points. His only permanent or repetitive patterns, or, “upholstery buttons,” are only identified with Dorset, with the Wessex man, and with his own memories. Hardy's “transcendental signifieds” are evacuated, put under erasure, and gain signification only by the distribution of metaphoric structures, bunched together while leading to diffusion, *dissemination*. Similar to Yeats, whose symbolic structures bear witness to the collapse of symbolism in general, Hardy's multiple agnostic metaphors bear witness to a world without a “centre,” a “self” vacillating between the rational and the irrational, but transcending the opposites and betraying them as the signs of the traditional binaries.

This thesis attempted to approach Hardy in the light of four characteristic aspects, which would expose the instabilities of the language of poetry and human understanding in general—Hardy’s agnosticism, his idea of the self, his language of negation, his “little ironies,” and, finally, his concept of temporality. The present study assumes that these elements in Hardy actually correspond to some key concepts of Derrida by which he challenges Western metaphysics and a culture which has long embraced the binary model. These key concepts of Derrida come as an aid when one tries to establish a link between his philosophy and a work of literature. Modernist poetry, which employs multiple and plural visions, voices, allusions, renders itself as a poetry highly obscure and ambiguous; it testifies to the rupture in human discourse. Derrida, similarly, speaks of this rupture as a fact that cannot be ignored or avoided. Derrida’s discourse is a domain without a “centre;” so the acts of interpretation should be accepted as continual processes, continually shifting their centre(s) around which social and cultural codes seem to operate or dominate.

Hardy’s agnosticism is one of those elements which make him most strikingly a subversive poet. His agnosticism is essentially the reason for and at the same time the outcome of the fact that he lacks a stable point of reference because his world of random chances denies the privilege of a God-centred universe. His dualities and binary oppositions do not merely reflect a world which is irrational but also a world in which past and present coincide, intersect, and then dissolve. Hardy’s world is a fragmented world, not without an origin, but one in which origin is not traceable.

The analyses in Chapter 3 aimed at showing how it is impossible to label Hardy through the stamp of any other philosophy or philosophical thinking. A self-educated poet, he displays a modest and outspoken intellectuality. His perception of the universal design is chaotic, based on chances and coincidences. In a Post-Darwinian world, Hardy could no longer abide by the middle-class convictions of his society. Paradoxically, in his poems, his artistic voice actually romanticizes superstition and the otherworldly. His poems about Emma epitomise his unconscious desire to encounter a “real ghost.” He desires to make a connection with the non-rational.

However, this desire does not necessarily contradict his rationalist-sceptic mind. Hardy finds balance in un-balance, just like his language of negation, which by no means seems to reflect simply the ravings of a pessimist. Rather, Hardy's agnostic voice is that of a sarcastic existentialist who indeed has made his way through chaos and has learnt to chuckle at life's inconsistencies. Agnosticism requires to a large degree awareness about and acceptance of life's shocking little ironies.

It has become obvious that in Derrida, categories such as the mind, the self, the poetic voice, the utterance, the persona are artificial distinctions, and they are projections of each other and are inseparable, too; they do not constitute categories, they are inscribed in language which precedes all. The poems chosen for analysis, though grouped under a number of subheadings and subtitles, may have exchanged places; they are not organized according to a model of similarity, subject, or theme. They may be treated as pieces of literature that help one strategy (or maybe more than one) come into being, one that would comply with the teachings of Derrida.

The first eight poems in Chapter Three (with the exception of "In the Study"), represent Hardy's agnostic poems although no other poem can be really considered independent of his agnosticism. Even though these God-poems may be accepted as thematically reminiscent of each other, every single poem, in fact, reveals an autonomous status and puts stress on different elements. The nature of poems like "The Subalterns," "A Sign-Seeker," "Hap," "Nature's Questioning," "God-Forgotten," "God's Funeral," and "Self-Unconscious" is philosophical and they become examples that reflect key concepts of Derrida such as *dissemination* and *the absence of the divine logos*. However, poems analysed under the other headings also represent Hardy's agnostic mind and his response to the logocentrism of the bourgeois spirit of the mid-Victorian and late-Victorian age. For example, poems such as "Evening Shadows," "Christmas in the Elgin Room," "Moments of Vision," "The Voice" "The Imprecipient," "The Clock of the Years," "The Temporary the All," and even "Ah, Are You Digging on My Grave?" offer no easy reconciliations between rationalism and religious faith. These poems help us discover that they, too, articulate Hardy's sceptic positioning against *the inaccessibility of the logoi*—divine,

spiritual, or rationalistic. When we discuss the function of the tropic qualities of these poems, it captures our attention that the poems mentioned in the latter group also display examples of *dissemination*, i. e. moments when language cannot contain the intended meanings and words become merely signifiers that float without being attached to any signified. Hardy strives to verbalize a world which cannot be rationalized; however, language itself cannot utter ultimate truths but only temporal and deferred fragments of the *truth*. Thus Hardy's agnosticism becomes his own response to logocentrism and parallels many key concepts of Derridean Deconstructionism—the absence of the logos, of the transcendental signified, of the unifying principles in general. The artistic expression of an agnostic mind, therefore, must reveal exactly the fact that truths and systems of meaning are unavailable and undecidable. The internal instabilities and inconsistencies of the language of poetry are both the sign and the result of Hardy's agnosticism. In other words, if Hardy's mind transcends the binaries of the logoi, so does his language.

The poems in the second group represent Hardy's idea of the self, which has been accepted as both unified and divided at the same time. This corresponds to Derrida's view of the self as a *trace*, *différance*. Poems such as "Christmas in the Elgin Room," "Moments of Vision," "The Voice," "The Haunter," "Before and After Summer," "At the Piano," "The Wind Blew Words," and "The Clock of the Years" epitomise Hardy's problematization of the concept of the self. They reveal that the poet employs double vision or multiple visions which disrupt the idea of a unified, coherent self. These poems do not comply with the idea of the self that we come across in Romantic and Victorian poetry. Since Hardy utilises a dramatised persona and claims that his poetic voices merely translate "seemings" and "impressions" recorded at various intervals of time, we have to accept that his poetry does not build itself on a coherent, stabilized sense of the self. This kind of an approach is an achievement that challenges the absolutist preconceptions of the metaphysics of presence. *Différance* in Derrida is subversive and revolutionary. It implies deferral and difference. Thus Hardy's recurrent elements such as mysterious voices from the past, echoes, ghosts become a challenge to the rationalistic, empirical presumptions

of the Western culture against the backdrop of Post-Darwinian evolutionism. The poems in the second group simultaneously stand for Hardy's challenge to linearity as they cannot be conceived of as products of a single-minded positioning. Therefore, all these poems could have been analysed in the fourth category where I explored Hardy's unique sense of temporality and where Derrida's notion of *time-space* seemed to be at work as an example of the act of twisting free of artificial, dual oppositions. Where there is no coherent self, there could be no constants, neither logoi, nor discourse, nor linearity, and vice versa.

This study puts a special emphasis on the language in Hardy but the analyses of the poems are limited to the poet's use of irony and language of negation. Poems like "Ah, Are You Digging on My Grave?", "The Ruined Maid," "At the Altar-Rail," "In the Room of the Bride- Elect," and "The Vampirine Fair" are taken as representative of Hardy's so-called "satires of circumstance." They involve tragic irony and humour which force us to reread them in a renewed light. In all of these poems Hardy employs a female speaker, who refuses to acquiesce to the hegemony of the male-centred, patriarchal social code and deals with chaos in her own way. Hardy transgresses the male/ female dichotomy as soon as he employs a feminine voice, i.e., the male poet has to assume a position which he can construe only in terms of fantasy or imagination. In this way, Hardy challenges logocentrism and phonocentrism—he has to abandon his male poetic ego in order to speak from the realm of the feminine psyche, a semantic and linguistic rupture in itself. Moreover, the woman as an individual in these satirical poems is incomprehensible and subversive—not in the traditional cliché sense which conceives of the woman's psyche as genuinely inconsistent and unstable, but as the key element that epitomises her ironic positioning as a challenge to prevailing social norms, logocentrism and metaphysical presuppositions. Hardy's women are innocent and guilty at the same time, but they retain their innocence when they are most guilty—a suggestion which celebrates dubiety and contradiction in itself. They refuse to be the victims of male power, but are part of its workings and benefit from it to cope with chaos. In short, women in Hardy's ironic poems become Hardy's substitutes for *différance* again, by

which poetic discourse plays upon semantic fixations. The woman is one element by which Hardy proves to transgress the dual oppositions of social constructs. At the same time, the ironic positioning of the woman, and irony, as a figure of speech, become subversive elements that both stabilize and destabilize meaning. Irony, like the metaphor in Derrida, has to abandon its bipolar constriction as “the opposite of what is intended.” One has to eventually come to the realization that, like the metaphor, irony ceases to represent a binary opposition. It should be conceived of, instead, as a play of signification.

In a similar fashion, the poems analyzed in terms of Hardy’s language of negation become the markers of Derridean *différance*. A number of poems with such linguistic traits demonstrate the destruction and deconstruction of the coupled oppositions such as presence/ absence, affirmation/ negation, as maintained by Derrida. Poems like “The Impercipient,” “The Shadow on the Stone,” “The Temporary the All,” “The Rambler,” “A Sign-Seeker” and “Hap” signify Hardy’s violation of the linguistic sign and his continual play within the binary model. Language of negation is not perceived as the opposite leg of affirmation or of presence. It is not the embodiment of a third category or a new synthesis, either. It corresponds to Derridean *diférance*, which envisions the destruction of all metaphysics of presence. It is not a coincidence, simultaneously, that these poems by Hardy that employ a language of negation reveal some amount of irony as well. Irony and negation become the literary epitomes of *aporia*, of undecidability. Irony as well as negation, challenges the metaphysical presuppositions, but so does any other figure of speech that represents the nature of the language of poetry. In such a context, then, one is to accept that there will be no distinct separation between literal and figurative meaning, all meaning is partial and contextual.

Finally, this thesis explores temporality in Hardy in order to show how he again transgresses the binary model. As an agnostic poet, if his sense of the self is partly fragmented, so will be his sense of temporality. Indeed, Hardy’s concept of temporality is a challenge to traditional metaphysics because it is neither ultimately linear nor essentially cyclical; it is a curious combination of both—a concept of time

simultaneously fluctuating between past, present and future, and becoming momentarily fixed at once at indefinite moments, to haunt the poems like echoes, like the voices of his ghosts. Such a concept of time epitomizes his search for a meaningful “sign,” an attachment with the physical reality. The voices from the past do not necessarily give shape to his present, and yet his present is unthinkable without the fantasy of the past. The instability of the concept of time and space in Hardy epitomises the absence of a transcendental signified. The ensuing crisis of representation, in this regard, strengthens his status as a subversive modern poet.

Poems such as “The Self-Unseeing,” “The Going,” “Evening Shadows,” “Afternoon Service at Melstock,” “Voices from Things Growing in a Churchyard,” “On Sturminster’s Foot-Bridge,” “Overlooking the River Stour” and “Domicilium” stand for Hardy’s unique sense of time and space. In Derridean context, these poems represent the merging of time and space into a unique but temporary status of temporality—Hardy’s space-time and Derrida’s *spacing*. Hardy’s space-time reciprocates Lacan’s *point de capiton*, or “upholstery buttons” by which meaning is temporarily nailed down and attached to a referent. The symbol of permanence and coherence in Hardy is Dorset, and the heritage of the Dorset man. This is not to claim that linearity in Hardy is undisturbed; it is both linear and non-linear, both diachronic and synchronic. The major element that necessitates such kind of an approach to history is the partly divided and partly unified self. When personal time and cosmic time merge with each other, when space ceases to be the prioritized leg of the binary opposition, when the self is conceived of as fragmented and fluctuating, the sense of temporality can never be considered static and solely linear. If *différance* works on the level of all coupled oppositions, it should disrupt the bipolar contrasts of time and space, linearity and non-linearity, synchrony and diachrony.

In conclusion, the reason why this study chooses to comment on these four aspects in Hardy is not only because they correspond to Derridean key concepts which destroy the epistemology of the Western culture and literature. It is easy to see that Hardy’s poetry, too, is his major powerful tool by which he challenges the logocentrism and phonocentrism of his time and after. His agnosticism projects itself on every level—

on the concept of the self, his ironic outlook, his language of negation, and his subtle sense of temporality. Deconstructionism does not necessarily oblige us to view a poet as a transitional figure to justify itself because the strategies of Deconstructionism are neither limited nor canonized. If literary figures or works appear to reinstate themselves as objects with ambiguous status or display a status of in-betweenness, it does not essentially imply that Deconstructionism is the only strategy allowed for criticism. Derrida maintains that this philosophy is not about coming up with a third category or a new synthesis. Deconstructionism is not only about reversing dual oppositions in general, but also about deciphering systems of meaning and truths in order to expose how language betrays us in the face of a post-Freudian, post-Nietzschean human psyche. Such an approach to literary works is simultaneously anachronistic, diachronic, and synchronic. We become aware that truth is extralinguistic; language pre-exists and cannot be hegemonized by human imagination. Therefore, even if Hardy were accepted as a clearly delineated canonical poet, we would still have many reasons to view him in Deconstructionist light. The most important reason would be the fact that he challenges the metaphysics of presence and the prevailing discursive modes. Deconstructionism adopts strategies by which we reinterpret continually and by which we enjoy the infinite play of signify-ing. However, Hardy alone is very Derridean in nature—his language is amorphous, his poetry is subversive and it already deconstructs itself and the social constructs by which it is generated. Hardy’s agnostic but simple outlook on life is his most Derridean element, perhaps instrument—he transgresses all the dual contexts of his time and our time, and his poetry becomes the epitome of linguistic play and crisis, free from the burden of the “sign.”

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APPENDIX A

POEMS

App. 1—"The Subalterns"

'Poor wanderer,' said the leaden sky,
 'I fain would lighten thee,
But there be laws in force on high
 Which say it must not be.'

- 'I would not freeze thee, shorn one,' cried
 The North, 'knew I but how
To warm my breath, to slack my stride;
 But I am ruled as thou.'

- 'To-morrow I attack thee, wight,'
 Said Sickness. 'Yet I swear
I bear thy little ark no spite,
 But am bid enter there.'

- 'Come hither, Son,' I heard Death say;
 'I did not will a grave
Should end thy pilgrimage to-day,
 But I, too, am a slave!'

We smiled upon each other then,
 And life to me had less

Of that fell look it wore ere when
They owned their passiveness. (*CP* 120-121)

App. 2—“A Sign-Seeker”

I MARK the months in liveries dank and dry,
The noontides many-shaped and hued;
I see the nightfall shades subtrude,
And hear the monotonous hours clang negligently by.

I view the evening bonfires of the sun
On hills where morning rains have hissed;
The eyeless countenance of the mist
Pallidly rising when the summer droughts are done.

I have seen the lightning-blade, the leaping star,
The cauldrons of the sea in storm,
Have felt the earthquake's lifting arm,
And trodden where abysmal fires and snow-cones are.

I learn to prophesy the hid eclipse,
The coming of eccentric orbs;
To mete the dust the sky absorbs,
To weigh the sun, and fix the hour each planet dips.

I witness fellow earth-men surge and strive;
Assemblies meet, and throb, and part;
Death's sudden finger, sorrow's smart;
- All the vast various moils that mean a world alive.

But that I fain would wot of shuns my sense-
Those sights of which old prophets tell,
Those signs the general word so well
As vouchsafed their unheed, denied my long suspense.

In graveyard green, where his pale dust lies pent
To glimpse a phantom parent, friend,
Wearing his smile, and 'Not the end!'
Outbreathing softly: that were blest enlightenment;

Or, if a dead Love's lips, whom dreams reveal
When midnight imps of King Decay
Delve sly to solve me back to clay,
Should leave some print to prove her spirit-kisses real;

Or, when Earth's Frail lie bleeding of her Strong,
If some Recorder, as in Writ,
Near to the weary scene should flit
And drop one plume as pledge that Heaven inscrolls the wrong.

-There are who, rapt to heights of trancelike trust,
These tokens claim to feel and see,
Read radiant hints of times to be-
Of heart to heart returning after dust to dust.

Such scope is granted not to lives like mine...
I have lain in dead men's beds, have walked
The tombs of those with whom I'd talked,
Called many a gone and goodly one to shape a sign,

And panted for response. But none replies;
No warnings loom, nor whisperings
To open out my limitings,
And Nescience mutely muses: When a man falls he lies. (*CP* 49-50)

App. 3—"In the Study"

HE enters, and mute on the edge of a chair
Sits a thin-faced lady, a stranger there,
A type of decayed gentility;
And by some small signs he well can guess
That she comes to him almost breakfastless.

'I have called--I hope I do not err--
I am looking for a purchaser
Of some score volumes of the works
Of eminent divines I own,--
Left by my father--though it irks
My patience to offer them.' And she smiles
As if necessity were unknown;
'But the truth of it is that oftenwhiles
I have wished, as I am fond of art,
To make my rooms a little smart,
And these old books are so in the way.'
And lightly still she laughs to him,
As if to sell were a mere gay whim,
And that, to be frank, Life were indeed
To her not vinegar and gall,

But fresh and honey-like; and Need
No household skeleton at all. (*CP* 419-20)

App. 4—“Nature's Questioning”

When I look forth at downing, pool,
Field, flock, and lonely tree,
All seem to gaze at me,
Like chastened children sitting silent in a school;

Their faces dulled, constrained, and worn,
As though the master's ways
Through the long teaching days
Had cowed them till their early zest was overborne.

Upon them stirs in lippings mere
(As if once clear in call,
But now scarce breathed at all) -
‘We wonder, ever wonder, why we find us here!

‘Has some Vast Imbecility,
Mighty to build and blend,
But impotent to tend,
Framed us in jest, and left us now to hazardry?

‘Or come we of an Automaton
Unconscious of our pains?...
Or are we live remains
Of Godhead dying downwards, brain and eye now gone?

‘Or is it that some high Plan betides,
As yet not understood,
Of Evil stormed by Good,
We the Forlorn Hope over which Achievement strides?’

Thus things around. No answerer I....
Meanwhile the winds, and rains,
And Earth's old glooms and pains
Are still the same, and Life and Death are neighbours nigh. (*CP* 66-67)

App. 5—“God-Forgotten”

I towered far, and lo! I stood within
The presence of the Lord Most High,
Sent thither by the sons of Earth, to win
Some answer to their cry.

- ‘The Earth, sayest thou? The Human race?
By Me created? Sad its lot?
Nay: I have no remembrance of such place:
Such world I fashioned not.’ -

- ‘O Lord, forgive me when I say
Thou spakest the word, and made it all.’ -
‘The Earth of men—let me bethink meYea!
I dimly do recall

‘Some tiny sphere I built long back

(Mid millions of such shapes of mine)
So named . . . It perished, surely—not a wrack
Remaining, or a sign?

‘It lost my interest from the first,
My aims therefor succeeding ill;
Haply it died of doing as it durst?’ -
‘Lord, it existeth still.’ -

‘Dark, then, its life! For not a cry
Of aught it bears do I now hear;
Of its own act the threads were snapt whereby
Its plaints had reached mine ear.

‘It used to ask for gifts of good,
Till came its severance self-entailed,
When sudden silence on that side ensued,
And has till now prevailed.

‘All other orbs have kept in touch;
Their voicings reach me speedily:
Thy people took upon them overmuch
In sundering them from me!

‘And it is strange—though sad enough -
Earth's race should think that one whose call
Frames, daily, shining spheres of flawless stuff
Must heed their tainted ball! . . .

‘But sayest it is by pangs distraught,
And strife, and silent suffering? -

Sore grieved am I that injury should be wrought
Even on so poor a thing!

‘Thou shouldst have learnt that *Not to Mend*
For Me could mean but *Not to Know*:
Hence, Messengers! and straightway put an end
To what men undergo.’ . . .

Homing at dawn, I thought to see
One of the Messengers standing by.
- Oh, childish thought! . . . Yet often it comes to me
When trouble hovers nigh. (*CP* 123-124)

App. 6—“God's Funeral”

I

I saw a slowly-stepping train –
Lined on the brows, scoop-eyed and bent and hoar –
Following in files across a twilit plain
A strange and mystic form the foremost bore.

II

And by contagious throbs of thought
Or latent knowledge that within me lay
And had already stirred me, I was wrought
To consciousness of sorrow even as they.

III

The fore-borne shape, to my blurred eyes,
At first seemed man-like, and anon to change
To an amorphous cloud of marvellous size,
At times endowed with wings of glorious range.

IV

And this phantasmal variousness
Ever possessed it as they drew along:
Yet throughout all it symbolled none the less
Potency vast and loving-kindness strong.

V

Almost before I knew I bent
Towards the moving columns without a word;
They, growing in bulk and numbers as they went,
Struck out sick thoughts that could be overheard: —

VI

'O man-projected Figure, of late
Imaged as we, thy knell who shall survive?
Whence came it we were tempted to create
One whom we can no longer keep alive?

VII

'Framing him jealous, fierce, at first,
We gave him justice as the ages rolled,
Will to bless those by circumstance accurst,
And longsuffering, and mercies manifold.

VIII

'And, tricked by our own early dream

And need of solace, we grew self-deceived,
Our making soon our maker did we deem,
And what we had imagined we believed,

IX

'Till, in Time's stayless stealthy swing,
Uncompromising rude reality
Mangled the Monarch of our fashioning,
Who quavered, sank; and now has ceased to be.

X

'So, toward our myth's oblivion,
Darkling, and languid-lipped, we creep and grope
Sadlier than those who wept in Babylon,
Whose Zion was a still abiding hope.

XI

'How sweet it was in years far hied
To start the wheels of day with trustful prayer,
To lie down liegely at the eventide
And feel a blest assurance he was there!

XII

'And who or what shall fill his place?
Whither will wanderers turn distracted eyes
For some fixed star to stimulate their pace
Towards the goal of their enterprise?'...

XIII

Some in the background then I saw,

Sweet women, youths, men, all incredulous,
Who chimed: 'This is a counterfeit of straw,
This requiem mockery! Still he lives to us!'

XIV

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.

XV

Still, how to bear such loss I deemed
The insistent question for each animate mind,
And gazing, to my growing sight there seemed
A pale yet positive gleam low down behind,

XVI

Whereof, to lift the general night,
A certain few who stood aloof had said,
'See you upon the horizon that small light –
Swelling somewhat?' Each mourner shook his head.

XVII

And they composed a crowd of whom
Some were right good, and many nigh the best....
Thus dazed and puzzled 'twixt the gleam and gloom
Mechanically I followed with the rest.

1908-10

App. 7—"Self-Unconscious"

Along the way
He walked that day,
Watching shapes that reveries limn,
And seldom he
Had eyes to see
The moment that encompassed him.

Bright yellowhammers
Made mirthful clamours,
And billed long straws with a bustling air,
And bearing their load
Flew up the road
That he followed, alone, without interest there.

From bank to ground
And over and round
They sidled along the adjoining hedge;
Sometimes to the gutter
Their yellow flutter
Would dip from the nearest slatestone ledge.

The smooth sea-line
With a metal shine,
And flashes of white, and a sail thereon,
He would also descry
With a half-wrapt eye
Between the projects he mused upon.

Yes, round him were these
Earth's artistries,
But specious plans that came to his call
Did most engage
His pilgrimage,
While himself he did not see at all.

Dead now as sherds
Are the yellow birds,
And all that mattered has passed away;
Yet God, the Elf,
Now shows him that self
As he was, and should have been shown, that day.

O it would have been good
Could he then have stood
At a clear-eyed distance, and conned the whole,
But now such vision
Is mere derision,
Nor soothes his body nor saves his soul.

Not much, some may
Incline to say,
To see therein, had it all been seen.
Nay! he is aware
A thing was there
That loomed with an immortal mien.(*CP* 331-332)

Near Bossiney

App. 8—"Christmas in the Elgin Room"

British Museum: Early Last Century

‘What is the noise that shakes the night,
And seems to soar to the Pole-star height?’
— ‘Christmas bells,
The watchman tells
Who walks this hall that blears us captives with its blight.’

‘And what, then, mean such clangs, so clear?’
‘ — ’Tis said to have been a day of cheer,
And source of grace
To the human race
Long ere their woven sails winged us to exile here.

‘We are those whom Christmas overthrew
Some centuries after Pheidias knew
How to shape us
And bedrape us
And to set us in Athena's temple for men's view.

‘O it is sad now we are sold —
We gods! for Borean people's gold,
And brought to the gloom
Of this gaunt room
Which sunlight shuns, and sweet Aurore but enters cold.

‘For all these bells, would I were still
Radiant as on Athenai's Hill.’

— ‘And I, and I!’
The others sigh,
‘Before this Christ was known, and we had men's good will.’

Thereat old Helios could but nod,
Throbbled, too, the Ilissus River-god,
And the torsos there
Of deities fair,
Whose limbs were shards beneath some Acropolitan clod:

Demeter too, Poseidon hoar,
Persephone, and many more
Of Zeus’ high breed, —
All loth to heed
What the bells sang that night which shook them to the core. (*CP* 927-28)

1905 and 1926

App. 9—“Moments of Vision”

That mirror
Which makes of men a transparency,
Who holds that mirror
And bids us such a breast-bare spectacle see
Of you and me?

That mirror
Whose magic penetrates like a dart,
Who lifts that mirror
And throws our mind back on us, and our heart,
Until we start?

That mirror
Works well in these night hours of ache;
Why in that mirror
Are tincts we never see ourselves once take
When the world is awake?

That mirror
Can test each mortal when unaware;
Yea, that strange mirror
May catch his last thoughts, whole life foul or fair,
Glassing it—where? (*CP* 427)

App. 10—“The Voice”

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.

Can it be you that I hear? Let me view you, then,
 Standing as when I drew near to the town
Where you would wait for me: yes, as I knew you then,
 Even to the original air-blue gown!

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?

 Thus I; faltering forward,
 Leaves around me falling,
Wind oozing thin through the thorn from norward,
 And the woman calling. (*CP* 346)

December 1912

App. 11—“The Haunter”

He does not think that I haunt here nightly:
 How shall I let him know
That whither his fancy sets him wandering
 I, too, alertly go? -
 Hover and hover a few feet from him
 Just as I used to do,
But cannot answer the words he lifts me –
 Only listen thereto!

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.

Yes, I companion him to places
Only dreamers know,
Where the shy hares print long paces,
Where the night rooks go;
Into old aisles where the past is all to him,
Close as his shade can do,
Always lacking the power to call to him,
Near as I reach thereto!

What a good haunter I am, O tell him!
Quickly make him know
If he but sigh since my loss befell him
Straight to his side I go.
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. (*CP* 345-46)

App. 12—“Before and After Summer”

I

Looking forward to the spring
One puts up with anything.
On this February day
Though the winds leap down the street
Wintry scourgings seem but play,
And these later shafts of sleet
- Sharper pointed than the first -
And these later snows- the worst-
Are as a half-transparent blind
Riddled by rays from sun behind.

II

Shadows of the October pine
Reach into this room of mine:
On the pine there swings a bird;
He is shadowed with the tree.
Mutely perched he bills no word;
Blank as I am even is he.
For those happy suns are past,
Fore-discerned in winter last.
When went by their pleasure, then?
I, alas, perceived not when. (*CP* 333-334)

App. 13—"At the Piano"

A woman was playing,
A man looking on;
And the mould of her face,
And her neck, and her hair,
Which the rays fell upon
Of the two candles there,
Sent him mentally straying
In some fancy-place
Where pain had no trace.

A cowed Apparition
Came pushing between;
And her notes seemed to sigh;
And the lights to burn pale,
As a spell numbed the scene.
But the maid saw no bale,
And the man no monition;
And Time laughed awry,
And the Phantom hid nigh. (*CP* 529-30)

App. 14—“The Wind Blew Words”

The wind blew words along the skies,
And these it blew to me
Through the wide dusk: ‘Lift up your eyes,
Behold this troubled tree,
Complaining as it sways and plies;
It is a limb of thee.

‘Yea, too, the creatures sheltering round—
Dumb figures, wild and tame,
Yea, too, thy fellows who abound—
Either of speech the same
Or far and strange—black, dwarfed, and browned,
They are stuff of thy own frame.’

I moved on in a surging awe
Of inarticulateness
At the pathetic Me I saw
In all his huge distress,
Making self-slaughter of the law
To kill, break, or suppress. (*CP* 446-47)

App. 15—"The Clock of the Years"

'A spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up.'

And the spirit said,
'I can make the clock of the years go backward,
But am loth to stop it where you will.'

And I cried, 'Agreed
To that. Proceed:
It's better than dead!'

He answered, 'Peace;'
And called her up—as last before me;
Then younger, younger she freshed, to the year
I first had known
Her woman-grown,
And I cried, 'Cease!—

'Thus far is good—
It is enough—let her stay thus always!'
But alas for me—He shook his head:
No stop was there;
And she waned child-fair,
And to babyhood.

Still less in mien
To my great sorrow became she slowly,
And smalled till she was nought at all
In his checkless griff;
And it was as if

She had never been.

‘Better,’ I plained,
‘She were dead as before! The memory of her
Had lived in me; but it cannot now!’
And coldly his voice:
‘It was your choice
To mar the ordained. (CP 528-29)

1916

App. 16—“Ah, Are You Digging on My Grave?”

‘Ah, are you digging on my grave,
My loved one? – planting rue?’
-- ‘No, yesterday he went to wed
One of the brightest wealth has bred.
“It cannot hurt her now,” he said,
“That I should not be true.”’

‘Then who is digging on my grave?
My nearest dearest kin?’
-- ‘Ah, no: they sit and think, “What use!
What good will planting flowers produce?
No tendance of her mound can loose
Her spirit from Death's gin.”’

‘But someone digs upon my grave?
My enemy? -- prodding sly?’
-- ‘Nay: when she heard you had passed the Gate
That shuts on all flesh soon or late,
She thought you no more worth her hate,
And cares not where you lie.’

‘Then, who is digging on my grave?
Say – since I have not guessed!’
-- ‘O it is I, my mistress dear,
Your little dog, who still lives near,
And much I hope my movements here
Have not disturbed your rest?’

‘Ah yes! *You* dig upon my grave
Why flashed it not on me
That one true heart was left behind!
What feeling do we ever find
To equal among human kind
A dog's fidelity!’

‘Mistress, I dug upon your grave
To bury a bone, in case
I should be hungry near this spot
When passing on my daily trot.
I am sorry, but I quite forgot
It was your resting-place.’ (CP 330-331)

App. 17—“The Ruined Maid”

‘O ’Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!
Who could have supposed I should meet you in Town?
And whence such fair garments, such prosperi-ty?’ —
‘O didn't you know I'd been ruined?’ said she.

— ‘You left us in tatters, without shoes or socks,
Tired of digging potatoes, and spudding up docks;
And now you've gay bracelets and bright feathers three!’ —
‘Yes: that's how we dress when we're ruined,’ said she.

— ‘At home in the barton you said “thee” and “thou,”
And “thik oon,” and “theäs oon,” and “t’other”; but now
Your talking quite fits ’ee for high compa-ny!’ —
‘Some polish is gained with one's ruin,’ said she.

— ‘Your hands were like paws then, your face blue and bleak
But now I'm bewitched by your delicate cheek,
And your little gloves fit as on any la-dy!’ —
‘We never do work when we're ruined,’ said she.

— ‘You used to call home-life a hag-ridden dream,
And you'd sigh, and you'd sock; but at present you seem
To know not of megrims or melancho-ly!’ —
‘True. One's pretty lively when ruined,’ said she.

— ‘I wish I had feathers, a fine sweeping gown,
And a delicate face, and could strut about Town!’ —

‘My dear — a raw country girl, such as you be,
Cannot quite expect that. You ain’t ruined,’ said she. (CP 158-159)

Westborne Park Villas, 1866

App. 18—“At the Altar-Rail”

‘My bride is not coming, alas!’ says the groom,
And the telegram shakes in his hand. ‘I own
It was hurried! We met at a dancing-room
When I went to the Cattle-Show alone,
And then, next night, where the Fountain leaps,
And the Street of the Quarter-Circle sweeps.

‘Ay, she won me to ask her to be my wife—
’Twas foolish perhaps!—to forsake the ways
Of the flaring town for a farmer’s life.
She agreed. And we fixed it. Now she says:
*“It’s sweet of you, dear, to prepare me a nest,
But a swift, short, gay life suits me best.
What I really am you have never gleaned;
I had eaten the apple ere you were weaned.”*” (CP 420)

App. 19—"The Vampirine Fair"

Gilbert had sailed to India's shore,
And I was all alone:
My lord came in at my open door
And said, "O fairest one!" (4)

He leant upon the slant bureau,
And sighed, "I am sick for thee!"
"My lord," said I, "pray speak not so,
Since wedded wife I be." (8)

Leaning upon the slant bureau,
Bitter his next words came:
"So much I know; and likewise know
My love burns on the same! (12)

"But since you thrust my love away,
And since it knows no cure,
I must live out as best I may
The ache that I endure." (16)

When Michaelmas brownd the nether Coomb,
And Wingreen Hill above,
And made the hollyhocks rags of bloom,
My lord grew ill of love. (20)

My lord grew ill with love for me;
Gilbert was far from port;
And - so it was - that time did see
Me housed at Manor Court. (24)

About the bowers of Manor Court

The primrose pushed its head

When, on a day at last, report

Arrived of him I had wed. (28)

"Gilbert, my lord, is homeward bound,

His sloop is drawing near,

What shall I do when I am found

Not in his house but here?" (32)

"O I will heal the injuries

I've done to him and thee.

I'll give him means to live at ease

Afar from Shastonb'ry." (36)

When Gilbert came we both took thought:

"Since comfort and good cheer,"

Said he, "So readily are bought,

He's welcome to thee, Dear." (40)

So when my lord flung liberally

His gold in Gilbert's hands,

I coaxed and got my brothers three

Made stewards of his lands. (44)

And then I coaxed him to install

My other kith and kin,

With aim to benefit them all

Before his love ran thin. (48)

And next I craved to be possessed
Of plate and jewels rare.
He groaned: "You give me, Love, no rest,
Take all the law will spare!" (52)

And so in course of years my wealth
Became a goodly hoard,
My steward brethren, too, by stealth
Had each a fortune stored. (56)

Thereafter in the gloom he'd walk,
And by and by began
To say aloud in absent talk,
"I am a ruined man! - (60)

"I hardly could have thought," he said,
"When first I looked on thee,
That one so soft, so rosy red,
Could thus have beggared me!" (64)

Seeing his fair estates in pawn,
And him in such decline,
I knew that his domain had gone
To lift up me and mine. (68)

Next month upon a Sunday morn
A gunshot sounded nigh:
By his own hand my lordly born
Had doomed himself to die. (72)

"Live, my dear lord, and much of thine

Shall be restored to thee!"
He smiled, and said 'twixt word and sign,
"Alas - that cannot be!" (76)

And while I searched his cabinet
For letters, keys, or will,
'Twas touching that his gaze was set
With love upon me still. (80)

And when I burnt each document
Before his dying eyes,
'Twas sweet that he did not resent
My fear of compromise. (84)

The steeple-cock gleamed golden when
I watched his spirit go:
And I became repentant then
That I had wrecked him so. (88)

Three weeks at least had come and gone,
With many a saddened word,
Before I wrote to Gilbert on
The stroke that so had stirred. (92)

And having worn a mournful gown,
I joined, in decent while,
My husband at a dashing town
To live in dashing style. (96)

Yet though I now enjoy my fling,
And dine and dance and drive,

I'd give my prettiest emerald ring
To see my lord alive. (100)

And when the meet on hunting-days
Is near his churchyard home,
I leave my bantering beaux to place
A flower upon his tomb; (104)

And sometimes say: "Perhaps too late
The saints in Heaven deplore
That tender time when, moved by Fate,
He darked my cottage door." (*CP* 265-268)

App. 20—"The Impercipient"

(At a Cathedral service)

That with this bright believing band
I have no claim to be,
That faiths by which my comrades stand
Seem fantasies to me,
And mirage-mists their Shining Land
Is a strange destiny.

Why thus my soul should be consigned
To infelicity,
Why always I must feel as blind
To sights my brethren see,
Why joys they've found I cannot find,

Abides a mystery.

Since heart of mine knows not that ease
Which they know; since it be
That He who breathes All's Well to these
Breathes no All's-Well to me,
My lack might move their sympathies
And Christian charity!

I am like a gazer who should mark
An inland company
Standing upfingered, with, 'Hark! hark!
The glorious distant sea!'
And feel, 'Alas, 'tis but yon dark
And wind-swept pine to me!'

Yet I would bear my shortcomings
With meet tranquillity,
But for the charge that blessed things
I'd liefer not have be.
O, doth a bird deprived of wings
Go earth-bound wilfully!

...

Enough. As yet disquiet clings
About us. Rest shall we. (*CP* 67-68)

App. 21—"The Shadow on the Stone"

I went by the Druid stone
That broods in the garden white and lone,
And I stopped and looked at the shifting shadows
That at some moments fall thereon
From the tree hard by with a rhythmic swing,
And they shaped in my imagining
To the shade that a well-known head and shoulders
Threw there when she was gardening.

I thought her behind my back,
Yea, her I long had learned to lack,
And I said: 'I am sure you are standing behind me,
Though how do you get into this old track?'
And there was no sound but the fall of a leaf
As a sad response; and to keep down grief
I would not turn my head to discover
That there was nothing in my belief.

Yet I wanted to look and see
That nobody stood at the back of me;
But I thought once more: 'Nay, I'll not unvision
A shape which, somehow, there may be.'
So I went on softly from the glade,
And left her behind me throwing her shade,
As she were indeed an apparition—
My head unturned lest my dream should fade. (*CP* 530)

Begun 1913: finished 1916

App. 22—"The Temporary The All"

(Sapphics)

Change and chancefulness in my flowering youthtime,
Set me sun by sun near to one unchosen;
Wrought us fellowlike, and despite divergence,
Fused us in friendship.

'Cherish him can I while the true one forthcome -
Come the rich fulfiller of my prevision;
Life is roomy yet, and the odds unbounded.'
So self-communed I.

'Thwart my wistful way did a damsel saunter,
Fair, albeit unformed to be all-eclipsing;
'Maiden meet,' held I, 'till arise my forefelt
Wonder of women.'

Long a visioned hermitage deep desiring,
Tenements uncouth I was fain to house in:
'Let such lodging be for a breath-while,' thought I,
'Soon a more seemly.

'Then high handiwork will I make my life-deed,
Truth and Light outshow; but the ripe time pending,
Intermissive aim at the thing sufficeth."
Thus I. . . . But lo, me!

Mistress, friend, place, aims to be bettered straightway,
Bettered not has Fate or my hand's achievement;

Sole the showance those of my onward earth-track--
Never transcended! (*CP* 7)

App. 23—“The Rambler”

I do not see the hills around,
Nor mark the tints the copses wear;
I do not note the grassy ground
And constellated daisies there.

I hear not the contralto note
Of cuckoos hid on either hand,
The whirr that shakes the nighthawk's throat
When eve's brown awning hoods the land.

Some say each songster, tree and mead -
All eloquent of love divine -
Receives their constant careful heed:
Such keen appraisement is not mine.

The tones around me that I hear,
The aspects, meanings, shapes I see,
Are those far back ones missed when near,
And now perceived too late by me! (*CP* 269)

App. 24—“The Self-Unseeing”

HERE is the ancient floor,
Footworn and hollowed and thin,
Here was the former door
Where the dead feet walked in.

She sat here in her chair,
Smiling into the fire;
He who played stood there,
Bowing it higher and higher.

Childlike, I danced in a dream;
Blessings emblazoned that day;
Everything glowed with a gleam;
Yet we were looking away! (*CP* 166-167)

App. 25—“The Going”

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!

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.

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

You were she who abode
By those red-veined rocks far West,
You were the swan-necked one who rode
Along the beetling Beeny Crest,
And, reining nigh me,
Would muse and eye me,
While Life unrolled us its very best.

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

Those places that once we visited.’

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! (*CP* 338-339)

December 1912

App. 26—“Evening Shadows”

THE shadows of my chimneys stretch afar
Across the plot, and on to the privet bower,
And even the shadows of their smokings show,
And nothing says just now that where they are
They will in future stretch at this same hour,
Though in my earthen cyst I shall not know.

And at this time the neighbouring Pagan mound,
Whose myths the Gospel news now supersede,
Upon the greensward also throws its shade,
And nothing says such shade will spread around
Even as to-day when men will no more heed
The Gospel news than when the mound was made. (*CP* 853)

App. 27—“Afternoon Service at Mellstock”

(Circa 1850)

On afternoons of drowsy calm
We stood in the panelled pew,
Singing one-voiced a Tate-and-Brady psalm
To the tune of 'Cambridge New'.

We watched the elms, we watched the rooks,
The clouds upon the breeze,
Between the whiles of glancing at our books,
And swaying like the trees.

So mindless were those outpourings! -
Though I am not aware
That I have gained by subtle thought on things
Since we stood psalming there. (*CP* 429)

App. 28—“Voices from Things Growing in a Churchyard”

THESE flowers are I, poor Fanny Hurd,
Sir or Madam,
A little girl here sepultured.
Once I flit-fluttered like a bird
Above the grass, as now I wave
In daisy shapes above my grave,

All day cheerily,

All night eerily!

- I am one Bachelor Bowring, "Gent,"

Sir or Madam;

In shingled oak my bones were pent;
Hence more than a hundred years I spent
In my feat of change from a coffin-thrall
To a dancer in green as leaves on a wall.

All day cheerily,

All night eerily!

- I, these berries of juice and gloss,

Sir or Madam,

Am clean forgotten as Thomas Voss;
Thin-urned, I have burrowed away from the moss
That covers my sod, and have entered this yew,
And turned to clusters ruddy of view,

All day cheerily,

All night eerily!

- The Lady Gertrude, proud, high-bred,

Sir or Madam,

Am I—this laurel that shades your head;
Into its veins I have stilly sped,
And made them of me; and my leaves now shine,
As did my satins superfine,

All day cheerily,

All night eerily!

- I, who as innocent withwind climb,
 Sir or Madam.
Am one Eve Greensleeves, in olden time
 Kissed by men from many a clime,
Beneath sun, stars, in blaze, in breeze,
 As now by glowworms and by bees,
 All day cheerily,
 All night eerily!³

- I'm old Squire Audeley Grey, who grew,
 Sir or Madam,
Aweary of life, and in scorn withdrew;
 Till anon I clambered up anew
As ivy-green, when my ache was stayed,
And in that attire I have longtime gayed
 All day cheerily,
 All night eerily!

- And so these maskers breathe to each
 Sir or Madam
Who lingers there, and their lively speech
 Affords an interpreter much to teach,
As their murmurous accents seem to come
 Thence hitheraround in a radiant hum,
 All day cheerily,
 All night eerily! (*CP* 623-625)

³ It was said her real name was Eve Trevillian or Trevelyan; and that she was the handsome mother of two or three illegitimate children, *circa* 1784-95.

App. 29—“On Sturminster Foot-Bridge”

(Onomatopoeic)

RETICULATIONS creep upon the slack stream's face
When the wind skims irritably past,
The current clucks smartly into each hollow place
That years of flood have scabbled in the pier's sodden base;
The floating lily leaves rot fast.

On a roof stand the swallows ranged in wistful waiting rows,
Till they arrow off and drop like stones
Among the eyot-withies at whose feet the river flows:
And beneath the roof is she who in the dark world shows
As a lattice-gleam when midnight moans (*CP* 484).

App. 30—“Overlooking the River Stour”

THE swallows flew in the curves of an eight
Above the river-gleam
In the wet June's last beam:
Like little crossbows animate
The swallows flew in the curves of an eight
Above the river-gleam.

Planing up shavings of crystal spray
A moor-hen darted out

From the bank thereabout,
And through the stream-shine ripped his way;
Planing up shavings of crystal spray
A moor-hen darted out.

Closed were the kingcups; and the mead
Dripped in monotonous green,
Though the day's morning sheen
Had shown it golden and honeybee'd;
Closed were the kingcups; and the mead
Dripped in monotonous green.

And never I turned my head, alack,
While these things met my gaze
Through the pane's drop-drenched glaze,
To see the more behind my back
O never I turned, but let, alack,
These less things hold my gaze! (*CP* 482)

App. 31—"Domicilium"

IT faces west, and round the back and sides
High beeches, bending, hang a veil of boughs,
And sweep against the roof. Wild honeysucks
Climb on the walls, and seem to sprout a wish
(If we may fancy wish of trees and plants)
To overtop the apple-trees hard by.

Red roses, lilacs, variegated box
 Are there in plenty, and such hardy flowers
 As flourish best untrained. Adjoining these
 Are herbs and esculents; and farther still
 A field; then cottages with trees, and last
 The distant hills and sky.
 Behind, the scene is wilder. Heath and furze
 Are everything that seems to grow and thrive
 Upon the uneven ground. A stunted thorn
 stands here and there, indeed; and from a pit
 An oak uprises, springing from a seed
 Dropped by some bird a hundred years ago.
 In days bygone --
 Long gone -- my father's mother, who is now
 Blest with the blest, would take me out to walk.
 At such a time I once inquired of her
 How looked the spot when first she settled here.
 The answer I remember. 'Fifty years
 Have passed since then, my child, and change has marked
 The face of all things. Yonder garden-plots
 And orchards were uncultivated slopes
 O'ergrown with bramble bushes, furze and thorn:
 That road a narrow path shut in by ferns,
 Which, almost trees, obscured the passer-by.
 'Our house stood quite alone, and those tall firs
 And beeches were not planted. Snakes and efts
 Swarmed in the summer days, and nightly bats
 Would fly about our bedrooms. Heathcroppers
 Lived on the hills, and were our friends;
 So wild it was when first we settled here.' (CP 3)

APPENDIX B

CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL DATA

Name : Nilüfer Özgür, PhD.

Place of Birth : Yonkovo, Bulgaria

Date of Birth : 31/10/1972

Work Address : Gazi University, Gazi Faculty of Education, Department of Foreign Languages Education, English Language Teaching Programme, C Bl. No: 203, Teknikokullar, 06500, Ankara, Türkiye

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EDUCATION

2009-2015: PhD—Middle East Technical University, Department of English Language Teaching, English Literature Programme.

2004-2007: Master of Art—Gazi University, Department of Foreign Languages Teaching, English Language Teaching Programme

1994-1999: Bachelor of Art—Hacettepe University, Faculty of Letters, Department of American Culture and Literature

1989-1990: High school—Yenimahalle Halide Edip High School, Ankara, Turkey

1987-1989: High school—ESPU Hristo Botev, Razgrad, Bulgaria

1984-1987: Secondary—ESPU Hristo Botev, Razgrad, Bulgaria

QUALIFICATIONS

2015: PhD Thesis—*Thomas Hardy as a Threshold Figure and Crisis of Representation in His Poetry—A Deconstructionist Reading.*

2007: M. A. Thesis—*Teaching the Novel through the Characters of Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man with Specific Reference to Gazi ELT Department of Gazi Faculty of Education, Gazi University.*

1999: İhsan Doğramacı Award for Exceptional Success (B.A.)

1999: Hacettepe University, First Class Honours Degree (B. A.)

1984-1989: First Rank Student at Secondary and High School Degree at Hristo Botev High School, Razgrad Bulgaria.

1987: Razgrad County Champion in the County Contest on Russian Language and Culture

1984-1987: Participation and Degrees in Contests on Bulgarian Literature, Hristo Botev High School, Razgrad, Bulgaria.

WORK EXPERIENCE

2001—Present: Instructor of English Literature at Gazi University, ELT Department:
2000-2001: Summer Term: Gazi University, Faculty of Trade and Tourism, Taught Professional English and English for Tourism.

2000-2001: Gazi University, Foreign Languages Practice and Research Centre, English Preparatory Class, Taught English for General Purposes.

2000-2001: Gazi University, Faculty of Industrial Arts, Taught General and Professional English.

1999-2000: Hacettepe Language Centre-Ankara. Taught English for general purposes at all levels—beginner, elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate, advanced. Taught English for Distance Education of Anadolu University (Taught English for Office Management and English for Tourism). 100 percent of the students registered in the Open University passed their English exams and graduated.

1992-1994: YEPA Ltd. and Education Co., Ankara. Worked as a translator and interpreter in Russian.

1987-1989: Worked in summer jobs in public and agrarian institutions in the county of Razgrad, Bulgaria as part of the state's educational policy. Attendance had been obligatory.

CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS ATTENDED

2013, December—Attended 21st METU British Novelists Conference: The Bronte Sisters and Their Work, Middle East Technical University, Ankara.

2010, December 16—Attended 18th METU British Novelists Conference: Jane Austin and Her Work, Middle East Technical University, Ankara.

2010, May- Presented a Paper in Congress-“The Influence of Plato's Metaphysics in the Poetry of William Butler Yeats”, Congress of Turkish-Greek Cultural Perspectives, Gazi University, English Language Teaching Department, Ankara.

2007, November 22-23—Attended National Congress: Gazi University, Gazi Faculty of Education: “Foreign Language Teaching in Türkiye”, Ankara

2006, 11th March—4th ELT Conference: Ankara University Development Foundation Private Primary School and High School, Certificate for Attendance, “Exploring Yourself in Your Voyage of Portfolio”, Ankara

2006, Attended Seminar by Fredricka L. Stoller, Northern Arizona University—“Making the Transition from Traditional Language Teaching Approaches to Content-Based Instruction: Lessons from Teachers in the Trenches”, Gazi University, ELT Department, Ankara

2005, 7 May, Attended Educational Seminar on English Language Teaching, Metro Hillside Press, Ankara

2001, September 9-11—Attended 5th International Conference: “Teachers Develop Teachers Research” Middle East Technical University, School of Foreign Languages, Department of Modern Languages, Ankara.

2001, 23-26 May—19th EAAE International Conference—“Re-Integrating Theory and Design in Architectural Education”, Gazi University, Ankara.

2001, 21 May—Prof. Walter Johnson: “Afro-American History”, Turkish-American Association, Ankara.

1997, October 6—“War in American Culture”, Department of American Culture and Literature, Hacettepe University, Ankara.

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Turkish : Native Language

Bulgarian : Advanced (speak, write, read, and translate)

YDS—November, 2014, 90/100

English : Advanced (speak, write, read, and translate)

YDS—April, 2014, 97,5/100

Russian : Fluent (read and write), Average (speak)

KPDS-November, 2007--66/100

German : Fluent (read), Average (write), Elementary (speak)

COMPUTER KNOWLEDGE: Windows XP, Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Power Point)

PERSONAL INTERESTS: Literary theory and criticism, modernism and post-modernism, modernist poetry, the linguistic sign and problems of the sign, deconstructionism, philosophy, poststructuralist theory (Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, Heidegger, Hegel), Shakespearean Drama, feminist theory, world history, American Literature, mythology and Greek tragedy, the epic, the romance, psychology and psychoanalysis, literatures of the minorities, non-fiction, world literature and languages, social sciences, art and cultural studies.

STATUS: Currently Employed at Gazi Faculty of Education, English Language Teaching Department. Instructor of English Literature.

APPENDIX C

TURKISH SUMMARY

BİR GEÇİŞ DÖNEMİ FİGÜRÜ OLARAK THOMAS HARDY’NİN ŞİİRLERİNDEKİ TEMSİL KRİZİ—YAPISÖKÜMCÜLÜK IŞIĞINDA BİR OKUMA

Friedrich Nietzsche gibi bir düşünürün ardında bıraktığı bir dünyada, mutlak gerçeklerin geçerliliğini sorgusuz sualsiz kabul etmek zorlaşmıştır. Nietzsche ve Heidegger’den başlayarak, Wittgenstein’den Derrida’ya kadar, 20. yüzyıl Batı felsefesi, Aristo’nun mimetik (yansıma aktarmalı) gerçekliğinin artık yürürlükte olmadığını kabul etmiş, “anlam” denen kavramın sözcüklerin dışına taşıtığını ya da sözcüklerin anlamları bir bütün olarak kapsayamadığını vurgulamıştır. Dil ve gerçek kavramlarına böyle bir yaklaşımla birlikte, dilin her şeyden önce geldiği ve böylece her gerçeğin metne ait olduğu vurgulanmaktadır. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, İngiliz şair, kısa öykü yazarı ve romancı Thomas Hardy’nin şiirleri, Yapısökümcülük felsefesine dayandırılabilir bir incelemeye oldukça açık birer örnek oluşturmaktadır çünkü böyle bir yaklaşım, dil ve hakikat arasındaki sorunlu ilişkiyi daha açık bir biçimde ortaya koymaktadır. Bu anlamda, Hardy’nin şiirlerinin Modernizmde gördüğümüz “temsil krizinin” habercisi olması şaşırtıcı değildir. Tüm şiirlerinde, mutlak hakikat sorunsallaştırılmıştır, ya bir bilinemeyendir, ya da “kör talih” (Mina Urgan’ın deyişiyle) denen bir yetkenin alanındadır, yani erişilmezdir. Öte yandan Hardy, daha güvenilir bir duruş sergilemek ve belki de daha sarsılmaz bir hakikat anlayışına erişmek için bine yakın şiir yazmıştır. Şairin bu çabası, Modernistlerde de gördüğümüz, rasyonel bir biçimde anlamlandırılmaya ve her türlü sabitleşmiş dilsel formülasyonlara direnen kaotik bir dünyanın neden olduğu bir kaygı duygusuyla mücadelesini ifade etmektedir.

Thomas Hardy, pek çok edebi akıma şahitlik eden oldukça uzun bir kariyere sahip olmuştur. Gerek nesir gerek nazım biçiminde olsun, eserlerinin çoğu Viktorya

dönemine aittir. En son romanı, *Karanlık Jude*, (*Jude the Obscure*) (1895), Modernist tavrın yansıması olmuştur. Bir bütün olarak ele aldığımızda, Hardy'nin tarzı hem geleneksel, hem de geleneksel olmayan, yani deneysel bir tarzdır. Bir romancı olarak Hardy, geleneksel Viktorya çağının edebi özellikleriyle özdeşleştirilirken, şiirleri bakımından Hardy'yi sınıflandırmak her zaman daha zor olmuştur. Pek çok eleştirmen ve okuyucu onu modern bir şair olarak kabul etmektedir. Norman Page gibi eleştirmenlerin de yeniden ortaya koyduğu, bazen klişe bazen de “genel bir gerçek” olarak kabul edilen, yani Hardy'nin bir Viktorya çağı romancısı ve modern bir şair olduğu görüşü yaygındır. Aslında bütün bu önermeler, şairin Viktorya çağı ve Modernist çağ arasında bir geçiş figürü olduğu, şiirlerinin ise olguları tersyüz edici niteliğe sahip olduğu ve semantik açıdan uyumlu ve mimetik olduğu görüşüne meydan okuduğu fikrini pekiştirmektedir.

Ondokuzuncu yüzyıl eleştirmenleri, Hardy'nin şiirlerinin değerini anlama konusunda ortak bir görüşe varamamışlardır. Yirminci yüzyılda eleştirmenler ise onun deneysel biçimine özgü kaprislerinin kaynağını daha iyi kavrama eğiliminde olmuşlardır. Bu durum, Hardy'nin Viktorya çağı şiirinin geleneksel formlarından uzaklaştığını ve Modernist şiir mizacının öncüsü olduğunu ima etmektedir. Trevor Johnson, örneğin, Hardy'nin tarzının kendine has bir tarz olduğunu söylemektedir. Ünlü Modernist şair T. S. Eliot, Hardy'nin şiirini kişisel olarak beğenmez ve iyi şiir yazma kurallarına karşı kayıtsız olduğunu düşünür. David Cecil ve George Fayen gibi eleştirmenler ise, teknik açıdan yetersiz oldukları halde, şiirlerinin, süblime birer dokunuş halini alabildikleri gerçeğini şaşkıncu bulmuşlardır. 1966'da David Lodge ise Hardy hakkında şöyle demiştir: “günahlarıyla erdemleri anlaşılmasız bir biçimde örtüşmektedir... göz kamaştırıcı ve umutsuzluk dolu... şiirlerini okurken, bizler, henüz tam olarak gerçekleştirilememiş bir ihtişamın vaadiyle, onun etkisinde kalıyoruz.”

Daha acımasız eleştirilerin de olması, Hardy'nin bir şair olarak tam anlamıyla anlaşılmadığını ve kolaylıkla bir kategoride konumlandırılmadığını göstermektedir. Bazı şiirlerindeki konuların aslında romanlarında ve kısa öykülerinde seçtiği

konuların bir tekrarı olduğu düşünölmüştür. 1889’da *Saturday Review* başlıklı dergide ismi bilinmeyen bir eleştirmen ise Hardy’nin *Wessex Poems* (*Wessex Şiirleri*) adlı şiir koleksiyonu yayımlandığında, şiirlerinin tümünü neden yakmayı tercih etmediğini sormuştur. Edmund Chambers Hardy’yi “ritim duygusu bakımından ruhsuz” bulmuş ve “gereksiz abartılı diksiyonunu” eleştirmiştir. 1901’de Herbert Warren adlı eleştirmen de Hardy’nin *Poems of the Past and Present* (*Geçmişten Günümüze Şiirler*) adlı ikinci şiir koleksiyonunu, *Wessex Poems* adlı ilk şiir koleksiyonu ile kıyaslamış, “boyut ve karakter bakımından benzer” bulmuş ve bunların “şiir sanatını” temsil etmeye aday olmadığını ileri sürmüştür.

1904 yılında Hardy, *The Dynasts* (*Hükümdarlar*) adlı destanını piyasaya sürdüğünde, Edward dönemi edebiyatının durağan sularını hareketlendirdikten ve 1914’te *Satires of Circumstance* (*Çeşitli Vesilelerle Yergiler*) başlıklı şiir koleksiyonunu yayınladıktan sonra, eleştiriler olumsuzdan olumluya doğru bir değişim sergilemiştir. Lytton Strachey ve Harold Child gibi eleştirmenler, Hardy’nin şiirlerindeki “kakofoniye” ve dil karmaşasına rağmen, “müziğin ve yalın tınların ruhumuza, iliklerimize işlediğini” görece kadar güzel olduklarını itiraf etmişlerdir. Hardy hakkındaki en olumlu eleştiriler 1918 ile 1920 yılları arasında görölmüştür. Edmund Gosse, örneğin, Hardy’nin şiirlerindeki “metrik özellikleri” savunan harika bir inceleme yapmış ve büyük bir zarafetle şairin “derin ve trajik gözlemleri” ile Shelley’de görölen o “romantik asabiliği” arasında ince bir ayırım yapabilmiştir.

Geçmişe ve daha yakın bir geçmişe ait bütün bu yorumlar, Hardy’nin şiir bakımından Viktorya çağının beklentilerine ve zevklerine uymadığını göstermekle birlikte, onun kolaylıkla etiketlenemeyen ve kategorize edilemeyen bir şair olduğu sonucuna bizi ulaştırmaktadır. Şiirindeki anlaşılmazlık ve kendine has biçemi aynı zamanda Modernistlerin de paylaştığı bir özellik olan “temsil krizinin” varlığına işaret etmektedir, yani dil ve anlam arasındaki çatışmanın, gösteren ile gösterilen arasındaki uyuşmazlığın, dil göstergesi gibi bir kavramın istikrarsızlığının dışı vurumudur. Bu yüzden, bilinmezci bir şair olan Hardy’nin geleneksel bir Viktorya çağı şairi olarak ele alınması zor bir girişimdir. Dolayısı ile bu tezin tartışma

çerçevesi, Hardy'nin şiirine uygulanan Yapısökümcü bir yaklaşımın sayesinde, dilsel ve anlamsal bir değişkenliğin varlığına, ayrıca şairin özlemini çektiği ancak adlandıramadığı mutlak bir hakikati şiirleştirerek, bir “temsil krizine” yol açtığı varsayımına dayandırılmaktadır.

İnsan dilindeki bu “anlamsal güvenilmezlik” aslında yeni bir olgu değildir. Hardy'nin de ait olduğu Viktorya çağında bile pek çok düşünür ve eleştirmen bu konuyu ele almışlardır. Ondokuzuncu yüzyılda yapılan filolojik incelemeler aslında bu olgunun varlığına dikkat çekmiştir. Richard Trench, Müller, George Eliot gibi önemli yazarlar, sözcüklerin, anlamları içlerinde zapt edemediğini, anlamların sözcüklerin dışına taşıdığını fark etmişlerdir. Darwin ve Hegel gibi düşünürlerden de etkilenen Hardy bunların arasındadır. İnsan yaşamındaki hakikatlerin gizemini koruduğu, dilin de bunları anlamlandırmak için yetersiz kaldığı ve bunların zaman denen kavramın ötesinde olduğu hissini taşımıştır. Her şeyin özünü oluşturan o olguyu bulma ya da kökenine inme çabası, Modernist şairlerle paylaştığı bir özelliktir. Ancak nesir gibi yazınsal bir türde, bunun imkânsızlığı ve hayal kırıklığı çok daha açık bir biçimde ortaya serilmektedir. Nazım türüne kıyasla, nesir, çok daha sıkıştırılmış ve yoğunlaştırılmış bir dile sahiptir. Bunun haricinde, mecazi anlamlara ve çeşitli söz sanatlarına güvenen nesir türü, semantik açıdan çok daha açık bir istikrarsızlığa işaret etmektedir. Bu yüzden, şairin, şiir gibi bir biçimde hakikatleri haykırması ya da dillendirmesi, içsel gerçeklerle dışsal gerçeklerin örtüşmesi, çok daha zor bir sürecin dışı vurumudur.

Her ne kadar Hardy'nin hem Romantik çağın hem de Viktorya çağının şiir geleneklerinin özelliklerini taşıdığını iddia edenler olmuşsa da, Hardy, geçişken bir statüye sahiptir. Viktorya çağının ötesine geçerken, Modernist şiirde görülen dilsel ve semantik belirsizliklerin habercisi ve öncüsü olmuştur. Hardy'yi belirli bir geleneğin çerçevesinde konumlandırmak zor olsa da, bazı eleştirmenlerin öne sürdüğü fikirleri gözden geçirmek, onun daha iyi anlaşılmasını sağlayabilmektedir. Frank R. Giordano, David Cecil, Linda Shires gibi eleştirmenler, onun Post-Romantik özelliklerine işaret etmişlerdir. Linda Shires, Hardy'nin, Christina Rossetti,

Robert Browning, William Thackeray gibi Viktorya çağının son dönem yazarlarıyla paylaştığı eleştirel, ironik ve sorgulayıcı bir akla sahip olduğunu belirtmiştir. “Double poem,” yani “ikili şiir” diye adlandırılan yöntemiyle Hardy, Romantik akımla ve William Wordsworth ile özdeşleşen gelenekten farklı olarak, daha mesafeli ve bertaraf edilmiş bir sese, bir anlatıma sahip olmuştur. William W. Morgan ise, Hardy’nin mersiyelerini ele alırken, Viktorya dönemi şairlerinden farklılıklar gösterdiğini iddia etmiştir. John Paul Riquelme de benzer bir görüş öne sürmüştür. Mersiye denen biçem geleneksel bir biçem olsa da, Hardy, çok daha ironik olan mizacı yoluyla, geleneksel Hristiyan öğretisinin etkisizliğini ve bu öğretinin bir teselli kaynağı olmaktan çıktığını büyük bir açık yüreklilikle ve samimiyetle anlatmıştır.

Modernizm, ondokuzuncu yüzyıl Romantik akımının öznel niteliğine ve onsekizinci yüzyıl Aydınlanma Çağının sarsılmaz ilkelerine, istikrar anlayışına ve burjuva ideolojisine bir tepkidir. Modernizm tüm toplumsal olguları, kurumları ve normları sorguya çekmektedir. Ancak çelişkili bir biçimde, geleneklere ve ideolojilere karşı çıkarken, kendi geleneğini yaratma çabası göstermektedir. Örneğin, Modernist edebiyat, T. S. Eliot’ın New Criticism ekolüyle özdeşleşen ve dil olgusuna Yapısalcı bir yaklaşım sergileyen bir nitelik taşımaktadır. Sanatçının bu birleştirici ilkeyi, yani “orijini” bulma çabasına Jacques Derrida “logos” (“deyi”) arayışı, “transcendental signified,” yani “aşkın gösterilen” arayışı adını vermektedir. Hem Romantiklerde hem de Victoria dönemi şairlerinde böyle bir çaba vardır. Romantik şairlerde bu durum, şairin doğayla yani Tanrı ile bir bütünlük hissini yaşaması biçiminde yansıtılmaktadır. Viktorya çağı şiirinde ise genellikle Hristiyan doktrinine olan güven duygusunun tazelenmesi, ya da bilim ve din arasında yapılan kolay uzlaşmalar biçiminde dışa vurulmaktadır. Modernist şairlerde benzer bir öz bulma çabası olsa da, Darwin sonrası ve sanayi devrimi sonrası bir çağda, bu “bütünleştirici” ve “uzlaşmacı” ilişkilere ve bağlara daha büyük bir şüphe ile yaklaşılmaktadır. Yirminci yüzyılda, Sigmund Freud’un psikanaliz kuramı, özbenlik kavramına devrim niteliğinde bir yaklaşım önermiştir. Freud’un, Nietzsche’nin ve Varoluşçuların öğretilerinin etkisi altında kalan Modernist şiirde de “özbenlik” kavramı bu yüzden

çokludur, parçalıdır. Özbenlik ve dil kavramları birbirinden bağımsız düşünülmeğe göre, şiirlerdeki dil de aynı şekilde parçalıdır, muğlaktır, istikrarsızdır ve çokanlamlılığa, yani “polisemiye” yol açmaktadır.

Hardy'nin şiirlerindeki sesler, kahramanlar ve sözcüleri de farklılık göstermektedir—ya ikilidir ya da çokludur. Bu, Modernistlerle paylaştığı bir özelliktir. Modernizmin öncüsü ve babası olarak kabul edilen T. S. Eliot'ın şiirlerindeki kadar bir parçalanmışlık duygusu ve çokseslilik olmasa da, Romantik çağ ve Viktorya çağı şiirlerindeki gibi bir bütünlük hissi, dilsel bir ahenk ve anlamsal bir istikrar yoktur.

Hardy'nin edebi konumunu geçişken olarak kabul etmek gibi bir gereklilik söz konusudur. Bunun pek çok nedeni vardır. Örneğin, Hardy'nin diksiyonundaki ve sözcük dağarcığındaki çeşitlilik ve yenilikçilik, egzantrik ve alışılmadık kullanımlar dikkat çekmektedir. John Powell Ward Hardy'nin dilindeki bu “zengin anarşiye” işaret etmektedir. Benzer bir biçimde, Taylor, Hardy'nin geleneklerden uzak bir biçime sahip olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Şair her daim yeni kalıplarla, şablonlarla ve sözcük birleşimleriyle karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Standart sözcükler, eskimiş sözcükler, konuşma diline özgü sözcükler, arkaik sözcükler, çocuklara özgü sözcükler, argo, ümmi sözcükler, uydurulmuş sözcükler ve yerli lehçeleri yansıtan sözcüklerden oluşan çok zengin bir dağarcığa sahiptir. İşte biraz tuhaf ve kendine has diye adlandırılan bu tarzı sayesinde ana akım şairlerinden ayrılmaktadır.

Riquelme, Hardy'nin “sınıf bilinci taşıyan, şüpheli ve olumsuzlamaya açık” üslubu ve eğilimleri sayesinde Modernizme yaklaştığını iddia etmektedir. Ward, Hardy'yi hem Modernizmle uyumlu hem de Modernizme karşı konumlandırabilecek olgulardan bahsetmektedir. Modernist şair Auden'e göre, “serbest nesir biçimini benimsemediğinden ve bazı geleneksel formları tercih ettiğinden,” Hardy tam anlamıyla Modernist değildir. Şair Ezra Pound'a göre, Hardy, “sözcük seçimlerindeki olağanüstü titizliği,” W. B. Yeats'e göre ise “objektif ve kişilerüstü sahnelerindeki ustalığı” bakımından Modernizmle uyumlu bir duruş sergilemektedir.

Linda Shires, Hardy şiirlerini “değişkenlik ve anlamsal kaymaları kaydetmeleri” bakımından oldukça modern bulmaktadır. Dil göstergesi, ikon ve gönderge gibi olguların arasındaki çelişkileri ve paradoksları inceleyen bir dile sahip olduğunu söylemektedir. Hardy’nin “rastlantı ve kaza üzerine yaptığı vurgular, kolay duyarlılıklara ve sağduyu gibi olgulara, romantik kodlara ve kurumsal dine karşı sergilediği şüpheli tavrıyla, insanla ilişkisi açısından zamanın göreceliliği” gibi unsurları ile birlikte, şiirine son derece modern bir içerikle şekil verdiğini anlatmaktadır.

Derrida’nın eleştirel yaklaşımının özünde her türlü sabitlenmiş yapı, oluş, hiyerarşi, ya da metafiziksel ikililik anlayışına karşı radikal bir meydan okuma vardır. *Of Grammatology* başlıklı sıradışı eserinde ve başka birçok makale ve kitaplarında Derrida, fonetik ya da yazılı “gösteren”lerin işaret ettiği “gönderge”lerin sadece birer “iz,” “ekleme,” “erteleme” ya da “différance,” yani “başkalık” olduğunu iddia etmektedir. “Gösterilen,” ya da “anlam” denen kavramın bir mahali yoktur; onun yerine, “gösterilen” denen alan, “gösteren”lerin sonsuz bir uçucu oyundur, değişimdir. Bu, işlevsel bir “gösterilen”in asla var olmadığı anlamına gelmemektedir. Sadece, “gösterilen”lerin kazanabileceği anlamlarının olması, bunların başka “gösterilen”lerden farklı olmasından kaynaklandığına, bunların da kendi içlerinde devamlı ertelenen başka anlamlara yol açtığına işaret etmektedirler. Derrida’nın amacı, yazarların veya yazdıkları metinlerin söylediklerini asla kast edemeyeceğini iddia etmek değildir, metinlerin aslında “henüz bilemediği” şeyleri teşhir etmektir. İkili zıtlıkların ters yüz edilmesi veya bunların “anlam merkezlerinin” dışına taşınması sonucunda, okuyucunun yorumlama ve anlamlandırma sürecinin sonsuz derecede etkilenebileceğini ya da ertelenebileceğini göstermektir. Bütün çalışmalarında Derrida, var olabilecek tüm metinlerinin “yapısının bozulabileceğini ya da sökülebileceğini” veya “gerçeklik merkezlerinin” taşınabileceğini ileri sürmektedir. İster yazınsal ister felsefi olsunlar, tüm metinler dilin açık uçluluğuna ve karar verilemezliğine tabidir. Bu anlamda Modernist şiir bir istisna değildir; dil, özbenlik, yapı, bilinç gibi kavramların içindeki “boşlukları” ve “uçurumları” mükemmel bir biçimde ortaya sermektedir. Şiir sanatı da mecazi bir tabiata sahip

olduđuna gre ve bu dilsel kırılğanlıkları ve kırılmaları daha aık bir biimde teřhir ettiđinden, post-Yapısalcı eleřtiriye elveriřli bir alandır. “Olduđumuz yerde bařlamamız” gerektiđini syleyen Derrida, bir ıkıř ya da kalkıř noktası gstermemektedir, sadece abalarımızın bir metnin isel gerilimlerinin, anlam belirsizliklerinin, kırılmalarının ve bu metnin iindeki “btnleřtirici hakikat merkezlerinin” nasıl ihlal edildiđine odaklanılması gerektiđini vurgulamaktadır. Derrida’nın, Platon’un *Phaedrus* adlı eserine yorumsal yaklařımını rnek alarak, Yapıskmc eleřtirinin, bir metnin kendi kendine nasıl ihanet ettiđini ve kendi iindeki paradoks ve eliřkileri yznden o btnleřtirici anlam duygusunu nasıl yıkıma uđrattıđını sergileyen bir model zerine kurulduđu anlařılmaktadır.

1989 yılında, D. Attridge ile yapılan bir syleřide Derrida, yazınsal metinlerle bařka metinler arasında kesin ve keskin bir ayırım yapmadıđını, te yandan Modernist metinlerin dilin kırılğanlıđını gstermeye daha elveriřli olduđunu belirtmiřtir. Bu tr edebi metinlerin dilin kırılğanlıklarını daha iyi yansıtıđını ve kendi kendilerini ters yz ettiklerini, bu yzden geleneksel olmayan metinler olduklarını sylemiřtir.

Yine de, bazı metinlerin daha “mimetik” bazılarının ise daha az “mimetik” (yansıma aktarmalı) olduđunu syleyebiliriz. Her ne kadar Derrida nesir ve nazım arasında sert bir izgi koymasa da, řiir denen ve daha sıkıřtırılmıř bir dille ifade edilen yazınsal tr, teřbih, mecaz, kinaye ve sembolizm gibi dilsel đelere daha ok gvenmektedir. Modernist řiir de kendi iinde eliřkilidir—“birleřtirici bir ilkeyi” ya da “z” bulma abası iinde olmasına rađmen, bunu bařaramamaktadır nk dilin sahip olduđu malzemeler btn aslında olduka kısıtlı olup buna izin vermemektedir. řairin dillendirmek istediđi bu “deneyst” deneyimi aslında insan dilinin dıřındadır nk “hakikat” ya da “gereklik merkezi” daima bařka bir yerdedir, dilin tesindedir. Modernist řiirdeki “gsteren” ve “gsterilen” arasındaki bu isel uyuřmazlıklar, dilin kendi tabii yetersizliđi, insanlık tarihinin ve insan dilinin artık farklı bir yne dođru evrildiđinin gstergesidir. Rainer Emig de bu yzden Modernist řiirin byk lde “mimetik” olamayacađını iddia etmektedir. řiirin en son iletisinin muđlak olacađını, oklu alıntılama ve kinaye gibi unsurlarla kendi iindeki dengeleri bozacađını ve

sembolik ve mecazi yapıların kaçınılmaz bir biçimde çökeceğini anlatmaktadır. Dil göstergesinin (linguistic sign) sorunsallaştığını, gösteren ve gösterilenin birbirinin altına kaydığını ve “fonetik gösterenin” şiirdeki kontrolü ele geçirdiğini öne sürmektedir. Emig’in bu vurgusu Modernist şiirle Yapısökümcü eleştiri arasındaki bağa işaret etmektedir.

Benzer bir vurgu yaparak, Howard Felperin, Yapısökümcü eleştirinin, metinlerin özerk ya da organik bir bütün olarak değil de, kinaye, paradoks ve belirsizlik gibi unsurları birleştiren “karanlık” birer “yazı” olduklarını gösteren bir yaklaşım olduğunu anlatmaktadır.

Hardy’ye gelince, pek çok eleştirmen şiirinin hem “mimetik” olduğunu hem de kısmen “mimetik” olmayan bir nitelikte olduğunu savunmaktadır. Dennis Taylor, örneğin, Hardy’yi daha çok bir 19. Yüzyıl şairi olarak gördüğünden, ölçü ve uyak gibi özellikleri ve sone gibi biçemi düşünüldüğünde Hardy’nin oldukça geleneksel bir şair olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Ancak Hardy’nin serbest nazım denen türe uzak durmasına rağmen, şiirlerindeki vurgulu heceleme biçemi ve “dörtlük” örneklerindeki çeşitliliği ve zenginliği, şairi, Modernist akımın habercisi ve geçiş dönemi şairi konumuna yükseltmektedir.

Peter Widdowson, Hardy’nin bu geçişkenliğini teyit edecek nitelikte incelemelerde bulunmaktadır. Marjorie Levinson, benzer bir biçimde, Hardy’nin hem mimetik hem de mimetik olmayan bir niteliğe sahip olduğunu belirtmekle birlikte, şairin aslında tüm “modernizm”lerin ötesine geçtiğini iddia etmektedir. William P. Morgan ise, gerek teknik özellikleri açısından, gerek düşünce ve konuları bakımından Hardy’nin geleneksel Viktorya şiirinin ötesine geçtiğini ifade etmektedir. Hardy’deki özbenlik kavramının Kartezyen benlik anlayışına uymadığını, şiirlerindeki sözcülerin “dramatize” edilmiş bir biçimde sunulduğunu ve bu yüzden öznel bir kimliği ifade etmediğini anlatmaktadır. Hardy’nin şiirlerindeki konuşmacılar ve sözcüler şairin kendi benliğini yansıtmamaktadır. Şair benliğini uzaklaştırmayı seçmektedir, şiirlerinin sadece birer gözlem ve izlenimden ibaret olduğunu iddia etmekte, böylece

şiiirinin daha nesnel bir karaktere bürünmesini sağlamaktadır. Bu özellik de Modernist şairlerin kanıksadığı bir yöntemdir.

Dilsel bir krizden bahsedildiğinde, Derrida'nın önermelerini daha açık bir biçimde incelemeye almak gereklidir. Bu tezin temel iddiası, böyle bir dilsel krizin şiirde baş gösterdiğini varsayarak, Hardy'nin şiirinin bütünüyle “mimetik” olmadığı, yani anlamsal ve dilsel bakımdan bir ahengi yansıtmadığı, dolayısı ile Modernizm'e göz kırpan niteliklere sahip olduğu gerçeğidir. Derrida'ya göre “dilsel kriz” denen olgu, hem ontolojinin, hem de epistemolojinin, yani Batı medeniyetinin ideolojik iflasıdır. Derrida'nın bu öğretisi, Nietzsche ve Heidegger gibi 20. yüzyıl düşünürlerinin mirasının devamıdır ve post-Yapısalcı felsefenin öncü modelidir. Nietzsche ve Heidegger Batı epistemolojisinin önermelerine radikal bir biçimde meydan okumuşlardır. Hakikat denen olguyu daimi bir biçimde sorgulamışlar, dil ve anlam arasındaki problemlili ilişkiyi incelemeye almışlar, dilin geleneksel ikilikçi yapılarını ters yüz ederek, tüm kavram ve olguları sorguya çekmişlerdir. Örneğin Nietzsche, “Ahlak Ötesi Anlamda Hakikat ve Yalanlar Üzerine” başlıklı makalesinde hakikat denen kavramı “eskimiş ve modası geçmiş bir metaforlar ordusuna” benzetmiş, “silik birer madeni para gibi,” içlerinin boşaltılmış olduğunu ileri sürmüştür. *Varlık ve Zaman (Being and Time)* başlıklı önemli eserinde ise Heidegger, Varoluşçuluk felsefesinin temelinde ve insanın tüm eylemlerine yön veren dürtünün gizemli bir “Varlığın” olduğunu iddia etmiş, ancak bu “Varlığın” üzerine bir çarpı koyarak, onu “silinmiş” bir kavram olarak ele almıştır. Başka bir deyişle Heidegger, tüm olguları ve kavramları hem birer “bulunuş”un (“presence”) hem de birer “bulunmayış”ın (“absence”) daimi titreşimi ve ilişkisi olarak algılamıştır.

Derrida ise hem Nietzsche'nin, hem de Heidegger'in öğretilerinin ötesine geçmeyi başarmıştır. Buna rağmen, Nietzsche'yi bir Nihilist olarak görmemiz mümkün olmadığı gibi, Heidegger'i de metafiziğin tuzağına düşmüş bir felsefeci olarak görmemiz de haksızlık olurdu; bu düşünürlerin yöntemlerinin ve stratejilerinin çoklu oluşu ve çeşitlilik göstermesi, bu gerçeğin farkına varmamızı sağlamaktadır. Derrida her iki öncünün yöntemlerini kanıksamaktadır, insan dili bir oyun alanıdır, gerçek ya

da hakikat ise daima silinmeye açık, titreşmekte olan bir kavramdır, hatta kavram değil de, “kavramı” bir unsurdur. Derrida’nın bu öncülerden en büyük farkı hiçbir “egemen” ya da “hükmedici” sözcüğü kullanmayı seçmemesidir. Derrida için nostaljik, gizemli, ya da özlem duyulan bir olgu ya da arayış yoktur, ne “oluş” ne de “varoluş” onun için hükmedici değildir. Bu yüzden Derrida daima farklı anahtar sözcükler kullanmaktadır—“iz” (“trace”), “oyun” (“play), “ekleme” (“supplement”), “erteleme” (“deferral”), “başkalık” (“différance”), “dağılma” (“dissemination”), “aşkın gösterilen” (“transcendental signified”), “aşkın gönderge” (“transcendental contraband”), “dalgakıran” (“deconstructive jetty”)—gibi terimler bunlardan sadece bazılarıdır. Bu anahtar kavramlar, Derrida’nın Yapısökümcülük felsefesinin temelini oluşturmaktadır ve Plato’dan itibaren Batı metafiziğine hükmeden fonosentrizm (ses-merkezcilik) ve logosantrizm (söz-merkezcilik) gibi saltçı ve mutlakiyetçi anlayışlara radikal bir biçimde karşı durmaktadır. Derrida’nın öğretisi ya da önerdiği stratejiler bütünü, hakikatin ya da egemen bir varlığın var olmadığını iddia etmekten ibaret değildir. Her ne isim alırsa alsın—Tanrı, Öz, Ruh, Akıl, Oluş, Varoluş, Bilinç v.b.—Hakikat denen olgunun hileli ve kaygan olduğunu, gerçeklik merkezinin daima “başka bir yerde,” daima dilin ötesinde bir alanda ve insan bilinci için ulaşılmaz ya da erişilmez olduğunu varsaymaktır.

20. yüzyıl felsefesi ve dilbilimi gösteren (“signifier”) ve gösterilen (“signified”) arasındaki bir boşluğun, bir kırılmanın varlığından söz etmektedir. Aslında dil göstergesindeki (“sign”) bu sorunsal uzun bir geçmişe dayanmaktadır. Rainer Emig, Michel Foucault’nun modelinden yola çıkarak bu sorunsalı açıklamaya çalışmaktadır. Antik Yunan çağından Rönesans dönemine kadar “gösterge” kavramı üç bölümden oluşan bir kavramdı—gösteren (cismi olgu, örneğin yazı, ses, işaret dili v.b.), gösterilen (temsil ettiği gerçeklik) ve bunların arasındaki benzerlik. Bu üç oluşum somut ve gerçek olarak hayal edilmekteydi. 17. yüzyıla doğru “benzerlik” oluşumu, “gösteren” ve “gösterilen” ile bütünleşmiş konuma geçmiş, dışsal bir gönderge statüsünü yitirmiş, böylece “gösterge” denen kavram ikili bir kavrama dönüşmüştür. 18. yüzyıl Aydınlanma Çağı modeli, örneğin, ikilikçi bir gösterge modeline dayanmaktadır. Descartes’in Kartezyen benlik anlayışı, yani “cogito”

kavramı da bu ikili modele dayanmaktadır. Hakikat denen olgu somuttur, duyularımızla açık bir biçimde algıladığımız her şey gerçektir, mutlaktır, kuşku götürmezdir. Bu anlamda dil olgusu da tam anlamıyla mimetiktir, yani yansıma aktarmalıdır.

Ancak 18. yüzyıldan itibaren bağlayıcı bir unsur olan “benzerlik” unsuru ortadan kalkmaktadır. Emig’e göre bunun nedenleri çeşitli ve karmaşıktır. Ancak bilimde gerçekleşen atılımlar, Sanayi Devriminin büyüyen etkisi, takdir-i ilahiye dayanan ve olayların önceden belirlenmiş olduğunu varsayan düzene olan inancı sarsmıştır. Böylece, hem nesnelere hem de bireylerde olduğu gibi “göstergeler” de bireysel bir güce kavuşmuştur. Bu durum öznel insanlık ve tabiat arasındaki bir boşluğa, kırılmaya neden olmuş, aynı zamanda Romantik akımın ortaya çıkmasının yolunu açmıştır. Daha sorunsallaşmış bir “gösterge” kavramı belirlemiştir; hala ikili kutuplardan oluşan, ancak bu iki kutbu bir arada tutmakta zorlanan bu gösterge kavramı, 19. yüzyılın ortalarına kadar edebiyatta olduğu gibi her alanda hissedilmiş, ancak 20. yüzyılda İsviçreli dilbilimci Ferdinand de Saussure’un kuramında açıklanmak için yarım yüzyıl daha beklemek zorunda kalmıştır.

Derrida, Yapısalcılığın öncüsü olarak kabul edilen Ferdinand de Saussure’un kuramını daha da ileriye taşımaktadır. Saussure, gösterenle gösterilen arasında keyfi, nedensiz bir ilişki olduğunu iddia etmiş, devrim niteliğinde bir tartışmaya yol açmıştır. Dilin bir kurallar bütünü olduğunu, aynı zamanda dilin bir “farklılıklar silsilesi” olduğu görüşünü savunmuştur. Derrida, Saussure’un bu önermeleri ile hemfikirdir. Ancak Saussure’un gösterenle gösterilen arasındaki ilişkiyi “birebir” veya “uyumlu” bir ilişki olarak görmesi Derrida’nın itiraz ettiği noktadır. Derrida’ya göre gösteren ve gösterilen arasında sabitlenmiş bir ilişki yoktur, anlam denen kavram çivi ile mihlanabilir bir şey değildir, gösterenle gösterilen birbirinin altını oymakta, gösteren gösterilenin altına kaymakta ve birbirlerinin rollerini ele geçirmektedirler. Böylece Derrida Yapısalcılığın “yapısını” sökmeyi başarmaktadır, sadece Saussure’un değil, Platon metafiziğinin etkisinde ve hükmünde bulunan tüm felsefi akımları ve öncüleri sorguya çekmektedir—Rousseau’yu, Hegel’i ve

diyalektiğini, Husserl'ı ve öncüsü olduğu fenomenolojiyi radikal bir biçimde ters yüz etmektedir.

Başka bir post-Yapısalcı dilbilimci ve felsefeci olan Jacques Lacan ise Derrida'ya hem rakiptir, hem de bazen muhaliftir. Öğretilerinde dilbilimini ve psikanalizi birleştiren Lacan “dolu konuşma” (“full speech”) gibi bir olgudan bahsetmektedir. Lacan, bilinçaltı denen alanın aslında dilin yapısına benzediğini ve çok nadiren de olsa, anlamlama (“signification”) sürecinin bazen sabitlenebilir olduğunu öne sürmektedir. Bu gibi imlemlere Lacan “döşeme düğmesi” (“point de capiton”) adını vermektedir; bu anlamlama ancak yine de geçici ve kısa sürelidir. Ses-merkezciliğe ve söz-merkezciliğe karşı bir duruş sergileyen Lacan ve Derrida'nın ortak özellikleri ve stratejileri vardır. Ancak Derrida için psikanaliz öncü bir yöntem değildir ve doğal olarak “dolu konuşma” ya da “anamlı iletişim” gibi kavramlar stratejilerini oluşturan kavramlar değildir.

Bu tezin ileriki bölümlerinde, Thomas Hardy'nin kısmen mimetik kabul ettiğimiz bazı şiirlerinde, Lacan'ın tıpkı “döşeme düğmeleri” gibi anlamlama anlarının geçici bir biçimde de olsa tezahür ettiğini ve Hardy'nin memleketi olan Dorset'in tabiatı ve zaman kavramının bu rolü üstlendiğini söylemek mümkündür. Bunun dışında Hardy'nin şiirini belli bir etikete ya da kategoriye göre sınıflamak mümkün değildir. Nitekim ünlü yapışökümcü eleştirmen J. Hillis Miller, Hardy'nin şiirinin “haritasını çizmenin imkânsız olduğunu” ve hiçbir “logos”un hükmedici olmadığını ileri sürmektedir. Miller'a göre Hardy'nin dünyası “merkezsiz” bir dünyadır. Bu anlamda Hardy, Modernist şiirini kısmen de olsa temsil etmektedir. Barbara Hardy de şairin dilsel boşluklarına, gerilimlerine, belirsizliklerine, istikrarsızlıklarına işaret ettiğine göre, şairin Modernistlere özgü “temsil krizini” yansıttığını ve geleneksel Romantik ve Viktorya çağı şiirinin ötesinde bir statü kazandığını söylemek mümkündür.

Hardy'nin şiirlerindeki bu dilsel krizin incelenmesi pek çok unsuru ele alarak mümkün olabilir. Bu araştırma, Hardy'nin şiirlerini dört ana grupta incelemeyi seçmiştir ve böylece Yapısökümcü eleştirel bir analiz yoluyla, bu şiirlerin kendi

anlamsal ve dilsel öğelerini nasıl ters yüz ettiğini göstermeyi amaçlamıştır. Birincisi Hardy'nin *bilinmezci* dünyası ve evren anlayışıdır; bu bilinmezci anlayış Batı metafiziğinin söz-merkezciliğine ve “mevcudiyet metafiziğine” meydan okuyan bir direniştir. İkincisi, Hardy'deki *özbenlik* kavramı ses-merkezciliğe karşı bir duruştur. Bu duruş, şairin çeşitli anlatımsal teknikleri sayesinde örneklendirilebilmektedir—“ikili ses” (“double voice”), “ikili görüm” (“double vision”), “dramatize edilmiş sozcüler” (“dramatised persona”), “yankı” (“echo”), ve “çokseslilik” (“multiple voices”) bunlardan bazılarıdır. Üçüncü grupta incelenen şiirlerde, Hardy'deki yapısal ve dilsel olgular bakımından gördüğümüz iki unsur dikkat çekmektedir—*olumsuzlama dili* ve *kinaye*. Bu unsurlar, şiirsel söylemin veya diskurun hem istikrarlaştırıcı hem de istikrarsızlaştırıcı unsurları olarak kabul edilmelidir. Son olarak, dördüncü alt başlıkta incelenen şiirler doğrusal zaman anlayışına meydan okumaktadır. Hardy'nin kendine has zaman kavramı hem eşsüremlidir (synchronic) hem de artsüremlidir (diachronic), hem doğrusaldır (linear) hem de yörüngeseldir (orbital). Hardy'nin bu yönleri, anahtar kavramlardır ve daha yakından incelenmelidir. Böylece, Yapısökümcü eleştirinin ışığında yapılacak bir inceleme, Hardy'nin geçişken statüsünü haklı çıkarmamızı ve şairi Modernizmin habercisi olarak görmemizi kolaylaştırmaktadır. Her şeyin ötesinde belki de, edebiyat üzerine yapılan hiçbir incelemenin mutlakıyetçi ve saltçı olmaması gerektiğini, dil denen alanın kendi içinde çelişkiler üzerine kurulu bir olgu olduğunu ve açık uçluluğu daima kucaklamamız gerektiğini anlamamızı sağlamaktadır.

Hardy'nin bilinmezçiliği (agnostisizmi) mevcudiyet metafiziğine bir karşı duruştur. Bilinmezcilik felsefesinin temelinde katiyeti reddetmek yatmaktadır, tanrının varlığı ya da yokluğu mutlak bir inanış değildir, evrenin işleyişi rastlantısal ya da kaotik bir biçimde tezahür etmektedir. Hardy, Hristiyan öğretisine olan inancını genç yaşta yitirmiştir ancak kilise ritüellerine ve geleneklerine olan bağlılığını hayatının sonuna kadar korumuştur. Hardy kendini “masum bir agnostik” olarak tanımlamaktadır, pek çok isimden ve düşünürden etkilenmiştir—August Comte, Shopenhauer, Darwin, Herbert Spenser, Leslie Stephen, François Fourier, John Stuart Mill, Ludwig Feuerbach, Edward von Hartmann bunlardan bazıları. Nietzsche ve Bergson'un

fikirlerine sıcak bakmamıştır. Buna karşın, yaşadığı dönemin içinde görüşleri yüzünden sert bir biçimde eleştirilmiş ve dışlanmış. Hardy, şiiri kendini daha kolay ifade etmenin bir yolu olarak görmüştür. Daha çok başarı sağlamasına rağmen, romanlarını hayatını idame edebilmek ve para kazanabilmek için yazmıştır. Ancak şiir yazmayı Hardy hep daha çok sevmiştir. Hayatının anlatıldığı kitapta, “evreni harekete geçiren gücün ya da güçlerin haksız ve acımasız olduğunu haykırmanın bir şiirde çok daha kolay olduğunu” itiraf etmiştir.

J. Hillis Miller’a göre, Hardy’nin evreni “logos”u olmayan bir evrendir—“ne akla dayalı içkin bir güç, ne düzeni sağlayan üstün bir zeka, ne şairin özbenliği ve kendi aklı, ne de her şeyin öncüsü olan dili” yönünden imtiyazlı konuma getirilen bir olgu yoktur. Belki de bu yüzden pek çok okuyucu Hardy’nin şiirini karamsar bulmaktadır. Sheila Berger’e göre ise Hardy’nin bilinmezliği karamsarlığının nedeni değildir. Hardy’yi bir kötümser olarak görmektense, onun “varoluşçu bir dışlanmışlığı” benimsediğini kabul etmeliyiz. Hardy’nin şiirlerinde, özellikle agnostik diye tanımlayabileceğimiz şiirlerinde “algı” daima kısımdır. Hardy’nin sözcüsü, anlatıcısı genellikle “bakan” ama “göremeyen,” “algılayamayan” bir konuşmacıdır. Şair, “aşkın gösterilen”e ulaşma ya da onu dillendirme arzusu içindedir, ancak rastlantısal dünyasında “logos” mevcut değildir. Pek çok şiirinde böyle bir durum söz konusudur. Örneğin “The Subalterns” (“Emir Kulları”) başlıklı şiirinde, doğanın üstün güçlerini konuşarak onları insansılaştırmaktadır. Tabiatın bu olguları daha üstün bir gücün hizmetkârlarıdır, ancak bu ilahi güç konuşurulmayıp, gizemini korumaktadır. Bu güç Tanrı da olabilir, başka bir güç de. Şair isim koymamaktadır. Bu varlık hem vardır hem de yoktur; insanların çektiği acılara neden olan işleyişleri yüzünden vardır, ama kayıtsız ve pasif bir güç olması yüzünden de “mevcut” değildir. Hardy kendi ikili zıtlıklarını, yani “varlık” ve “yokluk” ikilemini kendi kendine ters yüz etmektedir.

Başka bir şiirinde, “A Sign-Seeker” (“Emare Arayışı”) adlı şiirde benzer bir durum vardır. Konuşmacı, bir “işaret” aramaktadır; evrenin işleyişini anlamlı kılan, varoluşun bir amaç doğrultusunda ilerlediğini gösteren. Bütün duyularını ve

algılarını açmıştır, bekleyiş içindedir. Ancak ne eski dinler, ne kadim inançlar, ne akıp geçen tekdüze zaman, ne de mezarlardaki hayalet ruhlar böyle bir işaret göstermeyecektir. “Cehalet” ve “bilgisizlik” sessiz bir dalgınlık, bir bekleyiş içinde, ama hiç kimse ve hiçbir şey aradığı cevabı ona hediye etmeyecektir. Hardy’nin “logos”u, “aşkın göstereni” yine boşaltılmıştır, şiir, fonetik gösterilenlerin bir toplamı haline gelmiştir. Dil de işte bu kadar sessizdir, anlamları mihlayamaz, çünkü gösterenleri sadece kendi içine doğru tekrar tekrar taşımaktadır.

Metafor ya da mecaz, kendi içinde çelişkili bir söz sanatıdır. Derrida, metafor kavramını Batı metafiziğinin bir gereği, hatta bir tuzağı olarak görmektedir. Metafor, amaçlanan anlamı isimlendirmeye yönelik hem istikrar hem de istikrarsızlık yaratan bir olgudur. Şiirin dili, “serbest nazım” ya da “ad aktarması” (metonymy) biçimine yaklaştığında, Modernistlerin yaşadığı kaygıyı ifade etmektedir. Bu yüzden Modernistlerde şiir dili daha prosaik bir nitelik kazanmaktadır, yani düzyazıya yaklaşmaktadır. Hardy pek çok şiirinde düzyazıyı kullanmayı yeğlemiştir. Örneğin, “By Her Aunt’s Grave” (“Teyzesinin Mezarı Başında”) ve “In the Study” (“Çalışma Odasında”) adlı şiirleri yalın birer anlatıma sahip olup, aruz ölçüsüne ya da mecazi yapılara pek güvenmemektedir. Şairin salt amacı, ilginç birer hikâyeyi okuyucuya aksettirmektir, ancak bunu yaparken, şiirin en katı ve geleneksel normlarından uzaklaşmayı seçmektedir.

Bazen Hardy tek bir şiirinde çok sayıda metafor ve kişileştirme kullanmaktadır. Şairin bu çabası “aşkın gösterilen”i bulma ve dile getirme çabasıyla açıklanabilir. Ancak şairin aynı şiirde ve hatta bazen aynı dizelerde bu çoklu metaforik yapıları kullanması, bu sürecin tamamlanmasının olası olmadığını göstermektedir. Aynı “logos”un bu çoklu isimlerle, kıyaslarla, teşbihlerle anlamlandırılmaya çalışılması, bu “logos”a özünde bir isim verilemeyeceğinin de göstergesidir. Dolayısı ile bu tür şiirlerinde hem çokanlamlılık (“polysemy”) hem de Derrida’nın “dağılma” kavramının (“dissemination”) vücut bulduğunu görüyoruz. “Hap” (“Talih”) ve “Nature’s Questioning” (“Doğanın Sorgusu”) gibi şiirler buna örnektir. Hardy’nin “logos”u bazen “kör talihtir,” bazen “kumarbaz zamandır,” “yarı kör bir cellâttır,”

bazen “muazzam ahmaklıktır,” “beceriksiz ve duyarsız,” bazen de “henüz anlaşılamayan ilahi bir tasarı,” acılarımızın üstünde tepinen, iniltilerimizi duymayan, görmeyen.

“God-Forgotten” (“Tanrının Unuttukları”) ve “God’s Funeral” (“Tanrının Cenazesi”) gibi şiirlerinde benzer bir durum söz konusudur. “God-Forgotten” adlı şiirinde Hardy yine ilahi “logos”u anlamlı kılma çabası göstermektedir. Bu şiirinde “logos” Tanrının adını almaktadır. Hristiyan öğretisinin Tanrı kavramına hem uymaktadır hem de uymamaktadır. Hem kadir-i mutlak hem de alim-i mutlaktır. Ancak bu Tanrı, aynı zamanda unutkan ve umursamazdır, insan ırkını yaratmış ve ilgisini çekmediği için kaderine terk etmiştir. Tanrı ile direkt bir diyaloga giren konuşmacı tatmin edici bir tepki alamayıp kendi keder ve dertlerine dönüş yapmıştır. Hardy, Tanrıyı konuşturarak ve insansılaştırarak hem yakınlaştırmaktadır, hem de onu anlaşılmasız kılarak uzaklaştırmaktadır. Böylece yine ikili zıtlıklarını kendi kendine ters yüz etmektedir. Varlık ve yokluk birbirine zıt kavramlar değildir, daimi bir “dil oyununa, titreşmeye” tabidir. “God’s Funeral” adlı şiirinde de benzer bir yaklaşım sergilemektedir. Tanrının cenaze törenine katılan bir gözlemciyi sözcü olarak seçerek, Tanrı kavramını yaşamış ve ölmüş olan, insani özellikleri olan bir varlık olarak sunmaktadır. Yaşamış ve ölmüş bir Tanrı elbette simgeseldir, ancak şair varlık ve yokluk ikilemiyle yine oynamaktadır. Tanrıyı insan yapımı bir olgu olarak göstererek, hem varlığını hem de yokluğunu teyit edecek sözcüler paylaşacaktır.

“Self-Unconscious” (“Bilinçsizce”) adlı şiirinde ise ilahi “logos” için çoklu metaforlar kullanmasa da, ya da Tanrı ile direkt bir diyaloga girmese de, konuşmacı yarı-bilinçli bir haldeyken planlanmamış bir yolculuğa çıkar. Etrafına bakar, geçmişine döner ama gördüğü şeyler “ölü parçalardır,” anlamlı olan her şey gelip geçicidir ve Tanrı, ya da Elf, bu yolculuğunda ona eşlik etmemiştir; şair teselliye ve ehemmiyeti bulamamıştır.

İkinci grupta incelenen şiirler Hardy’deki “özbenlik” sorunsalını yansıtmaktadır. Hardy’deki özbenlik kavramı hem bütünseldir hem de parçalıdır, çoğunlukla ikilidir

ya da çokludur. Bu anlayış, Freud'un benlik anlayışına açıklık getiren bir örnektir. Benlik, bilincin ve bilinçaltının bir örüntüsüdür. Hardy'nin çoklu sesleri ve sözcüleri Kartezyen benlik anlayışına, dolayısı ile söz-merkezciliğe birer meydan okumadır. "Christmas in the Elgin Room" ("Müzedede bir Noel Gecesi") adlı şiirinde eski Yunan tanrılarını bir müzede unutulmuş olarak gösteren Hardy, Püritan öğretisi karşısında kaybettikleri bir hâkimiyeti anlatmaktadır. Tanrılar konuşunca insansılaştır, bu da onları birer ilahi logos olma konumundan uzaklaştırır. Tanrılar konuştuğunda hem insanoğluna daha yakın, hem de anlaşılmaz oldukları için de daha uzak hale gelmektedirler. Sözcülerle özbenlik kavramı arasındaki bu ilginç gerilim Hardy'nin çoğu şiirinde mevcuttur.

"Moments of Vision" ("Anlık Düşler") adlı şiiri de sorunsallaşmış bir benlik kavramına işaret etmektedir. Sözcünün/ konuşmacının benlik kavramı muğlâktır, aynada gördüğü imgeler yoluyla kendi hakikatlerini dillendirmeye çalışmaktadır. Hayal ettiği ilişkiyi dillendirmesi sorunludur, kendi kimliğini ifade eden zamirleri kullandığı gibi, kendisi dışında bir konuşmacıya ses veriyormuş izlenimini de yaratmaktadır. Hem yakınlık hem de uzaklık ifade eden kalıpları keyfi bir biçimde serpiştirmektedir. Bütün bu unsurlar da özbenlik kavramının devamlı olarak "başkalaştığını," yani Derrida'nın "différance" anlayışında vücut bulduğunu göstermektedir.

Hardy'nin şiirlerinde batıl unsurlar vardır. Kaybettiği ilk karısı Emma'nın hayaleti şaire sık sık eşlik etmektedir. Ancak şairin duyduğu sesler yanıltıcıdır, geçmişten ve gelecekte gelen yankılanmalar ya rüzgârın sesidir, ya da kendi anıları. Bu türdeki şiirleri, fonosentrizme, yani ses-merkezcilik anlayışına bir direniştir ve Derrida'nın "başkalık," yani "différance" kavramına tekabül etmektedir. Rasyonel bir açıklaması olmayan evreninde, güvenilebileceği bir işaretten yoksun, Hardy, gerçek bir hayaletle karşılaşmayı ummaktadır. Emma ile olan sorunlu evliliği, ölümünden sonra acı bir özlem ve hayal kırıklığı duygusuna yerini terk etmektedir. "The Voice" ("Ses") adlı şiiri böyle bir duyarlılıkla yazılmıştır. Duyduğu sesler ve yankılar gerçek değildir, "soluk bir isteksizliğin" ("wan wistlessness") dışı vurumudur.

“The Haunter,” (“Hayalet”) “Before and After Summer,” (“Yazdan Önce ve Sonra”) “At the Piano,” (“Piyanonun Başında”) “The Wind Blew Words,” (“Rüzgârın Sözleri”) ve “The Clock of the Years” (“Yılların Saati”) adlı şiirleri de benzer bir özbenlik sorunsalını temsil etmektedir. Bu şiirlerinde Hardy, kendinin dışında bir konuşmacıyı seçiyor ve yakınlık/ uzaklık kavramlarıyla oynuyor; birinci tekil sesin dışında, çeşitlilik gösteren kişisel zamirler, işaret zamirleri yoluyla benlik anlayışını daha karmaşık bir hale getiriyor. Bu şiirlerinde zaman ve uzam ilişkisi de sıklıkla doğrusal (lineer) olmaktan çıktığından, buna paralel olarak “benlik” kavramı da bütünsel ve ahenkli bir kavram olarak düşünülemez.

Üçüncü grupta incelenen şiirlerde kinaye ve olumsuzlama dili ön plana çıkmaktadır. Derrida’nın öğretilerinde her türlü ikilikçi yapının, yani dualitenin sorunsallaştığını kabul ettiğimize göre, bir söz sanatı olarak kinaye de problemlili bir ilişkiyi ifade etmelidir. Söylenen şeyin tersinin anlaşıldığını ima eden kinaye, aslında R. Emig’e göre dilsel ve semantik açıdan hem istikrar hem de istikrarsızlık yaratan bir araçtır. Genellikle belli bir konumlanmayı, bir duruşu da ifade eder. Hardy’de kinaye bilinmezliliğinin doğal bir sonucu olduğu gibi, kötümserliğini ve kötücüllüğünü nötr hale getiren bir unsurdur aynı zamanda. “Ah, Are You Digging on My Grave?” (“Ah, Kabrimi Sen Mi Kazıyorsun?”) adlı şiirinde kinaye, ikili zıtlıkları tersyüz eden ve onların altını oyan bir tekniktir örneğin. Ölmüş olan bir kadının mezarından konuşturulduğu bu şiirde, unutulmuşluk ve yalnızlık duygusunun hayatımızda önemli görünen “gösterenler” olduğu farz edilmektedir. Ancak Hardy, bu yalnızlığın daha hayattayken başladığını ima ederek, gerçek dediğimiz dünyanın bize sunabileceklerinin ne kadar geçici ve uçucu olduğunu hem muzip hem de trajik bir dille anlatmaktadır. Mezarını hiç kimsenin ziyaret etmediği merhumeyi sadece evcil köpeği hatırlamıştır; ama köpek de mezarına sadece acıkması durumunda kemiğini gömmek için gelmiştir, yani ziyareti tamamen bir tesadüftür. Trajikomik olan bu şiirde Hardy, kinayeli üslubu sayesinde ikili zıtlıkları yıkmaktadır—bu dünya ve öteki dünya, sevgi ve nefret, yalnızlık ve paylaşım, sadakat ve ihanet. Kinaye,

semantik açıdan hem yıkıcı hem de yapıcı bir unsurdur, yani kendi başına aslında logosantrizme bir meydan okumadır.

İlginçtir ki Hardy'nin en ironik ve eğlenceli şiirlerinin merkezinde hep bir kadın konuşmacı vardır, ama bu kadınlar hep sıra dışıdır. “The Ruined Maid” (“Yıkılmış Bir Kadın”) adlı şiirinde örneğin, taşralı bir kızla zengin bir adamın metresi olmayı seçmiş genç bir kadının diyalogu geçmektedir. İkisi de genç ve evlenmemiş kadınlardır, biri nasırlaşmış elleriyle topraktan patates çıkaran ağır bir işçi, öteki ise mücevherlerle, kuş tüyleriyle süslenmiş elbisesiyle boy gösteren, onurunu feda etmiş, “yıkıma uğramış” olduğunu itiraf eden şehrili bir afet. Hardy'nin kelime oyunu daha başlıkta ortaya çıkmaktadır. Hangi kadının gerçekten “yıkılmış” olduğuna karar vermek zor, ancak Viktorya döneminin geleneksel toplumunda kadınlara sunulan çok fazla seçeneğin de olmadığı aşikârdır.

“At The Altar-Rail” (“Mihrap”) adlı şiirdeki kadın figürü, kendi evlilik merasimine gelmeyen, ele avuca sığmaz, bağımsız ruhlu bir kadındır. Saf ve iyi niyetli görünen damadı mihrabın önünde beklerken terk etmiştir çünkü özgürlüğüne düşkündür. Taşrada onu bekleyen ağır bir çalışma hayatı cazip gelmemiştir. Kadın, evlilik kurumunu toplumsal bir zorunluluk olarak reddetmektedir ve bu durum başlı başına topluma şekil veren kavramların en önemlilerinden birine, yani evlilik sözleşmesine bir başkaldırıdır. Böyle bir dışı karakter yoluyla, Hardy, egemen olan toplumsal kodların ve normların kısmen de olsa içeri boşaltır. Kadınların tek kaderi evlenmek değildir. Yine de bazen evlenmek, kadının erkek egemen bir dünyada hayatta kalmak için verebileceği en güçlü mücadelesi ve silahıdır. “In the Room of the Bride-Elect” (“Gelinin Odasında”) ve “The Vampirine Fair” (“Güzel Vampir”) adlı şiirler buna örnektir. Erkeğin egemen olduğu dünyada kadın, erkeği yine kendi silahlarıyla vurmaya zorunda kalır, bazen evlilik yoluyla, bazen ihtiraslarıyla, bazen de bir güç savaşıyla. Böylece kadın geleneksel yapılara meydan okumakta ve onların parçası olsa da, eril kodların altını oymaktadır. Bu gibi şiirlerde şair Hardy bir kadının sesi olmaktadır; bunun için kendi eril egosunu da terk etmek zorundadır. Özbenlik

kavramı hem zenginleşmektedir, hem de sorunsallaşmaktadır. Bu da kendi başına logosantrizme karşı bir duruştur.

Tıpkı kinaye gibi, Hardy'nin olumsuzlama dili pek çok şiirinde ses-merkezciliğe ve söz-merkezciliğe bir meydan okumadır. Her şeyden önce, olumsuzlama dili olumlama dilinin zıt konumu değildir. Derrida, olumlama ve olumsuzlama gibi bir dualiteyi çökertmiştir, tıpkı diğer bütün metafiziksel, ikilikçi yapıları çökerttiği gibi. Hardy'nin olumsuzlama dili üçüncü bir kategori ya da bir sentez değildir, isim verilemeyen bir alandır. “The Impercipient” (“Algılayamayan”), “The Shadow on the Stone” (“Taşın Üstündeki Gölge”), “The Temporary the All” (“Fani Dünya”), “The Rambler” (“Avare”), ve “A Sign-Seeker” (“Emare Peşinde”) gibi şiirleri bu tür bir olumsuzlama dilini kullanmaktadır ancak bu teknik Hardy'nin kötümserliğini değil de kendine özgü üslubunu ve belki de felsefi görüşünü, yani bilinmezliğini ifade etmektedir. En önemli sonucu dualitelerin yıkılmasıdır ve semantik açıdan bir belirsizliğin baş göstermesidir. Modernistlerle benzer kaygıları taşıyan Hardy'de bu durum da doğal bir sonuçtur.

Dördüncü ve son grupta incelenen şiirlerde zaman ve uzam kavramları ele alınmaktadır. Daha önce de bahsedildiği gibi, Hardy'de zaman kavramı hem doğrusaldır hem de yörüngeseldir, hem eşsüremlidir hem de artsüremlidir. Derrida için zaman-uzam ilişkisi de metafiziksel bir ilişkidir. Batı epistemolojisinin yüzyıllar boyunca uzamı zamana göre daha imtiyazlı konumda gördüğünü belirtmiştir. Derrida'nın “différance” yani “başkalık” kavramı bu ikilemede, dikotomide de geçerlidir. Zaman ve uzam böylece uzam-zaman gibi bir kavramın içinde eritilmektedir. “The Self-Unseeing” (“Özgörüşsüz”) adlı şiirinde kullandığı yer zarfları ve kişisel zamirler anlam bakımından bir karmaşa yaratmaktadır. Yakınlık ve uzaklık ilişkisi muğlak ve karmaşık hale getirilmektedir. Bunun nedeni şairin şimdiki özbenliğini, geçmişteki özbenliği üzerinden görmesi ve yorumlamasıdır. Geçmiş, şimdiki zaman ve gelecek açık bir doğrusallık göstermemektedir, dolayısı ile bu durum karmaşık bir özbenlik anlayışına işaret etmektedir. Konuşmacının, ya da şiirdeki anlatıcının hem kendisinin olduğu hem de başkasının olabileceği bir şiirde,

“ikili bir bilinç” (“double consciousness”) kavramının varlığından da söz edilebileceği gibi, hayal ve gerçek arasında, hatta hayal ve anı arasında bir çatışma da görülmektedir (aynı durum “At the Piano” (“Piyanonun Başında”) adlı şiirde de geçerlidir). Hardy’nin bu şiirinin, Derrida’nın “uzam-zaman” (“spacing”) kavramına tekabül ettiğini söylemek mümkündür.

Hardy’nin karmaşık zaman anlayışına örnek oluşturan “A Sign-Seeker,” (“Emare Peşinde”) “The Going” (“Gidiş”) ve “Evening Shadows” (“Akşamın Gölgeleeri”) gibi şiirler, hem doğrusal zaman anlayışının hem de yörüngesel zaman anlayışının yansımasıdır. Bu şiirlerden zamansal bir model ya da kalıp çıkarmak da mümkündür, ancak hiçbir zaman bu sadece doğrusal bir tarih algısı değildir. Hardy’nin şiirlerinde kişisel tarih ve kolektif tarih birleşmektedir. Dünyevi zamanla mitolojik zaman birbirlerinin rolünü üstlenmektedir. Ancak Dorset denen bölge, Hardy’nin memleketi, zaman ve uzamın uyumlu ve ahenkli bir akış halini temsil etmektedir. Yani Dorset, Lacan’da bir “döşeme düğmesi,” yani semantik bir senkronizasyonun ve uyumun simgesi, Derrida’da ise “uzam-zaman” kavramının yerine geçmektedir, yani başkalaşım (“différance”) ve metafiziksel dualitenin yıkımıdır. Bu yüzden “Afternoon Service at Mellstock,” (“Mellstock’ta Bir Ayin”) “Voices from Things Growing in a Churchyard,” (“Mezarlıktaki Sesler”) “On Sturminster Foot-Bridge,” (“Sturminster Köprüsünde”) “Overlooking the River Stour” (“Stour Nehrine Bakarken”) gibi şiirlerde ve Hardy’nin en “romantik” şiiri sayılan “Domicilium” (“Yuva”) adlı şiirde hem semantik ve dilsel bir ahenk mevcuttur hem de bir belirsizlik vardır. Eşsüremlili zaman artsüremlili zamanla örtüşmektedir, kaynaşmaktadır; bireysel sesler ve çoklu sesler ise kişisel tarihle kolektif tarihin etkileşimini temsil etmektedir.

Hardy’nin şiirlerindeki bütün bu ayrıntılar ve Derrida’nın öğretileri dil denen kavramın ne kadar esnek ve istikrarsız olduğunu göstermektedir. Gösteren ve gösterilen arasında bire-bir bir uyumdan artık bahsedilemeyeceğine göre, dilin kendi içindeki gerilimleri ve kırılmaları şiir biçemi yoluyla çok daha açık bir biçimde gözlemleyebilmekteyiz. Dilin içsel paradoksları ve çatışmaları kaçınılmaz olup,

düşünce ve dil arasında artık bir ikileşimin (dikotominin) ya da keskin bir ayırımın olamayacağı ima edilmektedir. Yapısökümcü felsefenin ve kuramının işleyişi Hardy'nin şiirlerinde açık ve aşikârdır. Bunun nedeni Hardy'nin hem geçişken bir şair olması, hem de bilinmezci bir birey olmasıdır. Hardy'yi ezber bozan bir şair yapan en önemli özelliği de bilinmezciğidir, hem belirli bir gönderge noktasına sahip olmamasının bir nedenidir, hem de bir sonucudur. Özbenlik kavramının daha karmaşık olma nedeni de budur, hatta zaman ve uzam kavramının daha sıra dışı olmasının da nedeni aynıdır.

Sonuç olarak, incelenen şiirlerdeki bu dört kategori aslında yapay birer kategoridir. Tematik bir yaklaşım sergileme pahasına bu gruplamalar yapılmış olsa da, bu yöntem sadece kolaylık yaratmak için tercih edilmiştir. Dikkatle bakıldığında, aslında birinci kategorideki şiirler pekâlâ ikinci, üçüncü ve dördüncü kategorinin içinde incelenebilirdi. Ya da sonuncu gruptaki şiirler ikinci, üçüncü ve birinci grupta, Hardy ve Derrida'nın benzer anahtar kavramları açısından da (o kadar ayrıntılı bir biçimde olmasa da) analiz edilebilirdi. Bu durum açıkça şu gerçeğin ispatıdır: agnostik (bilinmezci) bir şairin gerek özbenlik anlayışı, gerek yapı ve dil anlayışı, gerek zaman anlayışı hiçbir zaman sadece istikrarlı, mutlakıyetçi, ya da söz-merkezci olamaz. Her ne kadar Hardy anlamlı ve eşgüdümlü bir dil göndergesini bulmayı ya da tayin etmeyi amaçlasa da, agnostik ve kısmen varoluşçu olan dünyasında tek başına ve dışlanmış kalmaktadır. Dizelerindeki tüm dünyevi ve dünyevi olmayan "göndergeler" ve "göstergeler" sessiz, etkisiz ve duyarsızdır. Bu yüzden Hardy ana akım Modernistlerden de farklıdır. Aynı kaygıları ve biçimleri paylaşmış olsalardı, Hardy, bir Katolik olan Hopkins gibi kadir-i mutlak Tanrısının varlığını dillendiremese de hissedirdi, Pagan ve gnostik olan Yeats'te olduğu gibi çok tanrılı mitolojiler sembollere hükmederdi, yine Katolik olan T. S. Eliot'ın son dönemlerindeki gibi Tanrıyı, uyumu ve düzen duygusunu yakalardı, D. H. Lawrence gibi doğa ile özdeşleşmiş ve bütünleşmiş hissedirdi. Ama belki de Dorset'in kültürel mirası, insanı ve doğası dışında, Hardy'nin böyle kalıpları, yani kalıcı "döşeme düğmeleri" yoktur. Bu yüzden Hardy kendine özgüdür. Modernistlerle paylaştığı en büyük benzerlik de bu "boyut-ötesi işaret" in arayışıdır, ve simgesel ve temsili dilin

çöküşüdür. Bu, bir çeşit bir başarısızlık ya da yenilgi değildir, her ne kadar bu çalışmada en sık geçen sözcüklerden biri “yıkım” olmuş olsa da, aksine, yorumlama ve okuma yetisinin esneklik ve açık uçluluk kazanması sonucunda, dil göndergesinin yükünden ve ağırlığından sıyrılmış ve arınmış bir dilin zaferidir.

APPENDIX D

TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enformatik Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>

YAZARIN

Soyadı : Özgür
Adı : Nilüfer
Bölümü : İngiliz Edebiyatı

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce) : THOMAS HARDY AS A THRESHOLD FIGURE AND CRISIS OF REPRESENTATION IN HIS POETRY—A DECONSTRUCTIONIST READING

TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans Doktora

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.
2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.
3. Tezimden bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz.

TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ: