Chapter - 4

Moth over Candle: Passionate Love
Chapter Four

Moth over Candle: Passionate Love

"O, I see a poor moth burning
   In the candle flame" said she,
"Its wings and legs are turning
   To a cinder rapidly."

(‘The Moth Signal’ CP, 369)

The moth and the candle together form a very powerful symbol of passionate love. The zeal with which the flame burns and flutters invitingly on a candle, symbolises passion in love while the moth’s tryst with the flame suggests deathless devotion of lovers. Symbolically, the flame bestows excessive desire to hold and be
with the moth, in a sweet embrace. The moth too desires the passionate warmth of the flame. Both know fully well that death awaits their embrace. Passionate love is thus consumed by its own fire. The realm of passionate love lies in the intermediary space between body and mind. It is bonded by the biological instinct on the one side and the imaginative impulse on the other. In Western and Eastern cultures passionate love has been considered a new territory, a recent phenomenon in historical time, a province no more than two thousand years in India and Greece and younger in Europe. It was discovered only after sexual love between man and woman had begun to emancipate itself from the biological function of reproduction alone. It consists in the single minded and relentless search of individuals desiring to constitute themselves into two person universe. In the words of Teilhard de Chardin:

This activity is the play of countless subtle antennae seeking one another in the light and darkness of the soul, the pull towards mutual sensibility and completion, in which preoccupation with preserving the species gradually dissolves in the greater intoxication of two people consummating the world.¹

Etymologically passion means a state of suffering. The word has particular significance with regards to love. It refers to the time of struggle, doubt, desire and longing. These mysterious moments of love, also known as the period of illusion, have been the subject of high poetry for centuries. The fundamental feature of passionate love, that makes it assessable to poetic explorations and discourse, is the
fact that passion transcends action and reality allowing the dramatic and poetic tension to endure the life of the narrative. De Rougemont very appropriately observes that:

... the passion of Eros is true first in dreams and perhaps never exists better than in the lyric impulse of its narrative.²

Passionate desire for physical proximity and possession remains latent in individuals even before the actual meeting of lovers takes place. This is the main reason why even before the actual experience of falling in love poetic personae, like adolescent youth, are enamoured of frustration and suffering. Myths and cultural prototypes of love serve as the amorous souls of lovers with self consuming passion and desire turned on itself. It surely can be considered as one of the most beautiful and wonderful experience of human life and Hardy’s poetry is replete with instances of intense passion:

Beckon to me to come
With handkerchief or hand
Or finger mere or thumb;
Let forecasts be but rough,
Parents more bleak than bland,
‘Twill be enough,
Maid mine,
Twill be enough!

Two fields, a wood, a tree,
Nothing now more malign
Lies between you and me;
But were they bysm, or bluff,
Or snarling sea, one sign
Would be enough,  
Maid mine  
Would be enough! (CP, 670).

The suffering and frustration presented in the poem appear as fantasised as the possibility of meeting, for the yearning lover. It suggests that the latent passionate mythical desire in him is longing for love to beckon. Even the slightest of hint with ‘handkerchief or hand or finger mere or thumb’ will suffice for him to brave the dangers of rough forecast, bleak parents, the distance of fields, forest and even the snarling sea. It is not a desire for particular beloved but only a yearning to claim someone, anyone, as ‘maid mine’. The poem clearly highlights the paradoxes of passionate love in which wish is combined with fear and illusion with sensation. These are the conflicts that lend to passion a poised unity, a sense of striving towards the unattainable resolutions of mystery and inquiry. The secret of passionate love lies in the illusion of oedipal possession in the mythical image of love defined by specific cultures.

Many of Hardy’s poems, for instance ‘Let Me Believe’ (CP, 674), ‘A Thunderstorm in Town’ (CP, 294), ‘A Two Years’ Idyll’ (CP, 594), etc. celebrate the upsurge of passion and also narrate the regretful reminiscences of the dreams that might have been. ‘Faint Heart in a Railway Train’ very appropriately narrates the experience of the poetic persona, who glimpses “a radiant stranger” (CP, 536) at a railway station during the halt. He is attracted towards her and inspired to speak to her but procrastinates too long in his mental ‘search for plea’ and is carried away by the train, out of her life, for ever. And then he futilely laments:

\[\ldots\ O\ could\ it\ but\ be\ \\
That\ I\ had\ alighted\ there\ (CP, 536).\]
The infinite possibility of happiness or misery that chance or choice lead one to leave unexplored fascinated Hardy. Here the train might be taken to suggest the extreme brevity of life's opportunities. The poem is a clear reminder of human nature that is more apt to regret the undone deeds than the accomplished tasks.

Hardy's concept of passionate love is formulated upon the conceptions of his society, as expressed in the ballads and myths that influenced the conduct of his countrymen. His exposure to the rural culture, which was alive to the ballad tradition and country fairs, during his childhood helped him reconstruct imaginative tales of passionate yearnings - some modified by his personal experience but most remaining universal in appeal and inspiration. Lafacadio Hearn describing the Western society says:

You must try to imagine, then, a society in which every man must choose his wife and every woman must choose her husband, independent of all outside help, and not only choose but obtain if possible. The great principle of Western society is that competition rules here as it rules in everything else. . . . So it may be said that every man has a struggle of some kind in order to marry and that there is a fight or contest for the possession of every woman worth having.³
This contest is obvious in Hardy’s poetry as it is equally perceptible in other English poets. Hardy like other writers of his society writes more about the pain, fear and struggle preceding marriage. His perception of love also owes to the literary tradition he inherited. His early love poems exhibit a bookishness and immaturity, as far as first hand experience of love shaped and trimmed by experience and brooding is concerned. F.B. Pinion cites the example of Hardy’s poem ‘After Reading Psalms XXXIX., XL., ETC.’ (CP, 660) as Hardy’s confession that “he knew little about love when he began to write poetry.”

Many of his early love poems, like ‘1967’ (CP, 204), are imitative of John Donne while ‘She to Him’ (CP, 11) are modelled on Shakespeare. They represent the general perception of love prevalent in the society. Trevor Johnson is right when he says:

His early poems are self evidently fictitious to the extent that their dramatis personae are invented or at least heavily disguised. Finally their gloom is a touch mannered their disillusion laid rather too thickly to be entirely too convincing. It is not that they are insincere or lacking in conviction rather one feels that their inspiration is bookish.

*Time’s Laughing Stocks* includes a group of poems called ‘Love Lyrics’. The first poem in this group composed in 1867 is captioned 1967. As the title suggests it is an imaginative construction of the society a hundred years hence the permanence of love sought by the poetic persona, in the form of far fetched imaginative conceit, echoes
John Donne. He says that the coming century will be different, could be better, but we two shall not survive to witness our love in that century:

    . . . I would only ask thereof
    That thy worm should be my worm, Love (CP, 204).

Donne also draws similar conceits when he imagines the commingling of two lovers in a flea.

    This flea is you and I, and this
    Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is

This seemingly exaggerated desire of lasting intermingling of two selves transcends both the physical and the spiritual realm. One of the poems by Robert Browning expresses similar hyperbolic desire:

    There you stand,
    Warm too and white too; would this wine
    Had washed all over that body of yours,
    Ere I drank it, and you down with it, thus!

Though some of the early poems by Hardy owe their inspiration, direct or indirect, to earlier writers, there is a marked maturity in his later poems. His romantic poems with equal degree of passion when compared to early poems claim wider acceptance and maturity of thought. The exaggerated enthusiasm of the earlier poem gives way to more balanced and beautiful expression of thought in the sad and lovely reverie entitled ‘In Death Divided’:

    I

    I shall rot here, with those whom in their day
    You never knew,
    And alien ones who, ere they chilled to clay,
    Met not my view,

    Will in your distant grave-place ever neighbour you.
II
No shade of pinnacle or tree or tower,
   While earth endures,
Will fall on my mound and within the hour
   Steal on to yours;
One robin never haunt our two green covertures.

III
Some organ may resound on Sunday noons
   By where you lie,
Some other thrill the panes with other tunes
   Where moulder I;
No selfsame chords compose our common lullaby.

IV
The simply-cut memorial at my head
   Perhaps may take
A Gothic form, and that above your bed
   Be Greek in make;
No linking symbol show thereon for our tales sake.

V
And in the monotonous moils of strained, hard-run
   Humanity,
The eternal tie which binds us twain in one
   No eye will see
Stretching across the miles that sever you from me (CP, 301).

Thomas Hardy's poetry endeavours to capture the nuances of this intense passion that yearns to consummate the feeling of falling in love. The obsessive fervour for pursuing passion dominates over the zeal for physical consummation. Passionate suffering and a yearning for intimacy with the beloved intensifies the emotional turmoil. Even unkept appointments are expressed with passion whereas, at
times, the actual meeting of lovers become a catastrophe, as in ‘Two Serenades’ (CP, 571). This mysterious stage of life celebrating the contradictions of passionate love has been effectively captured in Hardy’s poetry:

I do not wish to win your vow
To take me soon or late as bride,
And lift me from the nook where now
I tarry your farings to my side.
I am blissful ever to abide
In this green labyrinth--let all be,
If but, whatever may betide,
You do not leave off loving me!

Your comet-comings I will wait
With patience time shall not wear through;
The yellowing years will not abate
My largened love and truth to you,
Nor drive me to complaint undue
Of absence, much as I may pine,
If never another 'twixt us two
Shall come, and you stand wholly mine (CP, 577).

Passionate love is intense and thus not conducive to long-lasting productive, psychologically balanced relationships. Even in Hardy’s poetry one can observe the stark juxtaposition of mundane passionless existence with the ephemeral heightened feeling of romance or passion. Each lover lives with the notion of the idealized other. In fact, even Hardy’s poetic personae celebrate the feeling of falling in love. They rarely see the other as a complete human-being, with inherent human weaknesses. The myth of romance relies on the illusion that it can last forever. *Tristan and Isolde* and *Romeo and Juliet*, in the Western culture, portray romances that can last forever though only in death. ‘Her Temple’ among other poems clearly conveys the
protagonist's desire to provide a lasting permanence to his idealised perception of passionate love. The Western myth of eternal love is perceptible in Hardy's poems that depict passionate love, tragic or otherwise:

DEAR, think not that they will forget you:
- If craftsmanly art should be mine
I will build up a temple and set you
Therein as its shrine

They may say: "Why a woman such honour?"
- Be told, "O, so sweet was her fame,
That a man heaped this splendour upon her;
None now knows his name" (CP, 594).

When lovers come together, in Hardy's poems, they are usually consumed with unbounded passion, constantly endeavouring to overcome internal and external obstacles prolonging separation - such as in the model case of Tristan and Isolde. Interestingly, these obstacles tend to rear their ugly heads immediately after the couple has consummated their love. Passion lasts only till it is not consumed. Many a times, the moth of passionate love detests the inviting flame, real or imaginary, owing to the pre-knowledge of imminent dangers:

THOUGH I waste watches framing words to fetter
Some unknown spirit of mine in clasp and kiss,
Out of the night there looms a sense 'twere better
To fail obtaining whom one fails to miss.

For winning love we win the risk of losing,
And losing love is as one's life were riven;
It cuts contumely and keen ill-using
To cede what was superfluously given.

Let me then never feel the fateful trilling
That devastates the love worn wooer’s frame,
The hot ado of fevered hopes, the chilling
That agonizes disappointed aim!
So may I live no junctive law fulfilling law fulfilling,
And my hearts table know no woman’s name (CP,11).

Though ‘Revulsion’ may not be one of Hardy’s best poems but it incorporates the adolescent dilemma of struggle with the initial intricacies of encountering passion. The poetic persona’s awareness of love-worn wooer’s fret and fetter makes him despise passion for its inherent dangers. At the youthful stage of life, when winning means everything, he does not what to risk his prospects by trying to fulfil ‘junctive law’ of nature. The first two lines of the poem make it amply clear that the poetic persona is only analysing the initial compulsive passion and its imagined aftermath. The poem reveals his contemplative flirting with the fantasised idea of passionate love. The diction in the poem is equally superfluous. It complements the self-awareness and fragile engagement of the poetic persona’s encounter with the upsurge of passionate fervour. Similar treatment is meted to passionate upsurge of love in ‘I Said to Love’ (CP, 103), ‘The Musing Maiden’ (CP, 861), ‘Her Temple’ (CP, 594) to name only a few.

Frustration real or imaginary, fuels passion in poetry. Hardy’s love poetry abounds in the portrayal of dramatised instances where the poetic persona reveals keen lessons learnt from the frustration and loss of love. Hardy’s love poetry displays a lesson which leaves the lover wiser even in frustration. ‘Last Love Word’ (C.P. 704) ‘Song to Aurore’ (CP, 845) are only a two examples. ‘End of an Episode’ also ends with a lesson:
INDULGE no more may we
In this sweet-bitter pastime:
The love-light shines the last time
   Between you, Dear, and me.

There shall remain no trace
Of what so closely tied us,
And blank as ere love eyed us
   Will be our meeting-place.

The flowers and thymy air,
Will they now miss our coming?
The dumbles thin their humming
   To find we haunt not there?

Though fervent was our vow,
Though ruddily ran our pleasure,
Bliss has fulfilled its measure,
   And sees its sentence now.

Ache deep; but make no moans:
Smile out; but stilly suffer:
The paths of love are rougher
   Than thoroughfares of stones (CP, 211).

An autobiographical poem by Hardy 'At the word "Farewell"' portrays
Hardy's passionate feelings for Emma after their first meeting.

She looked like a bird from a cloud
   On the clammy lawn,
Moving alone, bare-browed
   In the dim of dawn.
The candles alight in the room
   For my parting meal
Made all things withoutdoors loom
   Strange, ghostly, unreal.
The hour itself was a ghost,
    And it seemed to me then
As of chances the chance furthermost
    I should see her again.
I beheld not where all was so fleet
    That a Plan of the past
Which had ruled us from birthtime to meet
    Was in working at last:

No prelude did I there perceive
    To a drama at all,
Or foreshadow what fortune might weave
    From beginnings so small;
But I rose as if quicked by a spur
    I was bound to obey,
And stepped through the casement to her
    Still alone in the gray.

"I am leaving you . . . Farewell!" I said,
    As I followed her on
By an alley bare boughs overspread;
    "I soon must be gone!"
Even then the scale might have been turned
    Against love by a feather,
– But crimson one cheek of hers burned
    When we came in together (CP, 405-06).

The magical feeling of instinctive attraction towards object of love, here Emma, can well be compared with the instinctive attraction of the moth towards a burning candle. The first stanza clearly idealises the beloved as a timid ‘bird from a cloud’ ‘moving alone’. The second stanza points towards the plan of nature that destined the lovers to meet. They only become puppets in the hands of destiny and feel instinctively drawn towards each other. But the ‘crimson cheek’ of the beloved also displays the burning
desire and the fragile scale of passionate consent tilts in their favour. It is a poem written retrospectively and so the plan of destiny was already realised before Hardy chose to give words to his remembered passion. Still the passion expressed in the poem does not lose its intensity just as ‘Benny Cliff’ (CP, 330) also portrays reminiscent passion without losing the experienced intensity.

Passionate love has been condemned due to the deliria, delusion and illusion fostered by it. Representative voices sounding moral or esthetical concerns have, for many centuries, tried to bring the rule of the law to the passionate spontaneity which in their eyes runs wild in the profane terrain. Rarely have they realised that the attractions of passionate love lie not only, or even primarily, in the promise of orgasmic license but in the fascinations exercised by its paradoxes. On the one hand, there do exist those burning torments of unrequited love or unconsummated love, the sharp stabs of jealous possession and the high pitch of love’s supreme joy. But on the other, however, are found the devotions and the meditations seeking religious intimacy and gravity of lover’s world. In ‘A Winsome Woman’ the narrator describing his beloved says:

There's no winsome woman so winsome as she:
    Some are flower like in mouth,
    Some have fire in the eyes,
    Some feed a soul’s drought
    Trilling words music wise;
But where are these gifts all in one found to be
    Save in her known to me? (CP, 882).

In passionate love longing is a state in which the adoration and cherishing of the person, for whom one lusts, override the forces of ambivalence, selfishness and
destruction which accompany the quest for pleasure. This in conjunction with desire gives birth to the dialectic of romantic eroticism.

The prototypes of longing in passionate love can be found in the two well knows myths from India and Greece. The split of the 'Purusha' in the *Upnishads* and the split of the hermaphrodite in Plato's *Symposium*, point towards the yearning for the mythic union in every man and woman. These are among the earliest attempts of the human imagination to formulate, in poetic images and symbols, an explanation of hetero-sexual love. They offer metaphors for the hermaphroditic quest for self-completion and fulfilment. In the Indian myth of creation, from the *Upnishads*, 'Purusha' was alone at the beginning of the universe. Looking around he saw nothing other than himself. He found no pleasure and so longed for a companion. He split himself into two. From this split of the 'Purusha' arose husband and wife. According to Plato's myth in *Symposium* humans began life as spherical creatures with eight limbs, two faces and two genital organs facing in the opposite direction. When they attacked the Gods, Zeus retaliated against them. Instead of destroying them, with a thunderbolt, he cut them into two halves. Later he turned their genitals around, to the front, so that they could momentarily unite in the copulative embrace. Commenting on the myth Plato remarks that the intense yearnings which each of them have towards the other does not appear to be the desire of lover's intercourse but of something else which the soul of either eventually desires but cannot tell. The myths clearly suggest this something else i.e.; longing lies anterior to desire.

Longing essentially requires an idealization and adoration of the beloved; with admiration and awe. Idealization makes the beloved an infinitely superior being to whom the lover willingly subordinates his desire. To whom the lover can surrender
and obey and thus reverse the ascents of the master servant metaphor of possessive desire. The idealizing fervour of passionate love, which recognises only the spontaneity of religious passion and graceful devotion, reveals the beloved as a being of almost sacred stature. This continual longing for the idealised beloved is the subject of many poems in Hardy. ‘The Seven Times’ (CP, 650) depicts intense longing that transcends not only physical appearance but also life. Similarly, the persona in ‘Her Definition’ (CP, 204) spends sleepless night in his intense endeavour to find appropriate ‘epithets’ to describe his beloved. The failure to find a suitable name for his beloved is not his failure but the failure of the language that cannot translate intense emotions into concrete signifiers. After considering numerous options he unwillingly calls her “The sweetest image outside Paradise” (CP, 205) in the absence of a better term.

But the idealization is as short-lived as the possibility of the mythical union. If the lover idealizes not the beloved but the image of the beloved there is every chance of its shattering even at the hint of the slightest incitation. In ‘The well Beloved’ the lover goes to marry his idealized sweet heart:

And as I quick and quicker walked
On gravel and on green,
I sang to sky, and tree, or talked
Of her I called my queen.

- "O faultless is her dainty form,
And luminous her mind;
She is the God-created norm
Of perfect womankind!" (CP, 121)
This part of lover’s passion, to quote Barthes:

is usually a smooth envelope which encases the image, a very gentle glove around the sacred being.

It is a devout, unorthodox discourse—when the image alters, the envelope of devotion rips apart, the horror of spoiling the idealization is stronger than the anxiety of losing. ¹⁰

As in the same poem, quoted above, when Venus, the symbol of love, appears before the bride groom and tells him.

. . . Brides are not what they seem;
Thou lovest what thou dreamest her;
I am thy very dream!" (CP, 122).

The smooth envelope which encases the image, the gentle glove around the sacred being, is ripped apart. The poem ends with.

— When I arrived and met my bride,
   Her look was pinched and thin,
As if her soul had shrunk and died,
   And left a waste within (CP, 123).

The great imaginative creations of identification and idealization are only preliminary achievements in the work of longing. They serve as a prelude establishing in the lover a special receptivity, a readiness to risk identity transcending individual boundaries so that he can become one with the beloved.

This striving for ineffable union, the longing par excellence, has been traditionally considered love’s greatest gift. This longing, to transcend personal
boundaries and attain union with the other, also suggests many parallels to mysticism, especially the devotional variety. Many secular and profane love poets in the West, like Donne and Hopkins, have taken divine vows in search of oneness and tranquillity, while many in the East like Meera, Kabir, Rumi among many others, spurred by the passion of longing, have renounced their ecclesiastical communities in search of the ultimate oneness. But unlike the mystics who envision a yearning for oneness with the everlasting the psychologists often view it as a forlorn desire to recapture the long lost unity, from the infant’s earliest experience, with the maternal world. Unlike Donne and Hopkins, Hardy’s inability to believe in the benevolent God prevented him from seeking divine oneness. Surprisingly, he sought tranquillity and relief in the fleeting moments of oneness with the mother and the maternal universe.

Hardy’s mother had a strong influence on Hardy. ‘A wasted Illness’ is an autobiographical poem composed when Hardy was seriously ill in London, fighting for life. It reveals his longing for oneness and relief in the prenatal maternal universe.

Through vaults of pain
Enribbed and wrought with grains of ghastliness
I passed, and garish spectres moved my brain.
To Dire distress (CP, 139).

He asked himself the question "Where lies the end/To this foul way?" (CP, 139) and ahead “saw a door extend – The door of Death”(CP, 139). And as “it loomed more clear” he cried for the all “delivering door”(CP, 139) the mother, the womb. With the imaginative process of re-entering the birth canal, the door of death, and suffering grew less near.
And back slid I
Along the galleries by which I came
And tediously the day returned, and sky
And life - the same

And all was well:
Old circumstance resumed its former show,
And on my head the dews of comfort fell
As ere my woe (CP, 139).

Thus in the maternal universe one finds the feeling of:

... pure happiness which is without alloy, and

gladness unsullied by sorrow, the perfect realization

of hopes and the complete fulfilment of one's

dreams...a miracle of wonder unsurpassing the
tongues of eloquent, and far beyond the reach of the
most cunning speech describe: the mind reels before

it and the intellect stands abashed.11

Longing is not always reducible to its infantine origins only. Psychic growth
changes by obliterating the contents of previous experience and by replacing them
with newer evolving modes of knowledge. Mysticism, art and love have consensual
and sometimes ritualised standards of illusion. Longing for union need not always
imply a psychotic dissolution. Demarcation between the self and the loved object,
fantasy and consensual reality, can also be altered by conjoining with the newly
idealized other. The lover, identifying with the novel perspective of the idealized
image of the beloved, feels more secure and the world around becomes heightened, as
if discovered anew. The lover is filled to the brim not depleted and his ache is anything but void. Hardy in one of his poems writes:

When I set out for Lyonnesse,
A hundred miles away,
The rime was on the spray,
And starlight lit my lonesomeness
When I set out for Lyonnesse
A hundred miles away (CP, 293).

Alike a mystic a lover also rekindles the world when in a state of grace, with the new found beauty and harmony. Passionate grace illuminates the surroundings, animates the lover’s relationship with nature and art. It also deepens his metaphysical responsiveness. The ecstasy which comes with the fulfilment of longing reaches beyond the triumph of orgasmic satisfaction. It is, put simply, a feeling of complete peace in an ineffable intimacy. In Far from the Madding Crowd, Gabriel Oak maintains that even flow of passion’s fulfilment which needs no reciprocation. It is free from the desire of flesh. Similarly, Marty’s love for Winterborne in The Woodlanders portrays the same ineffable intimacy. Knowing that Winterbourne and Grace love each other, she does not express in words her positive and profound feelings for him. Her silent devotion flows constant and steady, like that of Oak in Far from the Madding Crowd and Diggory Venn in The Return of the Native. Unlike Grace, Winterbourne’s death does not signify great loss for Marty. Instead, for her Winterbourne was ever alive in her heart and would continue to live until she lived. All the characters discussed above and poetic personae find fulfilment of longing, whenever they find it, in the mystical union with idealized lovers. Union of flesh brings only frustration and tragedy. ‘Her Secret’ is a poem that conveys continuous
longing and seeks its fulfilment only in the incorporeal sense. The unrest and longing for her unrequited love, experienced by the female persona in the poem, remains unrecognized by her husband. The ‘love bird’ fluttering within her breast craves for a lodging and finds it in the safe and lasting grave of her former lover. Her longing for the incorporeal lover is more satisfying than the love of her husband with whom she shares the intimacy of flesh:

That love's dull smart distressed my heart
        He shrewdly learnt to see,
But that I was in love with a dead man
        Never suspected he.

He searched for the trace of a pictured face,
        He watched each missive come,
And a sheet that seemed like a love-line
        Wrought his look lurid and numb.

He dogged my feet to the city street,
        He followed me to the sea,
But not to the nigh, still churchyard
        Did he dream of following me (CP,343).

Similarly, Hardy’s desire and feeling for fusion with the dead Emma appears more satisfying. Probably he would not have immortalized her, in his poetry, had she lived as long as he did. Thus, one may say that, in Hardy, the subjective image generates a positive and profound fulfilment in itself. Denis de Rougemont gives an interesting definition of passion in one of his essays ‘On the Myths of love’:
Passion is that form of love which refuses the immediate, avoids dealing with what is near, and if necessary invents distance in order to realize and exalt itself more completely (Rougemont 41).

Longing, then, tends to find fulfilment when the feeling of love provides a permanent internalised emotional possession of the spiritualized beloved. Desire on the other hand aspires for physical fusion and often finds disillusionment due to the temporality of satisfaction, if achieved. Thus desire and longing are different, not one. At certain moments they may temporarily commingle and co-exist. These two terms can be used interchangeably only in a temporary state when love becomes sex and sex becomes love. Otherwise sensual and possessive desire aspires to be fulfilled by overpowering its object while longing would have her or him indestructible, immortal and ascendant. This disclosure of desire and longing to each-other is almost always painful. The existence of the other person presents itself as a body that is penetrable and consciousness that is impenetrable. In passionate pursuit soul is also a vision that is not insensible to touch:

A dream of mine flew over the mead
   To the halls where my old Love reigns;
   And it drew me on to follow its lead:
   And I stood at her window-panes;

   And I saw but a thing of flesh and bone
   Speeding on to its cleft in the clay;
   And my dream was scared, and expired on a moan,
   And I whitely hastened away (CP, 130).
Such delusions also perceptible in ‘The Well-Beloved’ (CP, 121), ‘Amabel’ (CP, 6) pervade passionate love with irreducible ambiguity and potential tragedy in Hardy.

Passionate love also exhibits the simultaneous existence of joy and anguish. The extreme emotions of love’s happiness and its sorrow—of joy most sharp and anguish without end until death—are many a times found intermingled in the same poem.

"The creaking hinge is oiled,
   I have unbarred the backway,
   But you tread not the trackway;
   And shall the thing be spoiled?

"Far cockcrows echo shrill,
   The shadows are abating,
   And I am waiting, waiting;
   But O, you tarry still!" (CP, 207).

The torment and obsessive quality of passionate love derives not only from the inherent conflict—a squashing together of desire and longing—but also from the unyielding reality one encounters. In longing the purest state is one when the soul nearly contains the body and lovers yearn for their souls to merge and become one because consummation seems impossible as long as they possess bodies. Their ultimate goal becomes to intermingle with each other in death by escaping the flesh. Physical existence, which once exhausted their aspirations, becomes a hindrance in their intermingling:
With nothing left of me and you . . .
Beyond a pinch of dust or two; . . .

. . . I would only ask thereof
That thy worm should be my worm, Love! (CP, 204).

There are other poems that show how love transcends physical existence. Passionate love does not always require the presence of the individual loved. 'The Cheval Glass' portrays a heart rendering tale of a passionate lover who buys a cheval glass from an auction just because it once belonged to the girl whom he admired during his youth. The girl is unaware of his passion. She is married off to another person and also dies an untimely death. Her nameless passionate lover cherishes the cheval glass and carries it around wherever he goes:

"There, too, at pallid midnight moments
Quick she will come to my call,
Smile from the frame withal
Ponderingly, as she used to regard me
Passing her father's wall.

So that it was for its revelations
I brought it oversea,
And drag it about with me. . . .
Anon I shall break it and bury its fragments
Where my grave is to be" (CP, 339).

This theme of unrequited pleasure, at the edge of union, recurs in the Collected Poems. The complexity of passionate love intensifies with its inherent emotions of wooing and craving. Wooing conveys the desire to win the beloveds consent in love, as is evident in Browning's poems 'The Last Ride Together', 'Andrea Del Sarto',

135
'One Word More'. Craving, on the other hand, idealises the beloved as a separate person. Endeavouring to induce response and to receive it back, the lover then identifies with the received response. Instances of craving outnumber those of wooing in Hardy. Many of his poems are composed on his real or imaginary, intimate experiences with his actual or desired beloveds of bygone time. He cherished for life, the images of his youthful sweethearts–Rebecca, Maria, and Tryphena Sparks among many others. In one of his poems Hardy confesses:

If there were in my kalendar
No Emma, Florence, Mary,
What would be my existence now— (CP, 448).

A number of his passionate poems are alluded to Tryphena Sparks of which ‘The End of an Episode’ (CP, 211) has gained enormous literary reputation. The title lays bare its theme and the expression of passion does not betray the intensity of emotions expressed. ‘The Division’ (CP, 205) and ‘A Broken Appointment’ (CP, 124) are poems about Mrs. Henniker. Coincidentally, Hardy’s wife, Emma and Mrs. Henniker died within a short period of each other. They were buried close to each other in the Stanford church. The last sad slow line of the poem ‘Louie’ very appropriately portrays Hardy’s feelings for the two women; one his wife and the other his infatuation:

Long two strangers they and far apart; such neighbours now (CP, 735).

One of Hardy’s last love poems written in his eighties is ‘To Louisa in the Lane’ (CP, 801). It again confirms that his relationship with women lived most vividly in his imagination even long after they were irrevocably over. What emerges again and again from these poems is a wondering about what might have been the unfulfilled
possibility and Hardy's guilty passionate awareness of his divided localities. H.C. Duffin is right when he says:

The passion that moves behind his love poems is the passion of young manhood seen through a golden haze of retrospect.\(^{12}\)

Out of the far too many poems like 'A Thunderstorm in Town' (CP, 294), 'At Castle Boterel' (CP, 330), 'The Voice' aptly expresses the idea:

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! (CP, 325).

Hardy added a phrase from Virgil; 'Veteris vestigia flammae', to the Poems of 1912-13. It might be freely rendered as “last flickering from a dying fire”.\(^{13}\) The phrase epitomise Hardy's craving for his dead wife, Emma. 'Veteris vestigia flammae' are the words spoken by Dido, Queen of Carthage, in Book IV of Virgil's Aeneid. Dido expresses how the ability to love, which had died with the death of her husband Sychaeus, is reawakened by the visiting Trojan hero, Aeneas. She perceives it as a dying flicker of love as, her new found love, Aeneas too is about to abandon her shortly. This even prompts her to commit suicide. Dryden, in line 31 of Book IV,
translates the expression as “the sparkles of my former flame.” Allen Mandelbaum translates it as “the signs of the old flame” and also “the traces of an old fire”, since *flammae* can mean either fire of ashes, and *vestigia* can signify a mark or trace even the track of a footstep. Hardy also questions the status of remembered passion through this epigraph. These words place Hardy as Dido, falling in love again. But they also imply an allegation in which he stands in the position of Aeneas, standing before Dido’s mute accusing shade during his visit to the underworld in Book VI. The underworld motif suggests another mythic subtext, the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, of the singer who must attempt to rescue his beloved from death. Hardy alludes to it more explicitly in ‘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, 498).

This in turn implores one of the greatest mysteries inherent in the poem sequence of 1912-13. Hardy’s passionate sympathy for the dead Emma traces the reader back to Hardy’s individual psychopathology. Temperamentally, he was inclined towards the unique fusion of “distance and desire.”16 And craving refers to desire for the distant where an individual is aware of both the intensity of desire and its futility, owing to the unsurpassable distance. The Virgilian context is also evoked by the ‘purples’ which ‘prink’ in ‘Beeny Cliff’ (CP, 330). In this poem Hardy most explicitly returns to the scenes of his courtship with Emma. The poem is suitably subtitled ‘March 1870—March 1913’:

A little cloud then cloaked us, and there flew an irised rain,
And the Atlantic dyed its levels with a dull misfeatured stain,
And then the sun burst out again, and purples prinked the main (CP, 330).

In the 1895 Preface of A Pair of Blue Eyes the same ‘bloom of dark purple cast’ is described and in chapter four, in quotation marks. Hardy writes of ‘the purple light’ which surrounds its protagonists. Though it may be argued that, ‘purple prinked the main’ is inspired by the ‘purple light of love’ of Thomas Gray’s ode ‘The Progress of Poesy’. But Virgil lies behind that reference as well. Donald Davie stresses that the Virgilian context pervades the novel as it also permeates the sequence in Poems 1912-13 and that the epigraph echoes across Western tradition. Virgil’s words are translated by Dante at the climactic moment of the Purgatorio in which Beatrice replaces Virgil.
as Dante’s guide. The sequence thus presents Hardy as Dido, driven wild by passion; Hardy as the Aeneas who betrays; Hardy as Aeneas/Orpheus in the underworld. It also presents Emma as the lamentable ghost of Dido/Eurydice or as the redemptive guide Beatrice leading him through the topography of the past. All these positions are called up and interrogated when Hardy writes:

‘Through the years, through the dead scenes I have tracked you;
What have you now found to say of our past –
Scanned across the dark space wherein I have lacked you?’ (CP, 328).

He evokes the vestigia (tracks) of the epigraph, Aeneas’s confrontation with the unanswering ghost of Dido, and Dante’s passage through Hell and Purgatory. Thus the epigraph leads the reader towards the terrain of Western mythology but the psychological grief of the poet is also expressed through the journey of the poetic personae. ‘At Castle Boterel’ (CP, 330), emphasises upon moments in the psychology of grief. On the other hand, in ‘Where the Picnic Was’ (CP, 336), when Hardy returns to the Ridgeway, above Portland, and stands in the circle of charred embers – the ashes from an old fire – and sees the devastation, his Eros is imbued with death, its ‘dark space’ recalling the tormented topography of Dante’s hell – the purple and black air which Dante calls perso. The elegiac sequence, Poems of 1912-13, thus presents a complex process in which the experience of death, initially overwhelming, is worked-through to a point of resolution and achieved distance. It should be seen as a process that typically involves a repeated confrontation of loss; anger and perhaps even denial; a recapitulation of the relationship with the dead; the creation of a satisfactory internal image of the dead; and a giving up of the dead to the larger forces of nature. It presents a poetic sequence, rather than a single elegy, that attempts to freeze moments
in the process of mourning simultaneously allowing them to be explored. Peter Sacks in *The English Elegy* exemplifies this psychological reading. He characterizes the *Poems of 1912-13* as marking a break with the traditions of the genre:

In few other elegies has the poet gone so far to undermine his own identity or had to fight so desperately for his own survival.¹⁷

Sacks points out that the difficulty consists in analysing the ground on which memory must be recovered in fictionalizing Emma. In these poems, one may say, the moth of desire in Hardy craves for passionate oneness with the flame that has only the last flickering left from an otherwise dying fire in his memory. Craving is an intense passion for the unattainable and Hardy in these poems about Emma craves for the bygone moments that still live on in his remembered experience. Hardy could recreate the past, in poetry, at will because he never let go the experience. He clutched it as close to his heart as possible. ‘To Meet or Otherwise’ very aptly expresses this attitude of the poet.

*By briefest meeting something sure is won:*

*It will have been:*

*Nor God nor Demon can undo the done* (CP, 292).

Hardy craves for these living moments that are still fresh in his memory. With the death of Emma and Hardy’s marriage to Florence Emily Dugdale the reality of his marriage to Emma also died. What lived on was the elderly man’s craving for the youthful experiences of passionate love and his desire to merge again with the flickering of the flame, in the form of Emma’s remembered company that once lured
him. In essence these poems are the record of Hardy's craving for the spectre of lost love. H.C. Duffin is not alone when he opines that:

These poems are almost unique . . . . Of all preceding love poetry in English, none has the peculiar quality of intimacy that characterises these poems.¹⁸

After Emma's death Hardy looked again at the water-colour sketches they had made together forty-three years before, and reflected on the barrier that time and his wife's near insanity had thrown up between them. He calls it "that thwart thing", in 'The Division' (CP, 205) where he directly refers to it. Out of this complex of pain and regret, old love remembered, old haunts revisited, and his own magical facility for re-entering the past, he created a series of poems which express with unparalleled felicity both the searing pain of loss, and the sudden ecstasy of recapturing happiness. These poems are the product of half a century's unremitting toil. Hardy was seventy-two when he gave words to his passionate cravings:

Foremost in my vision
Everywhere goes she;
Change dissolves the landscapes,
She abides with me.

Shape so sweet and shy, Dear,
Who can say thee nay?
Never once do I, Dear,
Wish thy ghost away (CP, 210).
Only Hardy, even at an elderly age, could write with such splendour about the first flush of romantic admiration. It was as if, from a grim mountain, some long dammed-up spring were to burst out, full of force and beauty, to turn the parched and rocky hillside green again:

Yes, I companion him to places
Only dreamers know,
Where the shy hares print long paces,
Where the night rooks go (CP, 325).

Who else could describe more delicately that:

... Upon Boterel Hill, where the carters skid,
With cheeks whose airy flush outbid
Fresh fruit in bloom, and free of fear,
She cantered down, as if she must fall
(Though she never did),
To the charm of all (CP, 332).

But these poems do much more than evoke Emma with her:

... nut-coloured hair
And grey eyes and rose-flush coming and going (CP, 328).

They summon up, in loving detail, the past itself. The “beetling Beeny crest” (CP, 319), “thin Vallency's river” (CP, 329), “Where we made the fire/In the summer time” (CP, 336) recreate lost landscapes and other incidents connected with these places:

Whence she often would gaze
At Dundagel's famed head,
While the dipping blaze
Dyed her face fire-red (CP, 322).
The first poem, in the sequence, *Poems of 1912-13*, entitled ‘The Going’, begins in an easy, almost conversational style. It masks inner torments under everyday phrases where Hardy questions his dead wife:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Why did you give no hint that night} \\
&\text{That quickly after the morrow's dawn,} \\
&\text{And calmly, as if indifferent quite,} \\
&\text{You would close your term here, up and be gone . . . (CP, 318).}
\end{align*}
\]

It is almost casual, until the sudden change of tone:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\ldots \text{gone} \\
&\text{Where I could not follow} \\
&\text{With wing of swallow} \\
&\text{To gain one glimpse of you ever anon! (CP, 318).}
\end{align*}
\]

It reveals the rawness of the wound. The next stanza that begins in tenderness also bears a hint of self-reproach:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Never to bid good-bye,} \\
&\text{Or give me the softest call,} \\
&\text{Or utter a wish for a word, while I} \\
&\text{Saw morning harden upon the wall,} \\
&\text{Unmoved, unknowing} \\
&\text{That your great going} \\
&\text{Had place that moment, and altered all (CP, 318).}
\end{align*}
\]

The sense of insecurity in love, as though balanced on an edge, and the haunting theme that is to reverberate throughout the small collection of *Poems of 1912-13* becomes evident:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Why do you make me leave the house} \\
&\text{And think for a breath it is you I see (CP, 318).}
\end{align*}
\]

And in the poem, the phrase “for a breath”, fully conveys the fragility of life and how the “darkening dankness / The yawning blankness . . . sickens” (CP, 318)
Hardy. The homeliness of these utterance permits an intensity of quietness that is more shattering than any abandonment of grief. The reader is admitted to the temple that holds the very shrine of passionate love. The poetic persona, recognisably Hardy, expresses tender reproach for the sudden departure of his beloved, without any warning. He recalls her ways and traits with evident pathos: as the rain falls on her grave he thinks how she would run to shelter her delicate head even from a summer shower:

One who to shelter
Her delicate head
Would quicken and quicken
Each tentative tread
If drops chanced to pelt her
That summertime spills
In dust-paven rills
When thunder-clouds thicken
And birds close their bills (CP, 321).

It surely is not a craving for his dead wife but a desire to relive the dead days of courtship in which Emma lives as his beloved:

Soon will be growing
Green blades from her mound,
And daises be showing
Like stars on the ground, (CP, 321).

He escapes into an insecure happiness of reminiscent moments – “While life unrolled us its very best” (CP, 319). Then regret and tenderness impel him to ask, uselessly, why they did not “strive to seek that time's renewal” (CP, 319) in “this bright spring weather” (CP, 319). The despairing reality with the impossibility of making amends is expressed in terrible broken phrases. The groping movement of
utter hopelessness is revealed in the image of poet, himself as a broken puppet:

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, 319).

Hardy is not trying to write a 'beautiful' poem here. On the contrary, this is how a grief stripped person naked of pretence would express. It needs a great poet with genuine emotions to turn this disjointed fumbling into poetry.

A recurrent pattern perceptible in this poetry sequence pertains to an escape from darkness into a false dawn of feeling and memory, only to fall back into an even deeper abyss of desolation. 'Your Last Drive' portrays an everyday context, and casts it as a dialogue in which Hardy's 'dear ghost' points out the futility of his 'visits' to her grave. The last stanza begins with infinite tenderness:

True: never you'll know. And you will not mind.
But shall I then slight you because of such?
Dear ghost, in the past did you ever find
The thought "What profit?" move me much
Yet the fact indeed remains the same,
You are past love, praise, indifference, blame (CP, 320).

But even as he is drawn into this 'conversation' he realises that it is all illusion. He has, momentarily, defied time and intellect and craving in love is only an attempt to defy reality by desiring the unavailable.

Therefore, instead of trying to efface the memory of the beloved he clings tenaciously to the memories of their shared, distant past. He realised soon that it was
not possible to seek the spirit of his dead wife in the every day gatherings; at Morning Prayer, a lecture or by the sea. He was aware that the grave was the last place where he might find her. He found her company, momentarily, whenever in mystical mood he tried to revoke their shared past. He could then feel her image even through the thin blue air and even a dead leaf blown on his hand had the power to evoke her spirit. Her spirit still rekindled in him his early ardour recalled by the tender moments of their courtship, her habits and tastes. A night in November (CP, 555), Lament (CP, 323), An Old Likeness (CP, 633), The Frozen Greenhouse (CP, 698), After a Journey (CP, 328) are only a few examples. Love is treated as something fragile and yet priceless, in 'I Found Her Out There' (CP, 322). Here, the heart rather than the mind is engaged, for there is much variety even in as closely linked a series as this. Similarly, in 'Lament' Hardy lightly calls up his wife's delight in ordinary pleasures:

How she would have loved
A party to-day! —
Bright-hatted and gloved...

And she would have sought
With a child's eager glance
The shy snowdrops... (CP, 323-24).

Yet as each verse dances gaily along, in the poem it is suddenly checked by the harsh monosyllable 'But', followed by a tolling refrain that is varied each time:

... But
She is shut, she is shut
From the cheer of them, dead
To all done and said
In her yew-arched bed (CP, 324).
Memory opens the door, truth closes it again, and the flat, dull beat of the refrain contrasts painfully with the eager haste of the verses.

These verses are full of natural beauty and still the poet does not evade the harsh reality, unlike the romantic poets. Hardy is fully aware that the ghost exists only in his imagination and with daylight she will vanish. In these wonderful lines with their solemn music, their glowing contrasted images of night and day, the intimate and affectionate humour, the combination of old adversaries; Time, Reason and Truth of Fact, are all confounded, not by argument but by the sheer force of Hardy's conviction. So passionately does Hardy convey his vision that the readers accept his assertions with 'a willing suspension of disbelief.' However much one may deny it logically yet one is bound to assent with the heart to another kind of truth that is passionately Hardy's:

A ghost-girl-rider. And though, toil-tried,
He withers daily,
Time touches her not,
But she still rides gaily
In his rapt thought
On that shagged and shaly
Atlantic spot,
And as when first eyed
Draws rein and sings to the swing of the tide (CP, 333).

The Poems of 1912-13 covers almost all phases of romantic love but the emphasis remains on the sense of loss of a partner who was imaginatively wedded for life. Such a point of view cannot be labelled pessimistic. Human achievement can only be measured by looking backward. It is as true of achievement in the worldly sense as it is in the emotional sense of love. An endeavour to look back over a long
distance of time may prompt idealization of the situation but Hardy refrains from it. Beauty, passion, tenderness and understanding come alive in these poems owing to Hardy's honest expressions of personal emotions. He very quietly ascribes value to those incidents and things that were associated with the beloved. After the death of Emma, Hardy found a manuscript among her papers captioned 'What I Think of my Husband.' However one reconstructs the thirty-eight-year marriage, it is clear that it was not a happy one. The diaries Emma kept during the last twenty years of her life, perhaps entitled *What I Think of My Husband* and referred to as "diabolical diaries" by Hardy's second wife, Florence, seem to have contained a catalogue of her unhappiness and dissatisfaction. Hardy read and destroyed these diaries between December 1912 and February 1913. The husband who showed such sensitivity even to Emma's description of their first meeting cannot have been under any misapprehension as to the true nature of her bitter feelings towards him as he read the record she had kept. It is clear also that he recognized that his own disinterest in her left something, perhaps much, to be desired. It deepened his remorse and awakened in him a feeling of guilt. Before he could even realise he was writing poem after poem about Emma and soon it became a cycle and was published as *Poems of 1912-13*. They are among the greatest love lyrics in English. The attraction that a Moth feels for a Candle remains the strongest symbol of passionate love Hardy's romantic poems are bound together by such intensity of genuine passion that even the difference between reality and illusion blurs:

149
Something tapped on the pane of my room
    When there was never a trace
Of wind or rain, and I saw in the gloom
    My weary Beloved’s face.

‘O I am tired of waiting’, she said,
    ‘Night, morn, noon, afternoon;
So cold it is in my lonely bed,
    And I thought you would join me soon!’

I rose and neared the window-glass,
    But vanished thence had she:
Only a pallid moth, alas,
    Tapped at the pane for me (CP, 436).

The glass pane of the window presents a transparent division of twin realities. The real self on the one side of the transparent pane yearns to escape into the romantic and mysterious other. The moth of memory taps on the dividing glass inviting the flickering flame of desire to trespass reality and unite in a clandestine embrace of passionate oneness in the mythic union.
NOTES


8

स वेद नैव रेमे, तस्मादेकाकी न क्वते; स द्वितीये-
मैच्छत | स हेतावानास यथा स्त्रीपुमांसी संपरिष्कारी;
स इमेवितान देयापात्यं, तत: पतित्व पली चाना-
वतम् ; तस्मादिन्दएश्रतमय यथ इति ह स्माह याजा-
वत्कव; तस्मादयमानार्क: रिन्या पूर्वत अव; तां सम-
भवतु,ततो मनुष्या अजायत || 3 ||

At first there was only the Universal Soul. He received no delight. That is why none receive delight in living alone. He desired to gain a second [companion]. He was the same extent as when male and female embrace. He divided his Self into two parts. Thus husband and wife were created. (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 1/4/3).


