

Impassion or Hysteria: The Affecting and Touching Space in Thomas Hardy's "Poems of 1912-13"

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Abstract—Knowledge about man's environment is important. For long we have accepted physical forms and administrative arrangements base upon updated views of human activity. People are told students should study in classroom, prisoners should stay in jails; those reflect to the process by which people mark out and personalize the space they inhabit. However, space could be emotionally charged. In the "Poems of 1912-13" Thomas Hardy, a British poet, composed a series of poems after the unexpected death of his long-alienated wife, Emma. The series illustrates the psychological and emotional collision of Emma's death on Hardy, suggested by both his mental images of and real visit to the landscape in Cornwall, England. The space in represents the author's subconscious attachments to his late wife and to the landscaped. They present an apparent counterpart of the poet and his distressed conscience. After Emma had died, Hardy carried her memory alive by roaming about in the genuine in existence and fanciful land (space) they once had roamed and crossed. This paper highlights the space in Hardy's poems as an emotional charged in the landscape.

Index Terms—Thomas Hardy, Poems 1912-13, Robert Sommer, physical space, psychological space.

I. INTRODUCTION

"Remember only this one thing," said Badger.

"The stories people tell have a way of taking care of them. If stories come to you, care for them. And learn to give them away where they are needed. Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive. That is why we put these stories in each other's memory. This is how people care for themselves."

B. Lopez, *Crow & Weasel*.

There is a space for people who dwell in the past. There is a place for people who wants to throw the past away. There is a territory for people who relish the moment, live for the day. There is a place for a British poet, Thomas Hardy to reminiscence. "Poems of 1912-13", written by Hardy, explores intriguing ideas on artistry, mortality and his seeds in his memory, while searching for deep lessons about memory, love, mourning and ingenuity. Written in 1912-13, Hardy's "Poems of 1912-13" records conversations with a young and old ghost, his taciturn wife about imperishability, eternity and intense affection. The man in Thomas Hardy's

"Poems of 1912-13" tends to make the distinction between physical territory and personal space. Customarily, space refers to "a continuous area or expanse which is free and unoccupied (OED)". As Robert Sommer suggests, space is not expressly written for discernible sights; it is deeply

straightforward and precise to people who are able to grasp the surroundings. Literally, Sommer's idea of personal space is not carry around while territory is in or by comparison stationary. It is the borderline of personal space. In *Personal Space*, Sommer makes the differentiation between territory and personal space. He asserts space refers to "the emotionally charged zone which helps to regulate the spacing of individuals (viii)." At long last, the physical world is usually stamped as visualized boundaries and territories. There is always a hidden and imagined space. This is a recurring insight in Hardy's poems, as I intend to clarify in this essay.

II. THE SPACE IN "POEMS OF 1912-13"

Conventionally, space is relevant to "a continuous area or expanse which is free and unoccupied". It also refers to "a period or interval of time; a spell" (OED). In Hardy's poem "The Walk," the man "surveyed around, the familiar ground" of the site he once called on. In "Beeny Cliff," he shows and gives the impression on feeling and re-experiencing. The memories as he noted "a cloud then cloaked them", they "laugh-hearted lightly aloft on that clear-sunned March day." [1]. Viewing the remaining scenery, the narrator seems to gaze and eye at the scene as a medium of memory while getting high on its diverse facets from various angles. Molly Lefebvre, an English writer observed that "The description of the backgrounds has been done from the real" [2]. That is, the space in the "Poems of 1912-13" is not one hundred percent real. The real sets the space, the fanciful imaginary is emblematic and allegorical.

Henri Lefebvre, a French Marxist philosopher and sociologist came up with the idea of a "Trialectic of Spatiality," which supports to light the kaleidoscopic space up in Hardy's remembrance. Lefebvre affirms the spatial trialetics involves changing spatial practices, representation of space and representational space. He visualizes of spatial practice as a primitive and integral practice. It "embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations" [3]. The "practice" is actually a measure of conversion. It integrates and harmonizes in the real and the imaginary, or the "representation of space" and "representational space," according to Lefebvre's concept in *The Arcades Project* [4]. As such, Lefebvre's the representations of space "are tied to those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to 'frontal' relations" [3]. As a model, Cornwall is illustrious and eminent for its archaic, sacred and clerical history. In this memorable background, Cornwall, the place, lays some kinds of semiotic correlations to the representation of this particular Cornwall. "Representational space," further alludes to a "space as directly lived through its associated

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images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users'" [3]. Cornwall, therefore, labels as a real place. It is a site where Hardy once received and experienced in-depth life with his wife. As the scene was deciphered and spelled out into symbols in Hardy's personal remembrance, Cornwall, the place, becomes a "representational space". It embraces on metaphorical and illustrative meanings in Hardy's "Poems of 1912-13" which Hardy performed and accomplished what Lefebvre terms and addresses "spatial practices" with bygone times and recollections.

So strong is the impression with Hardy's semi-real, semi-mythical cosmos in his eulogy. He initiated the term "Wessex" from the trace, and employed it in his works. With fluid - bordered, places where Hardy conceived as much imaginative as geographical, Hardy termed Wessex as the era after the Dark Age kingdom of the West Saxons. Hardy's Wessex covers geographical sites in "Poems of 1912-13". To the east, it hits from Oxford to Winchester, and to London ahead. To the west, enters the Scilly Isles in Cornwall which carries the contemporary countries of Berkshire, Wiltshire, Hampshire as well as the true South West of Somerset, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall. Cornwall, the place has indeed been noted for identical "spatial practices" with Wessex in Hardy's novels and poetries. There was an empire named "Wessex" in ancient Anglo-Saxon time. Hardy not only created value of its history but also harmonized the myth of disparate west southern divisions into the Wessex lore. Wessex, for Hardy, as he claims, was meant to be every place, a place seemingly regional still broad and ubiquitous. It is a factual and historical site on the map of England, likewise practically everywhere else in the world. An English writer, Molly Lefebure, recounted and touched on Hardy's Wessex. She alluded that Wessex is literally "vanishing Wessex, perhaps lost Wessex." Notwithstanding his record recorded truly of the vanished life, Hardy blended and merged allusions to fictional Wessex, or to the fanciful towns and villages of Wessex, into his alterations. By the same token, the Wessex is far from being a total and integral creation. It is a scenario that Hardy utilized to sheltered his place.

Hardy's practice in space are described by a vigorous propensity to preserve the past. Worked and trained as an architect in his youth, Hardy drew in a controversial conservation of Gothic churches. Specifically, the controversy met on whether the medieval architecture should be conserved in its ruinous state, or refurbish and even embellished in accordance with an romanticized form. Hardy expressed in favor of the pros and cons in "Memories of Church Restoration," which for him suggested for "preservation of memories, fellowships, fraternities" [5]. Rehabilitation, then, would only name into being "aesthetic phantom[s] without solidity." Hardy decried and censured restoration for presenting a "rupture of continuity," which for him was "tragic and deplorable" [5].

III. ENVIRONMENT IMPACTS

Environment impacts upon human behavior. In the beginning of *Personal Space*, Sommer describes a realization of the connection between environmental form and human behavior which is taking place in the institutional field to illustrate the surrounding effect. Sommer addresses much at

the issue of psychological effect in the book, environment as well as how surroundings model human psyche, serves as a good pattern of a person commemorating things past. The deeply and emotionally charged zone around people sometimes describes as "soap bubble" or aura. As Sommer states, "Man is the most unreliable part of the man-machine-environment. [6]". The man-machine-environment represents the absolute enforcement from surrounding. Surroundings impact humans. It is an effect of nature on the human psyche, such as how environment has impacts on psychological well-being.

In Sommer's perspective, space can also be called "personal space of organism" [7]. As Von Uexkull uses the graphic parallel of people surrounded by soap bubble worlds, Sommer suggests the aura surrounding people is the "personal near." Hardy's mnemonic bubbles contains similar miraculous aura. In the "Poems of 1912-13," I would dispute that Hardy, as the poet and the narrator, uses the same methods of Sommer's bubble/space to construct the phantasmagoria of memory. Due to his artistic disorganization, the past in which he rambles about in the poems is paradoxically both touchable and allegorical: while attainable and explicit, it encompasses marvelous assemblage of imagination. Here I will use Hardy's "The Haunter" and "The Voice" for interpretation.

IV. SPROUTING IN MEMORY

Memory bubbles (Aura) are often unlikely to last. According to Oxford English Dictionary, bubble refers to "a good or fortunate situation that is isolated from reality." In "The Haunter," the female speaker is an whimsical character that wanders in a site where the poet couple once visited. As a meandering spirit, the phantom seems exceptionally able to discern the presence of the man though the man cannot. The imagery rendezvous is analogous to the bubble, namely, a "coming together." Hanging a few feet from the man, the phantom seems to lack courage to call him. Nothing approaches a real communication, but it is a kind of "gathering" indeed. With their space impacts placed side by side like bubbles, it shows as if the man and the spirit are having a reunion due to connection. Literally, the gathering is a mnemonic, isolated reminiscence.

Memory in Hardy's poems takes on a further imaginary nature as the "personal world". Personal world, according to William Stern, refers to an "nature center from which and toward which everything pertaining to it extends. [8]" Personal world employs the differences between worlds. Namely, each entity has his/her own cosmos centered in his/her person. In the world, it has its own spatial-ephemeral fabrication. The usual dimensions can be found in the personal world, however they haul and carry distinctive meanings beyond the space. In this approach of the phenomenology of space and time, Stern reaches to the existentialists' ideas of space and time. He proposes that in personal world, the whole of life is subjected to surroundings and environments. Consequently, entity (personal) world offers an imaginative analysis on the scene while confronting the spirit of the times. The narrator in "The Voice" creates a spiritual (personal) world, though it is an acoustic universe and not a visual planet, when he espies a calling from his taciturn wife and conceives of it as "dissolve [ing] to wan

wistlessness” [1]. The external sensory effects quickly metamorphose into mindscapes. The breeze may very likely represent Hardy’s deceased wife since the sound the wind makes is described as being “listlessness,” echoing the word “wistlessness.” Both suggest dissatisfaction with an increasingly strained relationship. Hardy and Emma had been estranged for a long time after their marriage, which reveals why the woman “did not walk with the man” in the man’s tramping trips [1]. As a result, the man digs into the past counterparts of all past happening, real and imagined, to make an integral, complete with the affections and feelings engaged. With his personal world as part of clarification and fulfillments in grief, the man strives to reconcile with the phantom and his contrite conscience.

In “The Walk,” the male speaker scrutinizes the woman’s behavior as if he were discovering his impression. The man’s recollections on the past aims at emotionally-charged events. As a case in point, he calls up the woman’s absence from an outing [9]. She did not walk with him on that day [1], because, he gives a reason for, “You were weak and lame, so you never came.” Assumed the woman was ill-equipped on the day, it is odd and peculiar that her no show is still sharply felt years thereafter. A comparable illustration takes place in the man’s return to Beeny Cliff. Here, he has memory flashes of “the woman riding high above with bright hair flapping free” [1]. The woman’s image in his memory is as the one “whom he loved so, and who loyally loved him” [1] The man must have been so passionately inscribed, so a scattered and sketchy trace in the landscape would eagerly recall memories of a once-lived-in world.

V. THE WALKING

Whether with bubbles or personal world, Hardy as the poet and as the male protagonist evokes memory by revisiting the old places. Much more than the bubbles and the personal world, Hardy trample about in the subliminal world of the unconscious. He keeps rambling in the places that fantasizes him. According to a tenant psychoanalysis, “events of a person’s life are all recorded accurately somewhere in the mind, like a continual video-recording, ready to be accessed if only the memories could be released from repression” [10]. The former life with the spirit is carved and stamped in a distorted form. The man keeps reciting and reiterating after the woman’s left. Discerning that there is no way to return, he hypnotizes himself as if the stare comprises a path reverse. He is so spellbound with the phantom that he is so sure of her return:

*He does not think that I haunt here nightly:
How shall I let him know
That wither 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! [1].*

The man’s returns are mourning process. Severe bereavement over the loss of beloved one could lead to perplexed approach. So deep is the man’s heartache, his

world falls apart after the woman’s death.

The man treads in the subliminal world of the unconscious. Washington Irving’s Rip Van Winkle is an allied illustration [11]: Though Rip Van Winkle seems to sleepwalk, he is sensible and aware. It might seem that he sleeps for such a long time; de facto, his subconsciousness is awake. Rip manages in the identical way as the man does in Hardy’s “elegiac poems. They both traverse the sites to find an ideal land. It exists only in the domain where the real and the imagery merge. It can be made discernible and touchable only by surfing the spiritual space to and fro in time. Just like the man in the poems. He conjures remembrance and transports the dead back to life again. Dorset, Beeny Cliff, and Plymouth are genuine in existence, but they embrace a implicit nature in the narrator’s mental rehabilitation. Physically, Beeny is a nature scenery but it is now blended with visions and memories. The sky is not the sky but “a nether sky, engrossed in saying their ceaseless babbling say” [1]. As a result, the narrator’s memories are interwove with images of Beeny Cliff as well. It provides the necessary setting for the man and the phantom. In Georg Simmel’s view, the man is keen and active who search for connections between the woman and the places. As such, he is susceptible to visual and audible impressions. The man’s experience in the sites as phantasmagorias, and that is also how Hardy represents the narrator’s real and semi-imagined experiences in the landscape.

VI. REMEMBRANCE AND MOURNING

The woman’s decease is a spring of creativity in the poems. Without the demise of the woman, the paths between the couple would never cross. Death and souls are compelling in “Poems of 1912-13.” Luk ács affirms that there are “two types of reality of the soul: one is life and the other living in memory too, there is now one, now the other, but at any one moment we can only feel one of these two forms” [11] in *Soul and Form*. Through searching the patterns of the soul — both in life and in memory — the man retrieves impressions, agonizes his deceased wife, and reconstructs a utopian land. Death gives growth to longing and prompts a ceaseless pursuit for utopia:

True longing is always turned inward, however much its path may lead across the external world. But it is only turning inward; it will never find peace inside. For it can create even its most profound self only through dreams; it can search for this inner self in the infinite distance of its own dreams, as something alien and lost. Longing can create itself, but it can never possess itself. The longing man is a stranger to himself because he is not beautiful, and a stranger is to beauty because it is beautiful [12].

For the narrator, death is the source of his writing. It is a kind of beauty. For at the occasion of death “the actual reality of life vanished before their eyes and was replaced by the reality of poetry, of pure psyche” [12]. The woman’s decease made the affecting man.

The sorrower in Hardy’s “Poems of 1912-13” undergoes the similar mourning practices that Elisabeth Kübler Ross portrays in *On Death and Dying* [13]. As Ross states in *On*

Death and Dying, there are five stages to process with grief: denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. In *On Grief and Grieving* [14], Ross highlights a sense of grief and bereavement. Likewise in the “Poems of 1912-13,” the man seems to stay in the yesteryear. He is stuck in the far-flung past, unable to move on. In “Poems of 1912-13” soap bubble assumes the result of the past which is reclaimed ended up realizing that it is an impossible task. Memory is similar to a place, which, once deterritorialized, would arouse irreversible loss and take on a imaginative, contrasting look even though it is ultimately reterritorialized. In “The Voice,” the man keeps hearing the voice from the woman he much yearned for: “how you call to me, call to me / Saying that now you are not as you were” [1]. This miracle reality seems to be particularly vivid with memory bubbles, in which, though the consciousness wishes to make the bubble in shaping his own memory, there are always pieces that do not fit thoroughly with the others, so much as to reveal the desolateness and emptiness of the integrated project.

To overcome remorse and guilty, the man in the poems condemns the woman for their estrangement [15]. It exposes his clumsiness in solving relationship problems. Like in “The Walk,” the man moans and grumbles that the woman is apathetic and unresponsive to his demand for her accompaniment: “You were weak and lame, so you never come” [1]. The word “weak” refers to “lacking strength, mentally, or intellectually deficient (OED).” And “lame” indicates “having a body part and especially a limb so disabled as to impair freedom of movement (OED).” The two words manifest that the woman is both physically psychologically “weak and lame,” so she is responsible for the marital relationship gone awry. The lost invitation and the man’s decision to walk alone imply that the man is equitably being the reason for their estranged relationship. The man backtracks the path that day “just in the former way.” He realizes that he is “by himself again” without the woman to blame, he becomes aware of his self-induced loneliness. At the end he manages to reconcile with the yesteryears by conveying “what difference, then?”

In addition to hallucination, dreams spell another gap in Hardy’s phantasmagoria of images. Both in “The Haunter” and “The Voice,” the male protagonist traverses the territory to find a utopia in the heterotopias of his memory, a non-place where the real and the fanciful merge. The memory scene can be touchable only by surfing the psychological space to and fro in time. Sailing in such a Shangri-la with the mourner, the apparition in “The Haunter” reflects:

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 him,
Near as I reach thereto! [1]

Dreams are memento concealing from the light. Cryptic like “ole aisles” though they are, as they consist of temporal and spatial structures “not fully projected,” dreams are the materials memories are made of [16]. In *The Poetics of Space*,

Gaston Bachelard alleges that people “shall therefore have to examine more closely how houses of the past appear in dream geometry. For these are the houses in which people are going to recapture the intimacy of the past in their daydreams” [17]. The incomplete frameworks are all that we pursue as memory relics. While the lamenter in Hardy’s elegiac poems thinks he could overhaul the past by returning to the sites, the imaginative visions contain intransigent remains that are spectral presences and eerie voices of the Other. He tries to make the past up but he never does.

VII. CONCLUSION

To conclude, soap bubbles and personal worlds are mingled in Hardy’s elegiac poems like “The Haunter” and “The Voice.” Both soap bubbles and personal worlds help to harmonize memory pieces originated from the man’s consciousness into a imaginary fantasy. According to Benjamin’s ideas in *Berlin Childhood around 1900*[18], the man gives and tries in: re-collecting his “unfinished moments” with Emma. He reintegrates and rewrites his life with the surrealist recollective perception which enables him to be united with the phantom in the bubble world. He encounters and spots the reminiscent outbursts of “nature as the bringer of comfort to pure feeling.”The man is therefore able to grasp and feel diverse facets of experience in the same memory site and organize them into an ostensibly harmonious whole. Though his awareness is always infused with landscape, however, the man pressure arouse from the alienation: He sees a thousand correlations, yet never grasp any. The landscapes of the memory seems exist out there, yet every tree and every path. The woman remains a conflicting and estranged existence. Her voice haunts everywhere in the sites the couple formerly stopped over. Perhaps, it is the never-ending whine of the mourner that alone integrate subjectivity.

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