TIME’S INEXORABILITY: A PERFORMANCE STUDY OF
GERALD FINZI’S EARTH AND AIR AND RAIN

by

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ABSTRACT

Gerald Finzi has at least once been characterized as the English Hugo Wolf. To one familiar with the music of both Wolf and Finzi, such a statement understandably elicits pause and must be qualified by the context in which the characterization was made. Wolf’s musical compositions are considerably more complex and broader in scope than those of Gerald Finzi. Finzi’s compositional style is one unmistakably British, and shares little in common with the music of Wolf. There is, however, a shared characteristic in their compositional styles. Each of the men was highly detailed in their sensitivity to poetry and used music as a medium to accentuate their respective languages’ aesthetic qualities.

For Gerald Finzi, the poetry of Thomas Hardy seems to have held a strong attraction as fodder for song composition. This is evidenced in the overwhelming number of his songs with Hardy texts as their subjects. Finzi’s Hardy songs constitute a significant period of English song composition in the first half of the 20th century. His careful attention to textual declamation and Hardy’s shifting tone of voice result in songs that not only exemplify a style distinctively British, but also a style that bears out the deeper philosophical foundations of Hardy’s poetry. His careful grouping of the ten poems of Earth and Air and Rain illustrates not only his gift for setting his native language, but also an intimate understanding of the ideology contained within Hardy’s poetry.

A successful performance of Earth and Air and Rain is greatly dependent upon the performer’s ability to portray the ideology of Hardy as seen through Finzi’s musical
interpretation of his poetry. Learning to recognize the compositional devices characteristic of
Finzi’s idiomatic style enables the performer to accomplish this task. To that end, the following
performance study seeks to compartmentalize those devices in such a way that not only
facilitates a successful performance of these songs, but that also gives insight to the performance
of the other Finzi settings of Hardy poetry.
DEDICATION

One of life’s eternal truths is that we are a product of past experience. Life at present is the result of a series of events that culminate in our present reality. For that reason, I dedicate the work herein to my parents. The reasons for this dedication could never be listed in a single volume but their loving and encouraging influence in the recent past and their facilitation of my early exposure to musical experience are the most prevalent. Further, this work is dedicated to one of the truly gifted musicians it has been my pleasure with whom to be associated. Making use of El Rincon as our office, David and I discussed the completion of our doctoral work at UA and life in general many times over. His friendship is missed daily and his passion for teaching young people will forever be an example in my own teaching.
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Introduction

It was Thomas Hardy who wrote “Why do I continue to do these things?” and, indeed, if appreciation were a measure of merit and cause for self-esteem, it would long ago have been time for me to shut up shop, class myself as a failure, and turn to something of what the world is pleased to call a more “useful” nature.¹

These are the opening sentences from Gerald Finzi’s self-composed preface to his collected works which he entitled Absalom’s Place. Finzi derives this title by referencing the son of King David who, because he himself had no son, erected a pillar to himself assuring remembrance of his legacy for future generations of Israelites. Considering Absalom’s infamous reputation in Jewish history owing much to anger and jealousy and his delusory nature, he seems an odd choice for the namesake of a collection of a composer’s work. Finzi is someone quite different from the historical figure he chose to reference. In this decidedly brief introduction to his opus, he grants insight and summary to both his “humanistic and artistic beliefs.”²

While this preface will be referred to several times in this study, its principal purpose here is to serve as an introduction to the significant personae involved in the present performance study of Gerald Finzi’s Earth and Air and Rain. Of the most significant persons to be referenced, Absalom is not one of them. Instead, the persons of both Thomas Hardy and Howard Ferguson played integral roles in Gerald Finzi’s life as a composer and as a man. Gerald Finzi met Howard

² Ibid.
Ferguson during their days as students at the Royal Conservatory of Music and instantly became friends. Ferguson would become a life-long friend and confidant in matters both personal and professional. Through the establishment of the Finzi Trust, Ferguson and Finzi’s wife, Joy, would ultimately be those responsible for the publication of his completed works, including those that were in progress at the time of his death.

The second person of significance mentioned in the opening lines is the man whom Finzi quoted in the initial sentence of *Absalom’s Place*, Thomas Hardy. It is assumed that the aging Thomas Hardy and young Gerald Finzi never had the occasion of meeting one another. During years that Finzi was discovering his compositional prowess, Hardy was a poet in his twilight years far removed from his professional life as a novelist, where he established himself as a significant voice in English Literature. Essentially, the two men were one generation removed from one another, yet Finzi was undeniably attracted to both Hardy’s poetry and philosophical outlook on the world around him. In correspondence with Howard Ferguson, he once stated that he “loved him so much and from the earliest days responded, not so much to an influence, as to a kinship with him (I don’t mean kinship with his genius, alas, but with his mental make-up).” Such an attraction to a body of work almost seems understated when considering that two thirds of his song compositions consist of settings by a poet whose “peculiar idiosyncrasies of language” were largely neglected by English song composers according to C.M. Boyd and others.

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In light of such an attraction on the part of a composer to a specific poet, painting Hardy’s poetry with a broad, critical paintbrush as “pessimistic”\(^5\) cannot suffice. Clearly Finzi was drawn to Hardy by much of what motivated this perceived pessimistic quality in his poetry. In the study of these Finzi’s Hardy settings, one sees a composer intimately engaged in not just the technical aspects of his poetry but also the affective elements of those poems he chooses to set. While not exclusive to Gerald Finzi as a composer of song, in his case, the resultant product is a catalogue of songs containing carefully calculated representations of those elements within the context of a musical quilt composed of “stock musical and expressive rhetorical devices”\(^6\) his understanding of the poet’s expression.

An obvious but important point to realize in the attraction of Finzi to Hardy is the fact that neither a composer or poet’s ideas nor their respective distinctive styles are realized or formed in a vacuum. The influences upon them are numerous and act to contour their philosophical foundations through acquired knowledge in counterpoint with their own pre-conceived ideological backgrounds. Be it poetry or music, the art produced by them is a sharing of these ideologies at their most personal level. There are rare historical instances of “a perfect storm” in which a composer and poet’s ideologies are so strikingly similar that the joining of their respective arts almost seem to find a home in one another. Such is the case with Gerald Finzi’s musical settings of the poetry of Thomas Hardy as can be observed in the song collection *Earth and Air and Rain*.

The following performance study of this collection examines the songs contained within the collection from the perspective of what attracted Gerald Finzi to the poetry of Thomas Hardy and his musical treatment of these poems, taking into consideration elements of composition

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\(^5\) In spite of Hardy’s insistence of his meliorism, literary criticism classify his poetry as the mood of his poetry as pessimistic.

including form, motive, dissonance, meter, and texture. Finzi’s use of these elements are discussed in such a way as to place them in the context of the ideas he wishes to express with his textural “patchwork quilt” referred to earlier. To accomplish this, it is necessary to observe both the similarities and differences in the two men and the influences in their lives that formed their artistic and philosophical views. While a detailed examination of these elements is beyond the scope of the present study, an awareness of connection between these aspects of the two men is essential to a detailed and successful performance.

The performance study begins with an observation of both Hardy’s and Finzi’s lives, focusing on those major events that helped form the defining characteristics that distinguish them among their peers and that have elicited responses from both the critical and scholarly communities. This section focuses primarily on the forces that lead to the commonality in philosophical views of the two men. The second part of the study is a discussion on the designation of a genre to *Earth and Air and Rain*. While Finzi published it as a “set” or “collection,” there are elements within the songs that suggest the songs are grouped together with “more than a desire for a sense of balance.”7 Finally, the largest part of the study is a detailed analysis of each of the ten songs both individually and as a group, based on the discussion in the first two sections. The end result is a performance study, providing both the singer and the accompanist/coach with not only a detailed road map for *Earth and Air and Rain*, but also with a fundamental understanding helpful in preparing any of the other Finzi settings of Thomas Hardy.

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The Poetry of Thomas Hardy

On June 2, 1840, Thomas Hardy was born the oldest of four children to Thomas Hardy Sr. and Jemima Hand Hardy. His sisters Mary and Katharine went on to careers as teachers and his brother succeeded his father as a stonemason and builder. Hardy studied architecture and would ultimately become an architect of repute. While his father had his station as a tradesman, he, his brother and his father, and ultimately Thomas were all trained musicians as well. Vilma Raskin Potter says Hardy described his formative years as threefold: professional, scholarly, and rustic. In the mornings he would study Greek, then work all day on Gothic architecture, and “in the evening, rushed off with his fiddle under his arm, sometimes in the company of his father as first violin and uncle as cellist, to play country-dances, reels, and hornpipes at an agriculturist’s wedding, christening, or Christmas party in a remote dwelling...not returning until dawn.”

Hardy would acquire a similar, if not more intense, love of the folk music and dance tunes from his grandfather, father, and uncle. He described himself as “wildly fond of dancing” even before he was old enough to learn how to play the fiddle. At the time of his passing, one of his most prized possessions was a fiddle which he had purchased while a young architect in London without financial means. Such love for music inevitably would color his novels and poetry through both their structure and imagery: “The language of music permeates Hardy’s metaphors, surrounds the situations of his fiction, penetrates the environment and atmosphere of

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9 Ibid, 48.
his tales.”\textsuperscript{10} It has been estimated that one in eight of his poems include musical associations or references.\textsuperscript{11} Indeed, within the context of the songs of \textit{Earth and Air and Rain}, Finzi chooses to open and close the collection with the Hardy poems “Summer Schemes” and “Proud Songsters” respectively. Each of these poems includes references to sounds of music found in nature. In “Summer Schemes,” Hardy uses the homonyms “quavers, minims, shakes, and trills” to describe the sound of singing birds.\textsuperscript{12} Those sounds are aurally remembered in musical representation in “Proud Songsters” at the set’s conclusion. Intermittently, Finzi additionally selects other Hardy poems with musical references as well within the context of \textit{Earth and Air and Rain}.

With such a love of music and the many allusions to its language contained within his verse, Hardy would seem naturally attractive to many of the song composers of the English Musical Renaissance.\textsuperscript{13} According to Trevor Hold, \\textit{Gooch and Thatcher’s Musical Settings of the Late Victorian and Modern English Literature} list some 300 songs and choral settings of his poetry by more than 100 different composers\textsuperscript{14} so indeed, this would seem to be the case. Such affinity for poetry’s sister art of music owes much to many of Hardy’s poems including directions along with the title such as, “to an old tune,” or “to the tune of ______.” In some cases, he even made suggestions as to the mode in which the poem should be performed if it were sung.\textsuperscript{15}

For all of its lyricism and musical thought, much of his poetry presents Hardy as a “problematic choice of poet” for any one of several reasons, including a dour philosophy and a

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid, 49.
\textsuperscript{11} Trevor Hold, “‘Checkless Griff,’ or Thomas Hardy and the Songwriters,” \textit{The Musical Times}, 131, no. 1768, (June, 1990), 309.
\textsuperscript{12} Quavers, minims, shakes, and trills also are accepted terms denoting either note values or vocal affects when discussed as musical elements.
\textsuperscript{13} The period from the last years of the 19th century to the Second World War is referred to as the English Musical Renaissance.
\textsuperscript{14} Hold, 309.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
blend of stoicism and fatalism not universally held as appropriate themes by many songwriters.\textsuperscript{16} The coupling of such a philosophical view with the rough sounds of a Dorchester dialect he favored in his Wessex novels further complicates the issue of a composer’s ability to set many of his poems. He often uses common verse forms but within them, he allows sentences to end at odd moments and running them across verse endings destroying what Hold refers to as their “inherent symmetry.”\textsuperscript{17} Again, referring to “Summer Schemes” from \textit{Earth and Air and Rain}, we see a portion of verse exemplary of this technical aspect of Hardy’s poetry.

When friendly summer calls again,  
Calls again  
Her little fifers to these hills,  
We'll go—we two—to that arched fane  
Of leafage where they prime their bills  
Before they start to flood the plain  
With quavers, minims, shakes, and trills.  
"—We'll go," I sing; but who shall say  
What may not chance before that day!\textsuperscript{18}

In line two, there is an interruption in the flow of text through repetition of the words “calls again” and another in line four with the words “we two” set apart from the thought that continues into line 5, where the metrical form would normally include a break in thought. From the perspective of the composer desirous of preserving Hardy’s intended literary effect,\textsuperscript{19} there are musical concessions to be made to do so. As will be observed in the musical analysis portion of this study, Finzi manages this quite skillfully and appropriately.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{18} Thomas Hardy, \textit{The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hardy}, (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1982). All of the poems included herein come from this publication.  
\textsuperscript{19} Gerald Finzi, \textit{Crees Lecture, 1954}, notes edited by Diana McVeagh, http://www.geraldfinzi.org/indexbf94.html?page=/about/crees.html. In his lecture to the Royal Conservatory of Music, Finzi discusses his awareness that there are composers for whom the poet’s literary choices are not of consequence in their compositions.
The compositional challenges presented by Hardy’s language are many within his verse. In spite of this, many composers have been drawn to the lyricism inherent in his poetry, possibly owing to his musical ear. But what of the “dour” philosophical subject matter alluded to in the Hold article? Consider again Finzi’s statement of finding identification with Hardy’s “mental make-up.” Upon listening to Finzi’s settings of Hardy poetry, it is clear that such an affinity for the poet’s work is linked to something more than just an admiration for his gift of lyricism. Finzi’s self-perception of identity with Hardy’s mental make-up and the composer’s interpretation of these philosophical foundations into representations in song make discussing Hardy’s artistic expressions of that perceived philosophy a necessary step towards a clearer understanding of the musical ideas expressed through *Earth and Air and Rain*.

Of the many descriptions of Hardy’s poetic ideals read during this study, Michael Milgate’s seems to most accurately describe that ideal in such a way as to identify Hardy’s poetry with the mental mindset that attracted Finzi. According to Milgate, “To Hardy, the true poet would see the union in the variance of natural things, and use Nature’s very deformities, defects, and contradictions to create a compensatory beauty, even if the volumes of such verse were unwieldy, jarring, and uneven.”20 The “compensatory beauty” of nature in Hardy’s poetry was one of great appeal to Finzi, just as was the awareness of the natural world’s “deformities, defects, and contradictions” that acted in opposition to man. Finzi often shared with those around him his love of Hardy’s pastoral and idyllic environs. Correspondence between him and Howard Ferguson always began with a Hardy poem before the formal body of their letters.

It is hard to dismiss the occurrence of two significant events in the latter half of the 19th century as influences upon Thomas Hardy both personally and professionally when discussing

the content of his poetry. The impetus of Darwin’s 1859 publication of *The Origin of Species* in Britain could be easily seen as having impacted a 19 year old Hardy in his views of science’s relationship to nature and religion and as having led him in his ultimate arrival at an agnostic core belief. It has been suggested that he saw Darwin’s publication as “primarily an ethical advance.”\(^{21}\) Another point of focus in Britain’s literary community was a response to Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* and his idea that “the continuous development of art is bound up with the Apollonian and Dionysian duality.”\(^{22}\) Given Hardy’s view of nature’s duality, an acknowledgement of this influence is not difficult to impute upon a great deal of his work.

Evidence of Hardy’s familiarity with Nietzsche’s writings is seen most notably in the poem, “God’s Funeral.” (1908-10)\(^ {23}\) While the larger part of Hardy’s discourse on Nietzsche negatively focuses on his and other German philosophers’ role in the first world war, he was intrigued by Nietzsche’s idea of art and the Apollonian and Dionysian duality.\(^ {24}\)

While a detailed understanding of *The Birth of Tragedy* is both beyond the scope of a performance study, presently beyond the willingness of the writer, and not essential for the performance of *Earth and Air and Rain*, upon reading these poems and studying their settings, an awareness of the concepts discussed within the work as they relate to the composer are, however, in play. For that reason, a working understanding of this concept must be presented to understand the eventualities affecting the character within these poems and their outcomes.

In Nietzsche’s view, the “Apollonian” is an idealistic view of the individual’s noble state, based on Greek culture’s representation as noble in the eyes of Apollo. The “Dionysian” is the reality that exists just beyond the boundaries of the character’s awareness. The tragic figure or

\(^{21}\) *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (New York: The Macmillan Company), 78.
\(^{22}\) Friederich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Translation by Ian Johnston.
\(^{24}\) Ibid.
hero within this drama has an antagonist of some kind acting upon him to bring the character to a freeing and enlightened awareness of his place in the world about him. A description of this idea is drawn by Nietzsche from Schopenhauer’s *World and Will as Idea*, where Schopenhauer describes a man trapped in the veil of Maya:

> As on the stormy sea which extends without limit on all sides, howling mountainous waves rise up and sink and a sailor sits in a row boat, trusting the weak craft, so, in the midst of a world of torments, the solitary man sits peacefully, supported by and trusting in the *principium individuationis* [the principle of individuality]*\(^{25}\)

The man’s trusting of his immediate surroundings inside the boat without concern or awareness of the surroundings beyond its deck is indicative of Nietzsche’s description of the “Apollonian,” with the tempests being representative of the “Dionysian” realities surrounding him. The presently absent antagonist in this story would be a person or entity acting upon the hero to bring him into a realization of the challenge his inadequate craft faces in the world beyond his present realm of awareness. Upon reading the poetry of *Earth and Air and Rain* in this contextual framework, the most significant of several philosophical similarities between Hardy and Finzi begins to materialize and is seen not only in Finzi’s individual settings, but in his connecting and ordering the settings in the manner he chooses.

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Thomas Hardy, like most literary figures of his repute, presents a broad range of subjects for study and subsequently presents no shortage of source material for research. For those who hold Finzi in high regard, he is no less a master of his craft but with a body of research dedicated to his work falling significantly short of the research focusing on his poetic counterpart in *Earth and Air and Rain*. For some time, Finzi’s legacy seemed relegated to that of many other British composers of the 20th century, dwelling in the shadow of names such as Elgar, Holst, Vaughan Williams, or Britten. The most plausible explanation for such stature is his relatively low compositional output in comparison to that of his aforementioned peers. Another possible reason could be his resistance to “the prevailing currents of mid-century compositional practice.”

From without Finzi’s circle of influence and their subsequent generations, such reasoning is understandable although shortsighted. Those who knew him and had occasion to interact with him in some capacity had great admiration and respect for Finzi as a composer, musician, mentor, or friend.

Finzi’s lineage is Jewish. His family had migrated to England in the 18th century and risen to some degree of prominence in trade and banking. Over generations, the family had acquired means adequately enabling Gerald to modestly devote his life to developing his musical skill as a composer without need of that life being his sole source of financial sustenance. This ultimately would cater to a slow, deliberate, and fastidious method of composition partly

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26 Curtis Scheib, *Gerald Finzi’s Songs for Baritone on Texts by Thomas Hardy: An Historical and Literary Analysis and its Effect on Their Interpretation*, (Dissertation research project at West Virginia University 1999), 3.
responsible for his earlier mentioned modest compositional output. Howard Ferguson described composition as a challenge to Finzi and that “even the most spontaneous sounding song might have required innumerable sketches and rough drafts, with sometimes a break of years between its opening and closing bars.”

To discuss Finzi’s family life as one absent of strife would be misleading. While true that the family had financial means with which to live comfortably, Finzi’s birth in 1901 was “not a welcome addition to the upstairs nursery,” in the words of his wife, Joy. Gerald had three older brothers and an older sister with whom he never had an amicable relationship. In 1908 his father died from cancer of the mouth. By 1917, one brother had died of a childhood illness, one committed suicide, and one died in the war. Gerald was his mother’s sole remaining source of attention and in many ways, an unwanted project. Partly owing to his own physical slightness and partly owing to his feelings of loss and isolation, the young Finzi would retreat to a world of literature and music. In 1913 hostilities in England and on the continent made the pending war seem inevitable, so his mother moved the family to Harrogate, feeling that staying in London was a dangerous proposition. It was at Harrogate that he began studying music with Ernest Farrar, who became not only a teacher but a surrogate father figure to the young man.

Ernest Farrar is an important point of contact in Finzi’s musical lineage. Farrar was a pupil of Charles Villiers Stanford, as also had been the likes of Gustav Holst, Ralph Vaughan Williams, John Ireland, Herbert Howells, and Ivor Gurney. Upon Farrar being called into military service, he referred Finzi to his old teacher at the Royal Conservatory. Stanford would not take on Finzi as a student because he did not believe the young man had a future as either a performer or a composer. It was subsequent to this disappointment that Farrar would send Finzi

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to Edward C. Bairstow, an organist at York Minster and a significant figure in English song through his relationship with the British singer and vocal pedagogue, Harry Plunket Greene; Greene’s memoirs on singing essentially provided him the bulk of material included in his vocal pedagogy text. Bairstow credits Greene, possibly with a bit of hyperbole, as having done “more than anything else to revolutionise English singing, and to change it from a bad imitation of the Italian style – largely taught in this country by Italians – to a healthy native art.”29 Bairstow attributes Greene’s accomplishment to “his perfect diction: intensely clear, absolutely pure, and full of significance.”30

Finzi’s relationship with Bairstow was not of the amiable nature that had been so comfortable and supportive with Farrar. Bairstow was strict to a point of excess with Finzi’s way of thinking, which predictably made their relationship difficult. Listening to and studying Finzi song and its own “fiercely English”31 characteristics, it is difficult not to believe the time with Bairstow provided Finzi a foundational understanding of an English style of singing characterized by those features he found so admirable in Greene. It was also during this time that Finzi would first begin to experiment with the settings of Thomas Hardy. By Footpath and Stile, a group of Hardy songs for baritone and string quartet, was published but later pulled from publication due to concerns that the compositions were not demonstrative of a mature compositional setting of the poems.32

Finzi would move to London in 1925 primarily in the interest of furthering his career as a composer. London offered much more in the way of musical discourse with a wider and more

29 Edward C. Bairstow, Singing from Learned Speech: A Primer for Teachers and Students, (London: Macmillan, 1941, foreword.
30 Ibid.
31 Howard Ferguson repeatedly refers to Finzi creating a style that was “fiercely English.”
32 Although Finzi pulled the pieces from publication, Ferguson, along with Joy Finzi and the Finzi Trust returned the works to Finzi’s catalog of published works after his death.
notable community of musicians and no shortage of performances for both study and enjoyment. Here he would begin studies in counterpoint with R.O. Morris. It was through his teacher that he would be introduced to the then 17 year old Howard Ferguson. Despite the difference in the men’s ages, Ferguson said he never felt a divide between him and Finzi, denoting one as student and the other as mentor. Such a disarming characteristic of Finzi’s personality is what endeared him to so many who were friends, students, or colleagues. The relationship between Ferguson and Finzi becomes one of special significance as previously mentioned in the study’s opening. Ferguson became a trusted friend for the remainder of Finzi’s life and thus the greatest source of insight, not just to Finzi, the composer, but Finzi, the man. Subsequently, he is integral to identifying those personality traits that offer an explanation of Finzi’s attraction to Thomas Hardy and his poetry.
Gerald Finzi and Thomas Hardy – Connecting Points

According to Howard Ferguson, Gerald Finzi “devoured poetry and prose of all the English masters, especially Thomas Hardy.”³³ Like many other composers of song, Finzi’s literary library was extensive and far outnumbered that of his music library. Almost certainly owing to this love and study of literature, Finzi himself had more than an elementary mastery of language, evidenced through his correspondence with friends and his own public discourse in pieces such as Absalom’s Place referenced earlier. As has already been put forth, his love for Hardy extended far beyond the poet’s ability with language. Common accepted connecting points according to Ferguson, Banfield, and McVeagh in their studies are three: 1) both men were staunchly anti-war, 2) the world’s beauty and indifference to man, and 3) both were aware of the inexorability of passing time.³⁴

Finzi lost one of his brothers and Ernest Farrar as a result of their service to England in the war of 1914-1918. Hardy saw England fall into what some describe as a needlessly protracted conflict late in the 19th century in the Boer wars and likewise saw the war of 1914-1918. Both of the men were familiar with the musical and poetic works of Ivor Gurney. Gurney suffered from both physical and emotional illness, possibly intensified due to events of war, from which he would never recover. Finzi’s feelings with regard to war were seemingly less forgiving than Hardy. While Hardy detested war, there were instances in which he grudgingly saw it as a

³³ Dressler, 12.
³⁴ Martin Hill, Stephen Varcoe, and Clifford Benson, Earth and Air and Rain, Songs of Thomas Hardy to Works by Thomas Hardy, Audio CD Hyperion: B002DJOU4S, Diana McVeagh, Liner Notes, 10.
necessary evil, as in the case of the war of 1914-18. He did not find sympathy with the imperialistic nature of the Boer War. Although a seemingly reluctant voice, there is a body of Hardy poetry obviously directed at a non-literary audience with regard to the battles being fought for rights to gold in Africa.\(^{35}\)

The 19\(^{th}\) century saw a wealth of poetry focusing on the beauty of nature and man finding escape in myriad idyllic settings described through both the imagination and memory of poets. In the case of Victorian poets such as Hardy, while physical beauty did not cease to be characteristic of nature, an awareness of its ever-changing process and that process’s indifference to man represented an unforgiving indifferent acting of nature upon and in opposition to the mortally-limited man. Both Hardy and Finzi are well documented to have been outdoorsmen and favoring residing in pastoral settings over those of the more urban surroundings necessitated by their careers. Howard Ferguson tells of Finzi walking some 30 miles a day across the country landscapes outside of London for a month at a time with nothing other than a toothbrush and an extra shirt.\(^{36}\) Correspondence between Finzi and Ferguson attributes much of his love of Hardy poetry and literature with the represented and described pastoral settings of Wessex. *Earth and Air and Rain* sees many such flattering images of nature only to see those same natural elements ultimately reveal the Dionysian reality of man’s place in nature at its conclusion.

The idea of a revealed Dionysian reality references the earlier mentioned reference to Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy*. The “play” seen in *Earth and Air and Rain* involves the characters of man and nature. The antagonist in this drama, from the perspectives of Hardy and Finzi, is representative of the most prevalent philosophical similarity between the two. To both Hardy and Finzi, the pressure of passing time is that element of nature that is persistently present and

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\(^{36}\) Dressler, 12.
actively working in opposition to the individual. Finzi’s awareness of such pressure is evident in
his fear that “there would never be enough time to complete all that he had in him to write.”\textsuperscript{37} It
would indeed be his own submission to nature’s indifference that would see him die prematurely
from complications of a combination of Hodgkins disease and the chicken pox in 1956.

In her discussion of Finzi and Thomas Hardy, Diana McVeagh draws attention to two
added observed similarities between the composer and poet that bear mention in light of the
poetic content of \textit{Earth and Air and Rain}. To the person who views the natural world as one of
chance, the first of these core beliefs is one so tangential to that idea that it seems almost
embarrassingly obvious. Both men were admitted agnostics who believed chance, not
providence, played a significant role in the life of humanity. The other common belief to which
she refers is the power of memory to crystallize the past. This is greatly seen in the life of Hardy
after the year 1912 when his first wife Emma would die unexpectedly and inspire a period of
productivity never before seen in his career as a novelist or poet. The event so impacted him that
throughout the years subsequent to her death, his desk calendar remained set at March 7, 1870 –
the date when the two first met. Hardy criticism has widely come to hold that the greatest of his
poetry is represented in that which he composed between 1912 and 1928. During this period of
time he would publish a great deal of poetry seen as social commentary on war and other
personal and societal issues. It was Emma’s death that would prove the greatest impact on his
poetic output.

Of the connecting points between Hardy and Finzi that give cohesion to the songs of
\textit{Earth and Air and Rain}, the most significant are the inexorable pressure of the passing time and
this ability of memory to crystallize the past. When performed as a complete set, Finzi’s settings

\textsuperscript{37} Dressler, 8.
of these texts and his “articulating [their] thoughts with his stock rhetorical and expressive devices” represent these ideas and employ them in such a way that they are seen acting upon the poet ultimately bringing him a greater awareness of his existence relative to the natural world. Such a dynamic contained within these songs represents much more than the mere “concern for a sense of balance” Howard Ferguson attributes as characteristic of Finzi’s published song sets.

\^38 Author’s insertion.
Earth and Air and Rain

There is some discussion as to when the actual premier of Earth and Air and Rain received its first public performance in its completed form. Dressler lists a performance on 7 January, 1937 with Keith Faulkner singing and Howard Ferguson at the piano as the first performance of the set. According to Banfield, this performance included only “Summer Schemes,” “Waiting Both,” “Rollicum-Rorum,” “The Clock of the Years,” and “Proud Songsters” on the program. A review in Music and Letters from January, 1937 lists a review of the songs in their completion as a group of ten as though the reviewer had heard the songs sung.\(^\text{39}\) It is unclear whether the reviewer would have been present at the January 7 performance but the possibility seems a plausible suggestion. Banfield lists the first performance in full with Robert Irwin singing and Howard Ferguson at the piano at The National Gallery concert on 24 March, 1943.\(^\text{40}\)

At least one other study of these songs has made an attempt to present a case for Finzi’s choice of the thematic material that holds the set together. Suggestions that the group of songs being “Emma” poems constitute that cohesive material have merit but fall short of being conclusive simply on the fact that a great number of these poems, while written after the death of

\(^{39}\) E.B., Review from Music and Letters 18, no. 1, (January 1937), 102-103. E.B. is most likely Eric Blom, Director of the Royal Conservatory in 1937.
\(^{40}\) Banfield, Gerald Finzi: An English Composer, 208.
Emma Hardy, do not contain reference to her nor to her relationship with her husband.\textsuperscript{41}

Additionally, three of the included poems were written before her death. The assertion based upon research in this study is that Finzi took the advice of Hardy himself that the characters in his poems should be read as though the monologue of one of his Dorset characters.\textsuperscript{42}

Approaching these songs with the idea that the poems center upon a single character progressing through a life-long drama allows for a significantly more cohesive, thoughtful, and communicative performance than a performance based solely on the common thematic material contained within the poems.

To this point, the idea of \textit{Earth and Air and Rain} not being designated as a song cycle has been avoided with a great deal of difficulty. Of Finzi’s sets of songs, he himself only referred to \textit{A Young Man’s Exhortation} as a song cycle with the desire that his Hardy or Shakespeare collections be designated as “sets.” This was largely due to the fact that he hated publishing single songs because they tended to be covered over with whatever was the newest fashion. Publishing songs as a set rather than a cycle was essentially an unspoken acquiescence of the composer to allow performance of the songs within the collection either as a complete set or to select individual songs or groups from within the set. This being the case, the short and easy answer to this question is to refer to \textit{Earth and Air and Rain} as “Ten Hardy Songs for Baritone and Piano.”

\textsuperscript{41} In his similar performance study of \textit{Earth and Air and Rain}, Albert Christian Elser III presents what her refers to the “Emma” poems and Finzi’s desire to express his and Hardy’s shared agnostic belief systems as possible motivations for the ten poems chosen to be included in \textit{Earth and Air and Rain}.

\textsuperscript{42} “Some Notes on Hardy’s Verse Forms,” \textit{Victorian Poetry} 17, no. 1/2 Special Commemorative Issue (Summer/Spring 1979), 3.
The Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians’ definition of a song cycle makes such a conclusion inadequate when programming these songs, however. That definition includes:

The coherence regarded as a necessary attribute of song cycles may derive from the text (a single poet; a story line; a central theme or topic such as love or nature; a unifying mood; poetic form or genre, as in a sonnet or ballad cycle) or from musical procedures (tonal schemes; recurring motifs, passages or entire songs; formal structures); these features may appear singly or in combination. Because the elements that provide cohesiveness are so many and variable, however, exceptions abound.43

Considering this definition, Finzi’s ordering of the songs, and the consistent employment of his stock musical devices for expression across the body of the collection, it becomes necessary for the performer to consider these songs at a deeper level than the connotation suggested by the word, “set.” In short, while the songs are a collection of poems, when performed in their entirety, they must be approached more as a song cycle. It is the opinion here that to express truly the meaning and intent of both composer and poet, the songs should be performed in their completion as a song cycle whenever possible.

For a successful performance of *Earth and Air and Rain* the performers must tie together the philosophical connecting points of Hardy and Finzi in a gradually unfolding metaphorical life-drama. It is hard to escape a sense of Finzi’s sequencing of these songs consecutively over the course of a single character’s travel through life. “Summer Schemes” begins the set with the poet cautiously optimistic about the journey ahead of him setting the stage of an anticipated rewarding life journey with the person to whom he is singing and whom he anticipates accompanying him on the journey. This sets the idealistic, or Apollonian if you’ll allow, anticipated outcome on the part of the poet. As will be seen and discussed throughout the studies of the individual songs, the poet experiences the successes, disappointments, regrets, and fears

one would expect along the way. With each experience, he draws closer and closer to an awareness of his inability to be anything other than subject to the ongoing process of a natural world he finds so appealing. This ultimate Dionysian realization comes in the closing bars of “Proud Songsters” as he realizes that his lot is the same of the singing birds he so anxiously anticipated hearing at the outset of his journey.

The elements of Finzi’s compositional palette at work in these songs are many. Those elements especially predominant in expressing the discussed ideas are primarily, but not limited to, his functional uses of form, meter, dissonance, motive, and texture. Generally speaking, Finzi idiomatically uses these elements to accomplish different tasks. To represent those places in the poetry where Hardy alters his poetic tone of voice, there are typically textural shifts in the accompaniments. He often uses relatively dissonant sonorities to represent the affective qualities of a particular word or phrase.  

The most prevalent connecting material between these songs is that of motive. The motivic material within the body of these songs fulfills two basic purposes. There are rhythmic motives that serve as either the passing of time or the chiming of the hour. Those chiming motives must be discussed in the context of the songs where they appear. The motive most often associated with the passing of time is present throughout multiple songs and appears in both augmentation and diminution within those songs. It can best be represented as either \[\text{\textbackslash\textbackslash} \text{\textbackslash\textbackslash} \text{\textbackslash\textbackslash} \text{\textbackslash\textbackslash}\] or \[\text{\textbackslash\textbackslash} \text{\textbackslash\textbackslash} \text{\textbackslash\textbackslash} \text{\textbackslash\textbackslash}\].

Melodic motives contained within the body of the songs fulfill the important role of giving insight to the mind of the poet as he progresses through his journey. The piano is no less a character in this than is the poet himself. The piano in all of Finzi song “plays an important part

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44 Finzi didn’t work in a particularly broad range of dissonance by the standards of 20th century practice. Dissonance must be realized within the framework of a largely more consonant style when discussing the music of Finzi.
in underlining key emotional words and phrases of the text.”45 As these motives are presented in the vocal line and the piano accompaniment, they serve two purposes respectively. The poet speaks the line and the piano acts either to repeat that thought or even to contrast it with another thought represented melodically elsewhere serving to “crystallize the past.” This happens with a particularly haunting effect in the concluding measures of “Proud Songsters.”

Finally, as the singer and collaborative accompanist perform these songs, there must be an awareness of Finzi’s love of language and even more the love of the poetry of Thomas Hardy. Questions about the interpretation of these songs is more likely solved by the repeated speaking of these texts and becoming intimately familiar with them and their desired affective qualities than a strict interpretation based on the rules of music theory and practice. Such study is a part of performing any song text but must be the first step in the presentation of Finzi song. Philip Langridge addresses this requirement as such:

Actually, if you look at the words, and speak them, and then half speak and half sing them, they will then fit exactly into Finzi’s melodic phrases. I find his writing (obviously) extremely exacting to sing, but if one imagines one is declaiming the words while singing them, everything seems to come together. Hard, but very rewarding.46

Finzi’s own feelings were that a composer never chose words but that words chose the composer. Such love of language on the part of the composer has led those such as Clifford Benson to reference Finzi as an English Hugo Wolf.47 To the end of honoring that love and devotion to his native language, the singer and accompanist should seek to “make words more beautiful by music”48 as they communicate the artistic ideals within Earth and Air and Rain.

46 Dressler, 18.
The Songs of *Earth and Air and Rain*

1

**Summer Schemes**

*When friendly summer calls again,*
*Calls again*
*Her little fifers to these hills,*
*We’ll go—we two—to that arched fane*
*Of leafage where they prime their bills*
*Before they start to flood the plain*
*With quavers, minimis, shakes, and trills.*
"—We’ll go," I sing; but who shall say
*What may not chance before that day!*

*And we shall see the waters spring,*
*Waters spring*
*From chinks the scrubby copses crown;*
*And we shall trace their oncreeping*
*To where the cascade tumbles down*
*And sends the bobbing growths aswing,*
*And ferns not quite but almost drown.*
"—We shall," I say; but who may sing
*Of what another moon will bring!*

There are many voices of nature acting in “Summer Schemes” and all are in the imagined ideal world the poet envisions for both himself and the person who will accompany him on his journey. The sound of the birds will serve as the first and final words on this journey. In “Summer Schemes” they act as a symbol of hope for the future and in the concluding song, “Proud Songsters,” as sobering reminders of the Dionysian reality of the world in which he exists. The form of the poem presents an interesting challenge compositionally because of the poem’s strophic form, with each stanza consisting of a cautionary change in the poet’s tone of voice to one of reticence about the difficulties and obstacles that may impede his path.
Finzi chooses to set the poem as a modified strophic form remaining true to Hardy’s chosen poetic structure. To begin the piece, Finzi employs a contrapuntal layering of the opening vocal motive in D major creating the effect of rapidly moving forward in anticipation of the coming journey. Finzi sets the vocal line consistently with Hardy’s placement of verse as it moves over a span of 18 measures without a notated rest apart from an eighth rest insertion as instruction for the singer to clearly articulate of the ending “s” of the word “fifers” without eliding it to the “t” of “to.” The texture of the piano accompaniment complements the vocal effect though a continuous texture of pulsing eighth notes in a perpetual murmur underneath the vocal line. At measure 15 the accompaniment begins an ascent to a higher register of the piano and gradually takes on the character of the “quavers, minims, shakes, and trills” of the birds described in the poetic text. To adequately emphasize the aural difference between a “shake” and a “trill,” Finzi offers aid in the right hand of the accompaniment. The accompanist should be aware of the difference of Finzi’s ordering of eighth notes beneath these two words. The arpeggiated triads in measures 19 and 20 under “shake” should be played beginning with the eighth note on the second half of the first pulse and those on the second pulse leading to the third. In measures 20-23, Finzi alters this through use of a neighbor tone figure that will force an alternate grouping of eighth notes giving emphasis to the three eighth notes originating on the measure’s first and third pulses.
Over this span of time, the vocal line has gradually ascended to its highest point thus far at C# and is left suspended just short of its goal, the tonic D. The accompaniment begins a descent stopping briefly in measure 26 at an F# tonality that prepares the second half of the stanza. The right hand oscillation between F# and C# rises and leads the vocal line to its ultimate goal, while the left hand continues its descent, not to the anticipated interval of a third to D, but to a distance of a 5th to B. As the vocal line enters on “We’ll,” Finzi has moved to the key of B minor rather than remaining in D major. The effect rendered is a striking one as the vocal line reaches the goal of its ascent but – in staying consistent with the poetic tone of voice – is rendered relatively unstable as the third of a new tonal area. The accompaniment texture has changed as well. There are no longer eighth notes lending aid to moving the poet’s thoughts forward. Instead, Finzi sets the words “We’ll go, I say” against a stark whole note at measure 28, giving added emphasis to the word “go.” In this moment of transition, Finzi has used both an unexpected harmonic structure and the texture of the accompaniment in representation of Hardy’s literary intent and has metrically placed the words “go” and “say” on strong beats maintaining the inverted word stress present in the poem. At this point, the singer must employ
his own intellect to find a different affect in the way he sings these lines. They should be subdued in relation to those of the first part of the stanza.

In the section between measures 30-36, Finzi employs use of dissonance to illustrate the poet’s awareness of future struggle and motive to plant a seed called to memory later in the mind of the listening audience. One of Finzi’s conventional rhetorical devices to introduce the presence of tension is that of a dissonant 9th to paint a particular word with angst. He often approaches such words with a melodic leap in the midst of an otherwise stepwise motion. In both measures 30 and 31 Finzi’s individually moving lines produce this event on the words “say” and “may” as seen in the following example:

Figure 1.2 (measures 28 – 36)
Red marking the motive that returns at the conclusion of “Proud Songsters”
Blue indicating the dissonant 9th sonority on the words “say” and “may”

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These occurrences come within the motivic material setting the phrase, “What may not chance before that day!” The accompaniment echoes the contour of the moment in such a way as to underscore the emphasis of both these words and the melodic motive accompanying them. There are multiple moments in which Finzi will employ motive to crystallize a past memory within the body of these songs, but none more meaningful than when this motive returns in the final bars of “Proud Songsters.”

Mirroring the thoughts of the poet, Finzi predictably leaves the closing of the first stanza suspended by ending the B minor section on an inverted F# major chord. His return to the key of D uses the same motivic material in the context of B minor, not truly arriving at the home key until the fourth pulse of measure 41. Again, from the outset of the new section at 37, the texture is that of incessantly moving eighth notes lasting until the third beat of measure 55, where an interrupting flourish of sixteenth notes occurs idiomatically representing the foliage being moved about by the a stream’s current as the “ferns not quite but almost drown.”. As the vocal line concludes in the second stanza, it has ended a descent rather than the ascent as in the first stanza. The churning of the water in the accompaniment has become the churning of the poet’s apprehensive thoughts about the future. Finzi again uses the F# tonality to move to B minor and again represents Hardy’s literary devices in much the same way. The ending phrase, “but who may sing \Of what another moon will bring!” is less dissonant, owing much to the leap of a 6th to B on the word “moon” in the context of an E minor tonality lending it stability. Although the motivic material is different than at the conclusion of the first stanza, Finzi still succeeds in giving emphasis to the poetic idea that will also appear in “Proud Songsters.” Hardy’s phrase here indicates the passing of a year’s time just as the poet will note that the proud songsters are “brand new birds of 12 months growing” in “Proud Songsters.”
The familiar opening motive returns in a *stretto* fashion but moves to an even higher register than at the opening and rises to G 6/4 chord followed by a single D major triad in the upper register. Finzi’s last musical representation of the poet’s state of mind is seen in his use of the ending cadence. Rather than using the typical V – I cadence, he employs a borrowed chord from D minor in a final cadence of v – I.

While the idea of Finzi representing the Apollonian/Dionysian dual realities as his motivation for *Earth and Air and Rain* would be misplaced, such a representation can be seen because of his sensitivity to Hardy’s text. Within the context of “Summer Schemes” Finzi successfully communicates the basis of that idea and orders the poems that follow in such a way as to give greater emphasis to the final lines of “Proud Songsters.” In many ways, “Proud Songsters” is the answer to “Summer Schemes,” and all that the poet experiences intermittently renders the impact of the answer in those final measures all the more sobering.
When I Set Out for Lyonnesse

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.

What would bechance at Lyonnesse  
While I should sojourn there  
No prophet durst declare,  
Nor did the wisest wizard guess  
What would bechance at Lyonnesse  
While I should sojourn there.

When I came back from Lyonnesse  
With magic in my eyes,  
All marked with mute surmise  
My radiance rare and fathomless,  
When I came back from Lyonnesse  
With magic in my eyes!

Lyonnesse is a significant place in the life of Thomas Hardy. As a young architect, Hardy visited it for the purpose of designing a new church building and met the elder daughter of one of the parishioners there, his future wife, Emma Lavina Gifford. Their meeting is of particular interest here because most of the poems contained in *Earth and Air and Rain* owe their inspiration to their courtship and subsequent marriage. If we view the poems of *Earth and Air and Rain* collectively, this poem is interesting because there is a noticeable absence of the skeptical, and at times cynical, tone of the other nine.

In the poem’s first stanza the poet is traveling to Lyonnesse and in the third, he is returning. In the second stanza, something happens to transform the poet and changes him
inwardly so much that those he meets upon his return see “magic, in my eyes!” Given this poetic structure, Finzi’s choice of an ABA form is imminently appropriate and consistent with the tones of voice Hardy portrays. Finzi employs two practices into his setting of this text that can be understood as representative of the poet’s travels. The most noticeable is that of the perpetual triplet figuration set against a walking bass and the vocal line. Use of this device for representation of travel could easily be seen as what Hold categorizes as Finzi’s overuse of old and worn out idioms. The other representation of travel is in the song’s unusual journeying through a number of oddly related key areas. A common criticism of Finzi is that he lacked a strong sense of cohesion between tonal areas within a work. Howard Ferguson comments specifically on this piece’s unconventional attempt at accomplishing that task, referring to its seemingly awkward key plan and, being perplexed, saying that somehow it just works. The principle key areas set out as follows: E minor → E major → Eb minor → Eb major → E minor.

There are often moments when Finzi’s music is not “so damned simple” and this is one of those instances which deserve a glance to account for his method of relating these key areas. A move from E minor to E major is simply enough seen in his raising of scale degree 3. To make the move from E major to Eb major, Finzi introduces an A# into the harmonic texture at measure 31 giving the next five measures the feeling of a brief venture into the lydian mode. The A# actually serves as an enharmonic rendering of the 5th of the tonic triad (Bb) anticipating the downward move to Eb minor. The new minor key area introduces what could possibly be a moment of melancholy as the poet begins his journey back home indicated by a return of the travel motive from the A section. A quick move to the parallel key of Eb major accompanies the poet sharing the way his countenance has changed in the brighter key. At the third beat of

49 Hold, *Parry to Finzi*, 400
50 Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*, 291
measure 48, Finzi sets off a brief section focused on elaborating a D major triad ending with a D in the vocal line that subsequently acts as a dominant pick-up to G on the word “back.” In doing so, he presents a suggestion of G major until the crescendo also begun at measure 48 arrives at the transformation back to the original key of E minor on the word, “magic” at measure 55. As the final phrase of the vocal line concludes outlining the E minor triad, the return of the opening theme closes the ternary form nicely and also lends a sense of completion to the poet’s journey.

The poet’s transformation that would “bechance at Lyonesse” takes place in the key of E major. His arrival is marked not with the key change but with the disappearance of the walking bass line at measure 26 after having first slowed in measure 25. The *piú sostenuto* at measure 23 should cue the singer to change the color of his tone to reflect at least a hint of being smitten with newly discovered love. Within the context of this second stanza is Finzi’s first representation of the poet’s awareness of the passing of time. He represents time in three separate instances, occurring in measures 29, 31, and 34 respectively. Finzi uses the figuration of a quarter note followed by two eighth notes and another quarter note in octaves possibly to represent the striking of the hour by the church bells associated with his reason for travel.

**Figure 2 (measures 29 – 31 and measures 33 – 34)**

Red marking the accompaniment’s tolling church bells

The figuration arises as an interruption in the otherwise complementary accompaniment line and almost seems to suggest that time begins in the poet’s life with his newfound partner.
This idea is not without evidence elsewhere in the collection. “Waiting Both” and “In a Churchyard” use similar gestures as not just an awareness of time’s passing but events in the poet’s life journey where he arrives at moments of enlightenment that bring him closer to a realization of his mortality in relation to the world around him. The stages in his life at which he has these realizations deal with the beginning moments of exuberance at the journey’s outset, questions of purpose and significance, and belief about his spiritual system of belief.
Waiting Both

A star looks down at me,
And says: "Here I and you
Stand each in our degree:
What do you mean to do,—
Mean to do?"

I say: "For all I know,
Wait, and let Time go by,
Till my change come."—"Just so,"
The star says: "So mean I:—
So mean I."

Evidenced by its inclusion in nearly every edited collection of Hardy poetry, this is considered to be one of his finest poems. This is one of the three poems that come from a different stage in his poetic life than those written in the aftermath of Emma’s death. There is little discussion between Finzi and his contemporaries as to its inclusion in this set, although it is entirely possible the decision had something to do with its relatively diminutive presence in terms of its length. Given that circumstance alone, without its inclusion in a collection it likely would be lost among a host of other singular compositional gems.

The poet finds himself in the familiar human condition of searching for the answer to the eternal question of his place and purpose in the physical world. This is in opposition to the star’s representation of a natural world that the poet assumes has direction and significance. Finzi represents the vastness and inaccessibility of the heavens through the employment of the extreme registers of the piano and through the most extensive use of chromaticism contained within the set. The device Finzi employs here – use of the piano’s extreme registers with the voice in the middle – proves to be conventional and is found
elsewhere in his settings of Hardy’s poetry. “The Comet at Yell’ham,” from *A Young Man’s Exhortation*, positions its character against a heavenly body representing infinity much in the same way the star represents the natural world with a chasm of space and time separating the two. While the poetic thought is different, Finzi employs the same separation of register and chromatic texture much as he does in “Waiting Both.”

The key is C minor though the first two pitches and the opening moment of the vocal line begins on G and elicits a feeling of the phrygian mode. The lower voice of the accompaniment begins a chromatic ascent of a 5th in counterpoint to the middle voice, which moves in contrary motion chromatically downward the distance of an octave. The two lines converge at the D5 just as the upper voice arrives at Eb6, creating a familiar clashing minor 9th sonority as a 4 note motive begins a descent into the lower register, illustrating the closing of the chasm between man and nature finally arriving at an octave G.

Here Finzi introduces the rhythmic representation not of the awareness of time through the chiming of the hour, but of the passing of time. It is presented in a fashion that will occur repeatedly in the remainder of the collection. The rhythm as it is presented here is an eighth note followed by a quarter note and another eighth. While Finzi chooses the tolling of bells to mark the arrival of seminal moments in the poet’s life, the motive introduced in “Waiting Both” is representative of the incessant passing of time that becomes the poet’s antagonist throughout the cycle. Subsequent occurrences will see this motive repeated sometimes in diminution and at other times, in augmentation, all accomplishing the purpose of emphasizing the effect of time’s passing on the poet’s perception of the world around him.

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51 McVeagh, 78
As the vocal line begins on G, this rhythmic motive continues moving toward quarter note pulses of an inverted G minor triad over C3 and Ab3 simultaneously on the 2nd and 3rd beats of measure 9 as seen below. This same figure appears again two more times as a C minor triad. Finzi places each occurrence in an inverted placement avoiding any solid relationship to a particular tonal area. The observance of the tenuto markings over the quarter notes is particularly crucial as once again Finzi presents a chiming of the hour growing out of the texture of times perpetual passing. The coinciding question, “What do you mean to do?” is rendered an urgent one as the striking of the hour in the piano part gives emphasis to nature’s asking a response from the poet.
The subsequent repeat of thematic material from the introduction begins a 4th higher and this time descends to C as the question has traveled down through time and space to elicit a response from the poet. Finzi makes use of an *accelerando* and *affrettando* to hint, not only at the poet’s unawareness of what his purpose is, but also at his frustration with that fact. As the vocal line moves, Finzi calls attention to the word “wait” by employing a leap of a 5th. Interesting to note, Finzi sets the words, “Time go by,” to the rhythmic motive displayed in figure 3.1 (see page 38). As the music moves forward, a decrescendo characterizes the vocal line approaching its highest note in on the word “change.” Change here indicates the end of the poet’s death and Finzi follows it with a musical sequence that is one of the more dramatic moments in the collection.

Finzi prepares the change in voice during the extended *rallentando*. The lower voices in alternation repeat similar motives, gaining momentum until meeting at the conclusion of a rising *molto crescendo* at a *fortissimo* A minor chord. An alternation with a G minor chord ultimately ends with an A minor chord in the lowest register of the piano and can be seen as a struggle between the poet and nature.

*Figure 3.3 (measures 19 – 23)*
A minor as nature and G minor as the poet

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The poet’s tonal area of G, represented by the A section’s descent from G to C, ultimately yields to nature’s tonal area of A. The concluding section affirms man’s helpless acquiescence to nature as Finzi repeats the opening motive of the song, with A being the tonal area and coming to rest on a final D minor chord as the star informs the poet that nature’s course and significance in time is of no more consequence or significance than his own. At this moment in the context of the cycle, the poet begins perpetually looking to the past and evaluating his own reality in light of that idea.
**The Phantom**

*Queer are the ways of a man I know:
He comes and stands
In a careworn craze,
And looks at the sands
In the seaward haze
With moveless hands
And face and gaze,
Then turns to go…
And what does he see when he gazes so?*

*They say he sees as an instant thing
More clear than today,
A sweet soft scene
That once was in play
By that briny green;
Yes, notes alway
Warm, real, and keen,
What his back years bring—
A phantom of his own figuring.*

*Of this vision of his they might say more:
Not only there
Does he see this sight,
But everywhere
In his brain-day, night,
As if on the air
It were drawn rose bright—
Yea, far from that shore
Does he carry this vision of heretofore:*

*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.*
Finzi’s setting of Hardy’s poem, “The Phantom Horsewoman,” shows an awareness of more than his connection to Hardy’s philosophical foundations and mindset. It also suggests an awareness of elements of Thomas Hardy’s personal life. Hardy employs a narrative voice in the poem, allowing insertion of himself into the story as an old man held captive by a 40 year old vision he can’t distinguish from the present. Hardy’s recently deceased wife, Emma, appears as a phantom horsewoman familiar to him in his earlier years. In the time Hardy spent courting Emma, he would walk alongside her on horseback as she sang his favorite folk tunes. Finzi’s choice to set “The Phantom” as a folk song in the style of a sea shanty seems more than coincidental. Evidenced by the tone of voice in the poem, he now observes her from not just a physical distance, but a distance of time that separates him from the woman he knew when they first met.

Finzi employs a motive with the rhythmic figuration of a dotted eighth, sixteenth, and another eighth consecutively to within a 6/8 time signature representing the gallop of the phantom woman’s horse. The phantom horsewoman is hidden from the view of the audience until measures 83-84 so that the horse’s gallop in these initial measures is only in the mind of the man being described by the narrator.

Figure 4.1 (measures 1 – 4)
Red Marking the galloping motive

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52 Oxford Reader’s Companion to Hardy, 330.
This figuration disappears from both the piano and vocal lines as the poet’s words, “With moveless hands…. And face…… and gaze,” are sung. As the narrator arrives at the word, “gaze,” Finzi groups the dotted eighth notes that have been pulsing with a rhythmic regularity into longer sustaining pairs, tying the 2\textsuperscript{nd} pulse of measures 23, 24, 26, and 27 to the 1\textsuperscript{st} pulse of the following measure. The aural effect of this grouping is not an exact augmentation of the passing time motive but the effect rendered is that of time slowing as the old man fixes upon his vision. As he “turns to go,” the \textit{a tempo} and return of the horse’s gallop at measure 30 serve to brings the listener back from the man’s vision and the narrator’s next question of, “what does he see when he gazes so?” The accompaniment acts to echo the question as the man continues in his trance.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure4.2.png}
\caption{Figure 4.2 (measures 23 – 29)
Red Marking passing time motive in augmentation}
\end{figure}

Beginning at measure 41, the passing time motive enters in its smallest form of diminution and functions musically as a rhythmic \textit{ostinato} underlying the vocal line in this section. Dramatically, the music increases the distance of time between the old man’s reality and the time in which he envisions the young horsewoman. The section is marked \textit{ma un poco meno mosso}. The slowing in tempo should have the feel of a quick 4 to aid Finzi’s expressive marking on the second pulse in the opening measures of this section. The singer should be especially
sensitive to both the *mezzo piano* dynamic and the *legato* marking set for the piano for the purpose of vocally painting the “sweet soft scene” setting of the poem.

**Figure 4.3 (measures 46-59)**

Red marking descent to the introduction of D#

Blue and gold marking the harmonic movement to C minor

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As the vocal line moves forward, the bass line in the accompaniment remains in the tonal area of F# minor. At measure 52, the bass line moves to an E 6/4. Finzi uses a lower neighbor D# on the second pulse of the measure creating a clashing dissonant 9th on the word “green” at the conclusion of Hardy’s descriptive representation of the man’s vision. The D# remains and is transferred to the piano’s right hand as the bass line descends to a similar dissonance with F# being the dissonant lower neighbor to the G# harmony on the word “keen.” Not only do these dissonances musically represent the old man’s angst in the drama, but the placement of these dissonances against descriptive words normally amiable in nature show Finzi’s propensity for musically demonstrating the irony that colors the majority of Hardy’s verse.

The D# Finzi introduced in measure 52 continues in the harmonic texture throughout this section and lasts until measure 59. It begins as a non-chord tone but becomes part of the G# tonality in measures 55-58 and serves as the common tone in the shift to C minor where the opening rhythmic motive of the galloping horse returns. As the narrator describes the old man’s vision in this section, the dramatic idea turns from a “sweet, soft scene” to one that inhabits the man’s mind in such a way that it imprisons him. At measure 73 Finzi denotes the vocal and piano score with *poco affrettando* and a gradual crescendo lasting through measure 80. In the context of these seven measures, Finzi notates a return to D minor in the key signature but noticeably avoids an arrival at D until the identity of the mysterious phantom is revealed at measure 85. The temptation on the part of the singer and accompanist is to place the climax in the vocal and piano texture on the word “far.” Finzi, however, notates a crescendo continuing throughout these 7 bars, with the point of arrival being an emphatic duplet outlining the 5-1 relationship of A to D on the word “heretofore” while still avoiding a cadential arrival at D minor. Following this line, the accompaniment melodically echoes the final notes of the vocal
line in slower time and in a lower register as the “ghost-girl rider” arrives with the accompaniment briefly restating the galloping motive as it earlier appeared.

Finzi next uses a chromatic descent in which the bass line covers the length of an octave expressing the way that time continues to act on the old man as “He withers daily.” As the bass line arrives at the lower D, it is within the framework of a Bb major tonality in which Finzi exactly recalls the song’s opening two measures down a 5th. He uses this motive to emphasize the vision of the perpetually youthful Emma just as the old man remembers her. In these few measures Finzi juxtapositions different motives to musically represent the chasm between idealized memory and the reality of the physical, spiritual and emotional condition of the poet imposed by nature’s indifference.

Figure 4.4 (measures 88 – 93)
Red marking the poet’s withering as he ages
Blue showing the eternal youth of Emma in his vision

![Figure 4.4](image)

As the music moves forward the dynamic breadth of the accompaniment reaches its most extreme level in the entire cycle. At measure 99, the accompaniment’s sforzando contains the now familiar dissonant 9th, and the galloping figure in the lowest piano register makes the ground rumble on “that shagged and shaly Atlantic spot.” It builds to a second sforzando occurring at measure 104, creating an effect almost cinematic as the phantom horsewoman “Draws rein.” The effect is such that the listener can almost envision the horse rearing up on its hind legs just before
the downbeat of measure 105 gives one last reminder of the pain bound in the old man’s vision with the presence of the dissonant minor 9th before she “sings to the swing of the tide” and the dynamic retreat of the accompaniment sees her riding back into the distance until she disappears.

Figure 4.5 (measures 100 – 105)
Red marking the “cinematic” rearing of the horse
Blue emphasizing the poet’s angst as she turns and the vision dissolves

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In “The Phantom” Finzi shows skill not only in creating an accompaniment that complements the vocal line but that also provides a broad dramatic range within which the singer can operate in communicating the poetic idea. Because of the intense dramatic character of Finzi’s setting and the poem’s subject matter, the danger on the part of both singer and accompanist is to be subject to the dramatic context in which it exists. It is important not to lose the communicative function of the poem in bringing to light the chasm between the individual’s ideal reality and the reality in which he actually exists. Finzi’s expression markings act as a guide to this end but must be considered in that context.
5

So I Have Fared

Simple was I and was young;
Kept no gallant tryst, I;
Even from good words held my tongue,
Quoniam Tu fecisti! Psalm 36
(For it was thy doing)

Through my youth I stirred me not,
High adventure missed I,
Left the shining shrines unsought;
Yet - me deduxisti! Psalm 60
(thou leddest me)

At my start by Helicon
Love-lore little wist I,
Worldly less; but footed on;
Why? Me suscepisti! Psalm 41
(thou upholdest me)

When I failed at fervid rhymes,
"Shall", I said, "persist I?"
"Dies" (I would add at times)
"Meos posuisti!" Psalm 38
(Lord, thou hast made my days)

So I have fared through many suns;
Sadly little grist I
Bring my mill, or any one's,
Domine, Tu scisti! Psalm 39
(Lord, thou knowest)

And at dead of night I call;
"Though to prophets list I,
Which hath understood at all?
Yea: Quem elegisti? Psalm 64
(whom have you chosen?)

Latin translations from the Psalms53

53 The Online Reference Book for Medieval Studies (Parallel English/Latin Psalter).
Finzi’s use of the folk idiom in “The Phantom” exhibits a crucial connecting point of the love of folk song shared by him and Thomas and Emma Hardy. In “So I have fared,” the choice of a macaronic text in a quasi-chant setting\(^{54}\) finds a principal philosophical connecting point between Hardy and Finzi that informs the vast majority of their published works. Both men met the evangelical movement in England with cynicism and satirical responses. Hardy’s poem, “After reading Psalm XXXIX, XL, etc.,” is easily seen as a representation of both satire and cynicism. Within the context of the individual’s life journey taking place in *Earth and Air and Rain*, it serves as the inevitable questioning of the religious establishment’s view of God and humanity.

Like “The Phantom,” “So I Have Fared” finds the poet looking to the past while time continues its forward progression. The poem’s stanzas make allusions to the Psalms, ending as they do with quotations from the Psalm texts of the Vulgate that comment on God’s providence. Aiding the satirical nature of the poem and creating a rhyme scheme, the final syllable of each line of Latin is pronounced with the [aI] rather than the usual [i]. Hardy’s setting of each stanza is consistent with the literary style of the Psalms. Distinctive in this particular grouping of the Psalms is an expository moment with a subtext of “what else could you possibly want from me?” The final lines are affirmations in light of a world that seems unjust and where the natural human response would be doubt. In the final stanza, Hardy breaks that pattern ending the final stanza, not with an affirmation of faith in providence, but rather the question “*Quem elegisti?*” (whom have you chosen?)

Evidenced by Finzi’s choice to denote the song a *recitative*, the style of singing should reflect that, especially throughout the first four and last stanzas. In contrast to the ending sections

\(^{54}\) Finzi’s instruction for performance of this piece is “this recitative should be sung with the flexibility and freedom of ordinary speech and the crotchet [quarter] should approximate the reciting note of Anglican chant.”
of the piece, there are no dynamic or expression marks apart from the piano’s *colla voce* and the voice part’s *mf*. Given the presence of specific dynamic and expression markings in the fifth stanza, the performer should refrain from much variance in dynamic or emotive quality apart from attention to the inflection of the words on the natural rhythmic accents denoted by the varying meter in each measure.

The fifth stanza begins at measure 27. Finzi briefly introduces a moment of rhythmic regularity and represents time’s passing through the poet’s life employing a walking bass line in even quarter note values in the style of Elgar.\(^{55}\)

55 McVeagh, *Life and Music*, 79. While McVeagh refers to this figuration as being “Elgarian,” it is similarly used in the music of many English composers of song in other contexts as well.
major key, the poet ends the fifth stanza with the phrase “Domine tu scisti!” (Lord, you know) suggesting the idea that God has seen his loyalty.

Finzi inserts an interlude between stanza’s five and six functioning musically as a shift to A minor and poetically to shift the poet’s tone of voice, yet again setting it against the familiar metaphor of night as uncertainty. As is the case repeatedly in Finzi’s Hardy settings, overstatement on the part of the performer is to be avoided at such moments to allow Finzi’s musical language its desired effect. The vocal line begins on A (as a non-chord tone) in the low register against the piano’s Bb neapolitan 6 chord with its root sounding a minor 9th above, creating not only a stark and foreboding character to the line “And at dead of night I call,” but also aurally representing the poet’s angst and struggle in the metaphorical darkness.

![Figure 5.2 (measures 38 – 39)](image)

Red marking the octave in which the voice sounds
Blue showing the dissonant 9th sonority produced

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The section is underscored by an accompaniment texture returning to that of stanza’s 1-4 essentially in note against note counterpoint until, in measure 46, the middle voice vaguely doubles the vocal line with tenuto markings lending added weight to the poet’s final question. The final ending on an open sonority rather than a definitive A minor chord suggests that the
poet’s question is rhetorical in the poet’s mind and thus, that religion does not hold an answer to man’s significance in the natural world.
When Lawyers strive to heal a breach,
And Parsons practice what they preach;
Then Boney he’ll come pouncing down,
And march his men on London town!
Rollicum-rorum, tollollorum,
Rollicum-rorum, tollollay!

When Justices hold equal scales,
And Rogues are only found in jails;
Then Boney he’ll come pouncing down,
And march his men on London town!
Rollicum-rorum, tollollorum,
Rollicum-rorum, tollollay!

When Rich Men find their wealth a curse,
And fill there-with the Poor Man’s purse;
Then Boney he’ll come pouncing down,
And march his men on London town!
Rollicum-rorum, tollollorum,
Rollicum-rorum, tollollay!

When Husbands with their Wives agree,
And Maids won’t wed from modesty;
Then Boney he’ll come pouncing down,
And march his men on London town!
Rollicum-rorum, tollollorum,
Rollicum-rorum, tollollay!
"No ceremony, good men all, I was passing by, and my ear was caught by the singing. I like singing; 'tis warming and cheering, and shall not be put down. I should like to hear anybody say otherwise."

- The Trumpet Major

Finzi’s title for the satirical song from *The Trumpet Major* is named for the nonsensical text he appended to the song as it appears in the Hardy novel. The character of the song can arguably be tied to the context of its appearance when a red-headed Private Derriman, whom Hardy’s verse describes as a semblance of the Farnese Hercules, sings the final stanza of this satirical song in a “stentorian” voice. The young private bellows the final stanza only after Sergeant Stanner had stopped short of including it due to what he sensed would offend the delicacies of female visitors to the camp. Derriman hears the singing and bleats out not knowing who was listening. Among the strophic songs within the body of *Earth and Air and Rain*, “Rollicum-rorum” is the closest to a pure strophic form. The song’s final high D was not original to the score but suggested and employed by the baritone who premiered the piece in 1937, Keith Faulkner. The slight deviations in the final stanza are indicative that Finzi may have tried to preserve the character of its presentation in the novel and keep the song from being purely strophic.

Both “Rollicum Rorum” and “To Lizbie Brown” were published separately from the set prior to the full publication’s appearance in the Boosey and Hawke’s catalog. Finzi’s feelings on Boosey and Hawkes’ decision to publish this song along with “Lizbie Browne” included the two weakest offerings he had contributed to the collection.⁵⁶ This is not only evidenced in his discussion with Howard Ferguson regarding Boosey and Hawkes’ publication of the piece but

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⁵⁶ Banfield, *An English Composer*, 208.
also his displeasure at Faulkner’s choice to sing the two songs in other instances to introduce the
songs to the public.\textsuperscript{57}

Particularly emphasizing the satirical nature of the song, Finzi employs the use of a bright
and playful tune once again in a folk idiom. The dreaded “Boney” who will come pouncing
down is Napoleon Bonaparte and here the soldiers meet the prospect of his attacking England
much as the English population did. Such a reference is not unlike the way a parent tells their
child that “Santa is watching.” Parents in England, for example, would admonish their children
that if they didn’t clean their room, Boney’d come and get them.

The hint for the vocal color the singer should employ can be found from the very first
measure where Finzi signifies a \textit{pesante fortissimo} that yields to the vocal line after a
\textit{descrescendo} down to a \textit{piano} vocal entrance. The dynamic level rises through a \textit{mezzo forte} at
the entrance of “rollicum-rorum” and then to a \textit{fortissimo} at the last statement of the phrase. Each
stanza becomes more and more raucous. The singer’s dramatic character should be that of
someone overly pleased with his own cleverness as he sings these lines. There should be the
impression of a cessation of “well-mannered” cleverness as the third stanza concludes.

Before the words of the young Derriman from the novel enter and target the sacred
subject of feminine sensitivities, Finzi’s interlude following the third stanza breaks the pattern of
melodically descending to meet the vocal line before beginning the next stanza. The melody in
the accompaniment instead rises to a high D, setting the stage for the rambunctious final stanza.
This material occurs rhythmically and with identical markings on four occasions. Each of the
first three times, notice that the note concluding the figure is both accented and held over the
course of the \textit{decrescendo} leading to the vocal line’s entrance. Finzi notates the \textit{diminuendo} a

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
full measure later and descends only to a *mezzo piano* instead of the earlier notated *pianos* from earlier stanzas.

**Figure 6a (measures 1 – 4)**
Blue indicating the direction of the piano interlude’s melodic line in stanzas 1 – 3

**Figure 6b (measures 71 – 73)**
Blue indicating the contrasting direction of the melodic line before stanza 4

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In the body of the fourth stanza Finzi expresses Derriman’s jocularity in the extension of the second line of the refrain. In stanza’s one, two, and three, this section inhabits a span of 4 measures. Here in the fourth stanza, he stretches the note values on “men” from one eighth note to five as he ties a quarter and dotted quarter across the bar. He stretches the note values on “town” over a span of three and ½ measures with accompanying sixteenth note flourishes in the
piano and a crescendo to fortissimo before a subito mezzo piano at the entrance of “Rollicum-rorum.” A section long crescendo arrives at a final interpolated high D that his held for the duration of a raucous closing flourish ending emphatically in D major.

If there is an example of Finzi’s music within the body of Earth and Air and Rain that fulfills the earlier quoted statement of being “so damned simple,” it is seen in “Rollicum Rorum.” The song is a broad caricature of the folk song idiom. With its lilting character and evenly measured phrases, it offers respite from the harmonic ambiguity and protracted phrasing characteristic of the other songs in the set. Finzi’s choice of sequence for “Rollicum-rorum” within the context of the set is of particular interest given the dark cynicism of the immediately preceding “So I Have Fared” and the regret of “To Lizbie Browne.” The juxtaposition of ironic text with this light and playful tune acts to show the poet as having to laugh at life’s inequities because he is powerless to influence a change in them.
To Lizbie Browne

Dear Lizbie Browne,
Where are you now?
In sun, in rain? -
Or is your brow
Past joy, past pain,
Dear Lizbie Browne?

Sweet Lizbie Browne
How you could smile,
How you could sing! -
How archly wile
In glance-giving,
Sweet Lizbie Browne!

And, Lizbie Browne,
Who else had hair
Bay-red as yours,
Or flesh so fair
Bred out of doors,
Sweet Lizbie Browne?

When, Lizbie Browne,
You had just begun
To be endeared
By stealth to one,
You disappeared
My Lizbie Browne!

Ay, Lizbie Browne,
So swift your life,
And mine so slow,
You were a wife
Ere I could show
Love, Lizbie Browne.

Still, Lizbie Browne,
You won, they said,
The best of men
When you were wed . . .
Where went you then,
O Lizbie Browne?

Dear Lizbie Browne,
I should have thought,
"Girls ripen fast,"
And coaxed and caught
You ere you passed,
Dear Lizbie Browne!

But, Lizbie Browne,
I let you slip:
Shaped not a sign;
Touched never your lip
With lip of mine,
Lost Lizbie Browne!

So, Lizbie Browne,
When on a day
Men speak of me
As not, you'll say,
"And who was he?" -
Yes, Lizbie Browne!
“To Lizbie Browne” is one of the three poems that pre-date those penned in 1912. The poem comes from Poems, Past and Present of 1901. The theme of regret and lost love is a theme Hardy espoused often and, just as in the case of “The Phantom Horsewoman,” the woman of whom the poet speaks is separated from him not just by a physical distance but the distance of time as well. Hardy’s descriptive language of her beauty shows a memory no less vivid than the old man’s vision of the phantom. The way the text is set against the music suggests the poet’s state of mind is markedly different upon the memory of Lizbie Brown than that of the phantom horsewoman. Though he is still haunted by his thoughts, in this instance they are more melancholy than angst-ridden. Again, his glance is backwards in time, but as it progresses it ultimately projects forward to a time beyond his mortal life, and the distance between the poet and a lost love is again protracted and painful.

The actual poem “To Lizbie Browne” presents the most difficult compositional challenge for Finzi. The nine stanzas with identical rhyme schemes and the identical number of verses all having the same metrical arrangement make it difficult to sustain any kind of continuing dramatic continuity musically. Additionally, the object of the poet’s affection has her name repeated no fewer than eighteen times in an arguably overstated refrain. These contributing factors make the prospect of holding the attention of a singer or an audience unlikely without an exceptionally creative plan for its setting. It is unclear why Finzi felt this song was one of the worst of the group, but the challenge of any of the elements listed here could easily be seen as a contributing factor. Finzi employs a musical plan somewhat similar to a Rondo form of ABACABAC’A and arranges the poem into nine sections using the plentifully-supplied utterances of “Lizbie Browne” as a musical refrain beginning, and ending each stanza while intermittently serving the dramatic function of illustrating the passing of time.
Stephen Banfield devotes much of his discussion on “To Lisbie Browne” to Finzi’s chosen device for the representation of passing time. Banfield notes the similarities of Finzi’s setting of the opening and closing of each A section stanza to the chiming every quarter hour at Westminster Abbey. As observed in the following figures, they are similar although not exact repetitions. In his study of these same songs, Albert Elser qualifies Banfield’s illustration with the admonishment that the similarities must be understood as similar in gesture but not as exact quotations. With each repetition, the pressure of passing time is amplified until the closing motive, when the accompaniment ends with one last pealing of the motive as a solo, signifying the poet’s own loneliness.

Figure 7a (measure 6) and 7b (measures 11 - 12)
Red indicating the mirrored chiming of the quarter hour at Westminster Abbey

The multiple sections of Finzi’s “rondo” primarily oscillate between the tonic Eb in the A sections and the relative C minor in the B and C sections. Throughout the song, Finzi rarely uses root position chords and avoids the tonic note sounding within the context of those few root position chords except one time. The result is a representation of the poet’s mind meandering

59 Albert Christian Elser, A Performance Study of Earth and Air and Rain, (dissertation at The University of Kansas), 50.
from one thought to the next. The vocal line never finds a settling point except in measure 61 on
the chord corresponding with the quote from Lizbie Browne asking “and who was he?” as the
vocal line’s G sounds against a G minor chord.

When Keith Faulkner first looked at this song, he suggested fewer *ritardandos* in the
piece to keep it moving along. Finzi acquiesced to his request but in correspondence with
Ferguson, he writes a telling “I don’t think it matters one way or the other” regarding Faulkner’s
suggestions.60 As a young composer, Finzi had a habit of leaving any dynamic or expression
marks out of his compositions with the idea that a thoughtful singer and accompanist would
know the proper interpretation of a poem and respond with the expressiveness it required.61 “To
Lizbie Browne” is heavily marked with expression markings and the singer and accompanist
should not ignore them but should interpret them in light of the poem’s context of expressing the
poet’s sense of regret in complement of the accompaniment’s texture.

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60 Gerald Finzi and Howard Ferguson, *Letters of Gerald Finzi and Howard Ferguson*, edited by Howard Ferguson
61 Dressler, 4.
"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 grew, 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."
Trevor Hold’s book that traces English song’s development from Parry to Finzi takes this poem as his representative argument for compositional difficulties presented by Hardy poetry. His article, “‘Checkless Griff or Thomas Hardy and the Songwriters’” makes use of much material from this chapter of the book. “The Clock of the Years” indeed is another case study in Hardy poetry’s challenges to writers of song. “The Clock of the Years” is saturated with what Hold refers to as Hardy’s “rough and craggy language, full of deliberately antique phrases, Dorsett dialect words and Anglo-Saxonisings.” Indeed, as is suggested by another researcher, a dictionary of old English should never be kept far away in the process of studying Hardy poetry or, obviously, Finzi’s settings of it. Appendix A at the conclusion of the document provides such a guide addressing the rough and craggy language seen in Earth and Air and Rain. The skill with which Finzi confronts the issues of language and awkward poetic line render what is arguably one of Finzi’s finest compositional moments. Rather than seeking to lessen the impact of those moments where the language and line is “craggy and awkward,” he honors Hardy’s literary language and uses those characteristics as part of the musical texture.

Finzi employs the use of a through-composed form to set Hardy’s unfolding mini-drama that is a “perfect foil to its predecessor, ‘Lizbie Browne.’” Subtle presences of rhythmic motives from earlier songs allude to the memory of Emma in “The Phantom Horsewoman.” In the poem, the poet is faced with a Faustian bargain of bringing back a deceased woman from his past and, as would be expected, he does so without first considering the full impact of his decision. Hardy selects a line of text from the fourth chapter of Job as a prelude to the body of the poem. Having just ended with the theme of loss in “To Lizbie Browne,” Finzi’s choice to leave this line spoken rather than sung creates a striking dramatic moment. The singer must not

62 Hold, Checkless Griff, 309.
63 Banfield, Sensibility and English Song, 292.
break character between these two songs. Hardy’s choice of Scripture references a moment when one of Job’s associates tells of a vision where his own experience with an unidentified entity poses the question, “shall mortal man be more just than God?” The following dorian flourish and arrival at D minor immediately presents the idea of the poet’s frightened state as the spirit states his control over the direction of time’s passing.

Finzi represents the spirit’s expansive voice through the forte marking during the opening recitative. He gives his first allusion to Emma with a reminder of the galloping motive from “The Phantom” in diminution at measure 7, then includes a silence after the poet completes his answer with “It’s better than dead.” The silence in the aftermath of such an emphatic ending to the recitative provides an opportunity for the dramatic impetus of that moment to be processed by the listener, but that dramatic impetus must be maintained by the intensity in the singer’s character.

The poet’s excitement grows as the woman is brought back from death and begins to become younger and younger. Finzi represents the backward turning of the years by a descending pattern in the bass line that arrives at an open position B major chord. Just as in “To Lizbie Browne,” he makes use of passing sonorities and inversions to avoid the stability of root position chords. Coinciding with this motion is the rising figuration in the right hand of the accompaniment showing the poet’s excitement and arriving at the same point on the word “Cease!” The poco allargando marking and the three tenuto markings give the chord more emphasis, but Finzi’s not allowing the vocal line to land on B still renders it unsettling. The unstable E major chord at measure 16 creates the dissonant 9th relationship that continues to function dramatically as a representation of angst even amidst the poet’s momentary exuberance.

64 Job 4:17, King James Version.
As the vocal line ends, the accompaniment echoes the poet’s thought of “let her stay thus always!” An augmented presentation of the rhythmic time motive seen in the middle section of “The Phantom” appears and even functions much in the same way texturally, except that it is transferred to an interior voice.

![Figure 8.1 (measures 18 – 19)
Red indicating the passing time motive in augmentation](image)

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Finzi continues the effect of not coming to rest as the clock continues to cycle backwards until she reaches “babyhood.” As she becomes “Still less in mien,” there remains the lack of a tonal resting place until she disappears into the spirit’s “checkless griff.” The vocal line comes to rest at C#, but still with the accompanying chord inverted. The section’s long descent continues with repeated galloping motives. The subito pianissimo at measure 37 is where the singer is faced with the realization that she is once again lost to him. His angst is represented in the piano as a forte gallop in B minor and similarly repeated two more times, more softly but with a greater degree of dissonance emphasized by accent marks in the lowest piano part.
At measure 44 Finzi inserts a protracted silence indicated with a fermata over the empty measure. The unsettling nature of silence allows the audience and performer to process the moment where reality sets in and the poet must process not only his sense of loss but also the realization that now that she has never existed, he will no longer have the memory of her or their time spent together in life. A chromatic descent and swaying texture in the piano reminiscent of “The Phantom” accompanies the opening of his complaint to the spirit that it would be better if “She were dead as before!.....The memory of her/Had lived in me.” Finzi continues to place the galloping motive from “The Phantom” in such a way that the thought of Emma continues to haunt him in her absence. As the poet sings “but it [her memory] cannot now,” the accompaniment continues to descend into the lower register, vaguely imitating the last cry of the vocal line. The morendo marking lends further illustration of the last of the woman’s memory fading from the poet’s mind.

Finzi returns to the recitative style of the song’s opening initially with a pianissimo as the poet recalls his own fault in losing the memory of the woman. The thought is reinforced as the spirit’s voice reminds him that “It was your choice…../To mar…..the ordained.” The song ends

65 Author’s insertion.
with a *fortississimo* A minor chord in the lowest registers of the piano, reinforcing the dark loneliness in which he exists.

“The Clock of the Years” creates an interesting point in the life journey of the poet. In each of the songs preceding, nature’s indifference toward man is seen in the way its forces work against his best interest. Finzi’s choice of placing this song at this point in the cycle finds the poet with a unique opportunity to briefly exchange places with nature and alter its process. In doing so his flaws are exposed when he creates a tragedy significantly worse than if he had allowed nature its “ordained” course. The immediately subsequent song finds the poet less reluctant to respond positively to what it has to say as a result.
In a Churchyard

"It is sad that so many of worth,  
Still in the flesh," soughe the yew,  
"Misjudge their lot whom kindly earth  
Secludes from view.

"They ride their diurnal round  
Each day-span's sum of hours  
In peerless ease, without jolt or bound  
Or ache like ours.

"If the living could but hear  
What is heard by my roots as they creep  
Round the restful flock, and the things said there,  
No one would weep."

"Now set among the wise,"  
They say: "Enlarged in scope,  
That no God trumpet us to rise  
We truly hope."

I listened to his strange tale  
In the mood that stillness brings,  
And I grew to accept as the day wore pale  
That view of things.

The song, “In a Churchyard (The Song of the Yew Tree)” sees nature speaking through a yew tree. It is common to find yew trees in churchyards throughout England giving shade to the headstones that cover them. The significance for Hardy’s choice of the yew to speak in this poem is its reputed longevity. Hardy sets what could be a symbol for nature’s transcendence among reminders of the mortality of man in “the restful flock.”
Finzi uses the accompaniment’s texture to show that while life has ended for the individual, the life of nature moves on. He musically places an idea that influences the poet’s ultimate response to the wisdom he encounters from the yew. Just as “Proud Songsters” will be the conclusion to “Summer Schemes,” “In a Churchyard” references “When I set out for Lyonesse.” In the former comparison, the subject of birds relates them to one another. In the latter, two pieces of rhythmic motive found in “In a Churchyard” relate back to those in “When I Set out for Lyonesse.” The two motives are that of travel represented in the \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash}} \) pattern in a 6/8 framework in both songs and the steadily pulsing toll of the church bell represented as 4/4 pattern of \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash}} \) in the B section of Lyonesse and as a steady 6/8 \( \text{\textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash \textbackslash} \) in Lyonesse. This time, however, the traveling is that of the yew’s roots creeping around the graves of the deceased rather than the excitement of newfound love.

While the key signature here would suggest A minor, the opening of the piece is unmistakably in D minor and, consistent with each piece subsequent to “Rollicum-rorum,” rarely lands in such a way as to provide a sense of tonal stability. Finzi’s setting of the opening phrase rhythmically repeats motivic material from “The Phantom,” initially in the accompaniment, and then continues in the vocal line against an ominously tolling church bell. The yew’s words work in combination with these events reminding him in the aftermath of his grief that had his former love lived and died, it would have been better for him.
The irony of Hardy’s poem is captured in the way Finzi uses the travel motive from “Lyonesse” to set the words “They ride\(^6\) their diurnal round…./Each day span’s sum of hours……/in peerless ease……/without jolt or bound……/Or ache like ours.” He evens out the 6/8 swaying motion, gradually moving to a steady eighth note pulse that meanders about as the yew’s roots creep in and around the graves of the restful flock. The yew’s roots hear their peacefulness and absence of pain through their silence. They are now “set among the wise’ and see the larger picture of mortality in nature through being “enlarged in scope.” Speaking on

\(^{6}\) Emphasis added by the author.
behalf of the dead, the yew enunciates their hope that “no God trumpet us to rise” against an idiomatic fanfare in the accompaniment. The dissonant nature of the fanfare is quite different from what would be imagined as a triumphal rise from the grave.

Just as the words of the deceased utter “hope,” Finzi introduces a D minor arpeggio beginning with a leap from D to A in the bass. The way he voices this figuration recalls the opening moments of “Summer Schemes,” again allowing a memory to crystallize the hope of the poet’s past.

Figure 9.2a. (measures 54 – 55)

Figure 9.2b. Opening measure of “Summer Schemes”

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In this moment of the accompaniment illustrating the poet’s processing of what he has heard, Finzi prepares the first moment of a solid tonal center at the moment the poet breaks free of the predisposed ideas about life and death. The sections from measure 57-62 return to the D major of “Summer Schemes.” In measure 62, as the poet acquiesces to “That view of things,” Finzi abandons D major and moves to the relative B minor and the final interlude repeats the opening music with the church bell pealing its last tones before the poet reaches the destination to which he had originally set out at the opening of the cycle.

Figure 9.3 (measures 59-70)
Red marking Finzi’s shift from D major to B minor

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Albert Esler’s feelings are that *Earth and Air and Rain* demonstrates both the cynicism and the rejection of spiritual Christianity of Thomas Hardy and Gerald Finzi. Finzi’s musical choices for setting “In a Churchyard” as he has can give some degree of credence to that idea. To make that assertion based on the information within the cycle seems to impute much more to these songs than is present. What is evident from the cycle is the familiar feeling of the pressure of passing time. There are moments of darkness and subdued emotion throughout the body of these songs, but the moment at which Finzi moves to B minor in the closing bars of “In a Churchyard” says a great deal about their feelings of the ending of time.

Both men are admitted agnostics, and their view of the end of mortal life is markedly different than that of the prevailing evangelical thought in English society both in the late 19th and 20th centuries. Finzi always remained hopeful that the tenets of that faith would prove to be true and would reveal themselves to him. Hardy’s thoughts were that he had been searching for God for 40 years and surely should have found him. The poet at the end of “In a Churchyard” has a moment of enlightenment in the last D major section, but enlightenment changes when he realizes the finite nature of his life rather than the eternal life promised by the evangelical tradition. For the evangelical, death is a movement to a new phase of life and a time to be joyful. To the agnostic, it is a reminder of the limit of his time. The two ideas hold an understandably different view of the pressure of passing time. The songs within *Earth and Air and Rain* owe much of their subdued nature to the way Finzi and Hardy viewed life and nature in comparison to those within the traditional views of Judeo-Christian traditions.

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67 Esler, iii.
68 Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*, 275.
69 Ibid.
Proud Songsters

The thrushes sing as the sun is going,
And the finches whistle in ones and pairs,
And as it gets dark loud nightingales
In bushes
Pipe, as they can when April wears,
As if all Time were theirs.

These are brand new birds of twelvemonths' growing,
Which a year ago, or less than twain,
No finches were, nor nightingales,
Nor thrushes,
But only particles of grain,
And earth and air and rain.

“Proud Songsters” is the only Hardy song set by both Benjamin Britten and Thomas Hardy and gives example of how two contrasting musical styles lend varying interpretations to the same poem. Britten’s song is significantly shorter in length and focuses immediately on the sobering nature of Hardy’s poetic thought. Finzi’s setting provides not just representation of the poetry but also a picturesque backdrop of the physical world ultimately functioning to bring emphasis to the Dionysian reality that has been growing steadily throughout the body of the cycle. The moment at which the poet finds himself completely and wholly an insignificant part of nature’s process is one not of exuberance, but of acquiescence. This effect is achieved through Finzi’s use of textural contrasts to represent the poetic dynamics of contemplation, realization and resignation. Finzi’s use of idiomatic compositional tools to clearly represent such dynamics musically is
seen throughout the body of *Earth and Air and Rain*. The relative ease with which he does so reaches one of its highest levels in “Proud Songsters.”

Finzi’s choice of musical background for “Proud Songsters” is the passing of time motive that permeates the texture of the opening accompaniment and largely dominates the texture until measure 30. The B minor opening continues the poetic thought that ended “In a Churchyard,” but nature’s voice returns as the singing of birds in the right hand accompaniment. At measure 5 the singing stretches over large triplet figures aurally clouding the accompaniment’s regular pulse. Each of them begin at *mezzo piano* and *decrescendo* immediately. These moments are the sounds of the birds singing and of reflective thought on the part of the poet at the end of the day.⁷⁰

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⁷⁰ Poetically, the thought here is of ending so the “day” is also somewhat likely as the latter years of the poem’s date of composition.
The performer must stay engaged in the long interludes while hearing and absorbing the sounds of nature around him and should respond accordingly to what he hears. The sounds he hears are the thrushes, finches, and nightingales represented in the first line of verse. These are the birds he sang of journeying to see in “Summer Schemes” at the cycle’s beginning, and a sense of melancholy should inhabit his singing and character as he realizes that his arrival has not been exactly what he anticipated at the outset of his journey.

As the vocal line enters, the passing time motive has taken over again and has a rapidly moving quality becoming more and more urgent until it undergoes a transformation at measure 28. The marking of *sempre legato* and no real dynamic markings give a sense of the continuing indifferent resignation of the poet after his experience in the churchyard. During the time of the *crescendo poco a poco* stretching from measure 22 to 25, the birds’ singing rises to a point at which it is no longer a subdued moment of reflection but the deafening voice of nature inundating him with memories he imagined at the start of his journey. He has arrived at the “arched fane of leafage,” and the birds are filling the air with their “quavers, minims, shakes, and trills.” The idea of the Dionysian is sounding so loudly that the Apollonian ideal he imagined is completely obscured.
The poet is now alone when he reaches his destination and finds himself transformed through the experiences of life. With this wisdom has come both enlightenment and regret. The ritard and cessation of the passing time motive at measures 28 and 29 bring the audience to realize his acquiescence in reality.

In the song, "Der Wegweiser," the spurned lover in Winterreise determines that he will commit suicide and thus will travel the path "from which there is no return." The song, "Das Wirtshaus," (The Inn) immediately following has a simple hymn-like accompaniment with clear cadences reflecting his resignation to the fate that shortly awaits him. Finzi creates a similar effect as he enlists a simple homophonic texture with clear cadences on the words, "of grain, /And earth,...and air...and rain." Finzi once again makes use of the passing time motive to set
these words. He then crystallizes the final realization of the poet in simultaneity with his memory upon the word “rain” as the motive from “Summer Schemes” setting the words, “What may not chance before that day” returns. The motive leads to two final statements of the passing time motive under a rallentando.

Figure 10.3 (measures 37-40)
Red box marking repeated motive from opening of “Summer Schemes”
Blue boxes showing D major’s ultimate yielding to B minor

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The effect is hauntingly suggestive of life’s ending. In the final two statements of time’s passing, Finzi sets the listener up for a V-I cadence but deceptively moves to a B minor figuration and ends the piece in B minor still outlining the D major tonality as the hint of the Apollonian submits ultimately to the final sounding B.
Conclusion

The present performance study is one researcher’s interpretation of Thomas Hardy’s poetry through the musical compositions of Gerald Finzi. The subjective natures of both musical and literary criticism require the obligatory statement that the interpretations here are not presented as, or intended to be, definitive ones. Rather, they are intended to add to the existing body of research as further study and explanation of the philosophical and musical ideas of both a fine composer and a fine poet. Trevor Hold’s criticism of Finzi is that he often misses the subtleties and intentional ambiguities within Hardy’s poetry.71 Finzi himself was aware that at some level, setting poetry to music had the potential to limit the breadth to which a reader could imagine the world of the poet. His earlier mentioned speech at the Crees Lectures of 1954 contain references to several poets, including A. E. Housman, who held composers in great disregard because of their lack of attention to the nuance of their words and language.72 The simple exercise of speaking a same sentence repeatedly and inflecting it differently easily confirms the fact that this is a well-founded and true concern.

In the case of Gerald Finzi, one finds a composer who was not merely seeking texts to provide fodder for song composition but who studied a single poet intensely and immersed his life in that poetry. The elements of Hardy’s poetry that discouraged many composers from setting his poems were those admired and embraced by Finzi. As a result, his settings of Hardy

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71 Hold, Parry to Finzi, 403.
contain an understanding that, while not absent from other composers’ works, is deeper than that of most other composers of the English musical renaissance of the early 20th century.

As a performance analysis, the present study should be understood much in the way Finzi viewed his settings of Thomas Hardy’s poems. Finzi often spoke of a “compulsive chosen identity” that the composer had to assume when setting the work of a poet. This essentially assumes that the composer plans and organizes his compositions based on how he reads and understands the poem in question. Considering the number of his own compositions that often saw completion only after protracted amounts of time, it is easily assumed that his understanding of Hardy’s poetry was such that his chosen identity was one carefully considered and well understood.

The present study could be significantly altered were these songs approached at either an earlier or later time in the researcher’s own life. To that end, the songs contained within Earth and Air and Rain show the great depth of affinity and understanding Gerald Finzi had for both Thomas Hardy and his work. As a final statement, Stephen Banfield’s words demonstrate this understanding more eloquently than any.

The highest praise a songwriter can pay Hardy is not to emphasise one of his preoccupations – pessimistic philosophy, lost love, death and graveyards, the blind indifference of nature, the inexorably continuity of life, the joys of uninhibited living, or any of the other of his recurrent themes – but to represent the great range of his poetic conceits as broadly as possible by juxtaposing contrasting and conflicted ideas and letting the resulting antinomial structure speak for itself, as it does in the tiniest space in the individual poems.  

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73 Banfield, Sensibility and English Song, 291.
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APPENDIX

Unusual or Dialect Words from Hardy’s Poems in *Earth and Air and Rain*
arranged by the songs in which they appear in sequence

“Summer Schemes”

**Fane**

*temple*

**Leafage**

*leaves collectively or foliage*

**Bills**

*The horny beak of certain birds, especially when slender, flattened, or weak*

**Quaver**

*A note having a duration equal to half that of a crotchet and an eighth that of a semibreve; a symbol representing this (now usually drawn ♩)*

**Minim**

*a symbol (now usually drawn ♩) for a note having a duration equal to half that of a semibreve; a note of this length*

**Shake**

*To vibrate irregularly, tremble*

**Trill**

*a. A tremulous utterance of a note or notes, as a ‘grace’ or ornament: b. A rapid alternation of two notes a degree apart; a shake*

**Chinks**

*A convulsive gasp for breath, or spasmodic losing of the breath, as in hooping-cough; a convulsive fit of coughing or laughing*

*Scrubby - Rough, bristly*

**Copses**

*taken from “coppice;” a thicket of small trees or underwood periodically cut for economic purposes*

**Oncreeping**

*The action of moving on the ground, as a reptile, or a human being on hands and knees*

**Cascade**

*a waterfall*

**Bobbing**

*Movement up and down*

**Growths**

*A crop or yield as used in a classification of (esp. the best) vineyards to indicate the quality of the wine produced there*
“When I Set Out for Lyonesse”

Rime 1. a. Hoar frost (see note); frozen mist. Also: a chill mist or fog (regional)

Spray Small or slender twigs of trees or shrubs, either as still growing or as cut off and used for fuel, etc.; fine brushwood

Durst dared

Briny Of or pertaining to brine or to the sea; saturated with salt

Keen a. Jolly good, very nice, splendid. (colloquial) b. Wise, learned, clever

Shagged Having or covered with shaggy hair; rough with hair. Chiefly said of animals: Of a hill-side, etc.: Covered with scrub, trees, or some rough or shaggy growth

Shaly Composed of, or having a resemblance to shale

“So I Have Fared”

Tryst A mutual appointment, agreement, engagement, covenant

Helicon Name of a mountain in Boeotia, sacred to the Muses, in which rose the fountains of Aganippe and Hippocrene; by 16th and 17th c. writers often confused with these. Hence used allusively in reference to poetic inspiration

Wist Attentive, intent

Grist Phrases. to bring grist to the (one's) mill: to bring business to one's hands; to be a source of profit or advantage

“To Lizbie Browne”

Archly In an arch manner; cleverly, waggishly; with good-humoured slyness or sauciness

Wile In lighter sense: An amorous or playful trick; a piece of sportive cunning or artfulness

“The Clock of the Years”

Babyhood The period or condition of infancy

Mien The look, bearing, manner, or conduct of a person, as showing character, mood

Griff A deep narrow valley or chasm

Mar To hamper or hinder; to impair or damage
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