

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

8 *The Dead and the Living One*

The dead woman lay in her first night's grave,
And twilight fell from the clouds' concave,
And those she had asked to forgive forgave.

The woman passing came to a pause
By the heaped white shapes of wreath and cross, 5
And looked upon where the other was.

And as she mused there thus spoke she:
"Never your countenance did I see,
But you've been a good good friend to me!"

Rose a plaintive voice from the sod below: 10
"O woman whose accents I do not know,
What is it that makes you approve me so?"

"O dead one, ere my soldier went,
I heard him saying, with warm intent,
To his friend, when won by your blandishment: 15

"I would change for that lass here and now!
And if I return I may break my vow
To my present Love, and contrive somehow

"To call my own this new-found pearl,
Whose eyes have the light, whose lips the curl 20
I always have looked for in a girl!"

"—And this is why that by ceasing to be—
Though never your countenance did I see—
You prove you a good good friend to me;

