

'Of what importance does 'After A Journey' from Hardy's 'Satires Of Circumstance' hold in the maintenance of memory and emotion?'

'After A Journey' is one of Thomas Hardy's more detailed and vividly descriptive poems in his 'satires of circumstance' collection. Hardy delves into the thoughts and emotions of Emma, his wife, and their early courtship, including the feelings Hardy has after her death. 'After A Journey' describes the themes of Hardy's regret and anxiety he has as he cannot communicate with his wife, only through his imagination.

'After A Journey' comprises four 8-line stanzas with the rhyme scheme of ABABCDDC. In the first stanza, Hardy describes himself following the ghost of Emma over the cliffs of the South West coastline. The 'voiceless ghost' is clearly that of Emma, but this ghost is not the same one as in 'The Haunter', this being the young Emma with her 'nut-coloured hair' who is behaving in the way a young woman in love would, enticing her lover to chase and catch her. Here, Hardy shows how he still remembers the electric romance of their courtship years and reinforces this with strong sexual connotations, for example, the highly suggestive use of the word 'ejaculations' to link the ocean breaking on the coastline to sexual union.

The meter in this poem plays a major role in the speed and emotion in the poem. In lines like 'Whither, O whither will its whim now draw me?' the change from iambic to triple meter conveys a sense of speed and purpose. However the meter is inconsistent throughout the poem. For example, 'Up the cliff, down, till I'm lonely, lost' shows a different meter. The changes between Trochees, triple meter, and iambic emphasises the hectic rollercoaster journey that Hardy is being taken on, with all its energy and speed. Therefore the meter dramatically emphasises the drama of Hardy's thoughts and imagination.

Stanza 2 places the emphasis on time instead of place. The word 'haunts' cleverly describes the places that Emma spent a lot of her time, while also reinforcing the presence of the 'voiceless ghost'. Stanza 2 describes the anxiety Hardy owns, due to not knowing what his dead wife would say. He describes their marriage in metaphoric clichés such as 'summer gave us sweets, but autumn wrought division?' This quote reinforces the romantic courtship or 'summer', and the troubled marriage or 'autumn' in this case. The use of a question also emphasises that this is what Hardy imagines Emma saying, reinforcing the use of Hardy's imagination in this poem. The last line of the stanza 'despite time's derision' holds great importance. Hardy wants to preserve his memories and emotions for Emma as well as he can but here he describes how time mocks and teases. He knows he

is the only person to remember Emma and the love they shared and with every day that passes, and eventually when Hardy himself passes, their memories will pass with them. Hardy was very aware of the longevity of objects such as the countryside and coastline, but also the expiration of people and their memories. This is one of the main reasons that Hardy wrote these poems in the first place, as preservation of the love they shared.

To reinforce the ideas of imagination, Hardy uses vivid language and imagery to make his poetry more exciting and saleable. An example of this is the use of the present continuous tense, especially in the third and fourth stanzas. Words like 'leading' and 'flitting' are all verbs describing Hardy being led around a lot. For a 'frail' man, this would be of difficulty and therefore reinforces the fact this poem could be of imagination or a dream of such.

The journey Hardy goes on in this poem can be seen as metaphorical, whilst Hardy uses many metaphors to add to the poem's ambiguity. In the first stanza the words 'unseen waters' may represent Hardy's feelings of sadness and despair, and not just the obvious meaning of the waters under the cliff.

Hardy uses ideas and images that mirror the stories and tales of people such as Virgil and Dante. For example Hardy compares Emma and himself to Aeneas and Dido; the Greek legend of the Queen whose capacity to love, which had died with her husband Sychaeus, is reawakened when visited by the Trojan, Aeneas. This is shown in the quote, 'Through the years, through the dead scenes I have tracked you: what you found to say of our past- scanned across the dark space where I have lacked you?'. To quote Tim Armstrong's criticism in *Thomas Hardy: Poems of 1912-13*, 'Hardy evokes the vestigial of the epigraph, Aeneas' confrontation with the un-answering ghost of Dido, and Dante's passage through hell and purgatory'. This is not the only time Hardy has used these references in his poetry. For example the last poem in the collection, 'Where The Picnic Was', the area where the fire was, represents Dido's words 'veteris vestigia flammae' meaning 'I see in you traces of an old flame'. This describes Hardy falling in love with Emma again while revisiting the places of their courtship, and this is a very romantic image about memory and imagination as well.

The poem also has paradoxes about life and death as well. The quote 'when we haunted here together' describes this. This describes how Hardy is saying that even when they were together, they were dead. This has connotations of Hardy's famous ideas that no matter what level of love is shown in a natural place, the surroundings will remain un-phased and will not know or care when people die. These ideas are similar to Shakespeare's ideas in 'Measure For Measure', when

the Duke explains to Claudio how life is not better than death, and how every materialistic object on earth has no meaning after you die.

In stanza 3, Hardy describes the scenery and the memories shared there. 'The waterfall, above where the mist-bow shone at the then fair hour in the then fair weather .' The use of pathetic fallacy here describes the scene and demonstrates it was a happy memory.

To reinforce the idea of the natural world carrying on around us, in stanza 4 Hardy writes 'the waked birds preen and the seals flop lazily'. This shows how the world carries on around him even if someone that loved these places has died. This is similar to poems like 'a death day recalled' where Hardy writes 'why did not valency in his purl deplore one who haunts were whence he drew his limpid stone?'

The overall message that Hardy portrays in this poem is that one can be reminded of the past but the past can never be restored. For example the fact Hardy refers to the old places that Emma and him visited as 'haunts' depicts this. Similar ideas are addressed in poems such as 'The Haunter' where Hardy writes from the perspective of Emma's ghost; 'Yes, I companion him to places only dreamers know'. Thus reinforcing the dream-like world that is explored in 'After A Journey'. Also in 'Beeny Cliff' where Hardy writes 'the woman now is – elsewhere', again depicting the ideas of grief and remembrance that Hardy experiences. Hardy writes the majority of his poetry quite simply from his heart, and from the experiences that he shared with his wife. By writing about these memories and thoughts, Hardy hopes that the hurt and sorrow he experiences can be lifted, even temporarily, because these memories are the only important memories he has left.