



ISSN: 3005-5091

AL-NOOR JOURNAL
FOR HUMANITIES

Available online at : <http://www.jnfh.alnoor.edu.iq>

JNFH
Al-Noor Journal
for Humanities

“Disappointment in Love and Everlasting Struggles against Indifference to Human Suffering in Two Poems by Thomas Hardy”

Asst. Prof. Essam Muhammad Mahmood
College of Education/ Department of English
Alnoor University

Abstract

The major objective of this paper is to shed a bunch of light on two contradictory personalities who are totally different in manners, behaviours, thinking, tendencies and above all response. These two characters are Emma, the innocent tender creature who has devoted all her youth and life to her husband Hardy who is in contrast to her selfish, nonchalant, careless and vain man. In the two poems, namely: "The Voice" and "After A Journey. "These two absolutely contradictory personalities are purely presented.

Keywords: Modern English Poetry, Thomas Hardy, Disappointment, Suffering.

© THIS IS AN OPEN ACCESS ARTICLE UNDER THE CC BY LICENSE.

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



خييات الحب والنضال المتواصل ضد عدم الاكتراث بمعاناة الانسان في قصيدتي توماس هاردي

الباحث الاستاذ المساعد عصام محمد محمود
جامعة النور - كلية التربية / قسم اللغة الانكليزية

إن الهدف الرئيس لهذا البحث هو إلقاء الضوء على شخصيتين متناقضتين كلياً في الطباع والسلوك والتفكير والرغبات والاستجابات، وهما شخصية إيما المخلوقة البريئة الرقيقة التي نذرت حياتها وشبابها لزوجها هاردي، الذي كان نقيضاً لها، إذ أنه شخصية تتصف بالأنانية واللامبالاة. وقد تم تقديم الشخصيتين في قصيدتي "الصوت" و "بعد الرحلة".

كلمات مفتاحية: شعر الانكليزي الحديث، توماس هاردي، خييات الامل، المعاناة.

Thomas Hardy was an English novelist and a poet. Hardy attempted composing poetry at the age of twelve after being acquainted to the poetry of contemporary Victorian poets such as Robert Browning, Alfred Lord Tennyson and Swinburne.⁽²⁾

In his early years, Hardy met Emma Lavinia Gifford, the sister-in-law of the local reactor, who was a young, attractive woman. Her admiration for him and her appearance attracted him. Hardy's literary works drew the attention of Emma, a sensitive young woman who urged him to pursue writing poetry and fiction. They fell in love with one another shortly after, but they had to wait years to get married at Santa Peter's church.⁽³⁾

The first three years of their marriage were quite happy: the couple spent their honeymoon in Paris and travelled extensively on the continent. Time passes and things seem to be changed for Emma from happiness into misery. With the passage of time, Emma felt more and more estranged from her elusive husband. She didn't entirely approve the contents of his fictions and last, but not the least, his romantic interests to some beautiful rich

ladies have been increased and as a result of that interest, he began to neglect his wife as much as possible.⁽⁷⁾

Emma, the reckless husband's victim, simply kept a hidden journal where she wrote her thoughts and grievances over her deceitful spouse. She permanently left him behind and continued to live alone, regretting the little time she had shared with this self-centered, thoughtless, and selfish being.⁽²⁾

The sudden death of Emma on the 27th.november 1912 with whom Hardy had long been estranged threw him into a complete disarray. After Emma's death, the great husband didn't remain alone. He was taken care of by his niece. This lady was a shy charming woman with some literally aspirations who had published a few books about children and also written poetry. In 1914, Hardy married a very

beautiful, distinguished woman who is almost forty years younger than him. Sadly, his second marriage proved to be disappointing which led to separate from each other.⁽³⁾

Hardy began to publish his first volume of poetry in in 1898,a collection of poems written over thirty years, among them, two poems which are considered the finest and strangest celebrations of the dead wife Emma. These two poems are "The Voice" and "After A Journey."⁽¹⁾

The first was written by Hardy in remembrance of his late Emma. His sincere regret for how their relationship had evolved in the following years is evident in the poem. Because of how he treated her, his remorse haunts him so much. The poem is composed of four stanzas that eloquently convey the feelings of regret, sorrow, and remorse.⁽²⁾

The "Voice" offers an air of pessimism. In it, the speaker is almost haunted by the thoughts of his romantic love looking for him or her, but no longer the same person she was before.

The poem also seems to be about the speaker's feelings of pain and overwhelming nostalgia that he feels regarding the loss of his romantic beloved. ⁽⁶⁾

The first stanza begins with the simple, but powerful phrase, "Woman much missed", how you call to me.' Here, the speaker remembers his wife, Emma, the young, delicate lady with whom he had spent lovely, beautiful moments. He imagines that she is returning to him as he repeats the words : "How you call to me," and states that "she is much missed", indicating his need to see and meet her .The regret is in full sense which might be due to the speaker's irresponsible tendencies towards his Emma whom he married some forty years ago. Again the word, " missed" conveys a specific situation; it means that he once loved at the prime of her youth and beauty and after he has left her, he began to visualize her as his conscience has pricked him because he treated her badly and severely. He can't stop thinking about her whenever he remembers Emma. ⁽⁷⁾ She was really sincere to him all the way through and he feels this passion, but he never admits it. This is the first stanza.

In the second stanza, the speaker goes deep into the past shedding some lights on the beautiful time when he was happy with her: ⁽⁶⁾

"Can it be you that I hear, let me view you then;
Standing as when I drew near the town;
Where you would wait for me, yes, as I knew you then;
Even to the original air blue gown"

The lines above shed some lights on the way he looks at Emma. Again the lines show his longing for the woman once he had loved, but when he states the phrase, "Let me view you", the reader realizes that he only wants to see her initial beauty. ⁽²⁾

He progresses to day dream as he says:

“Standing as when I drew nearer to the town where you would wait for me/ as I knew you then yearning for his submissive youthful love”. All these points above demonstrate that he loves Emma in a shallow levels. ⁽⁴⁾

The third stanza reflects the romantic atmosphere that gathers them together.

"Or it's only the breeze in its restlessness;

Travelling across the wet meadows to me hear"

Here, the man reveals and shows his feelings purely and sensitively. It is the happiness and precious love that has seen lost. He has no specific thoughts about her in his mind. The persona just recalls the events of his passed days with Emma. ⁽¹⁾

The line, “Or it is only the breeze in its listlessness” reflects the poet's doubts about Emma's presence, but he stealthily hopes that it is her wandering freely like a gentle breeze ignoring him by all means. “The wet meadows” might represent his submissive feelings towards her and the word “wet” might stand for his tears. ⁽⁵⁾

Compared to the first three stanzas, the final one is substantially shorter. The speaker is attempting to restore order in his life here. He must come to terms with life's inevitable course. The speaker in this instance feels as though the world is ending because the word "Faltering forward" implies something, and the line "leaves around me Faltering" communicates a sense of mortality and, ultimately, profound melancholy.

The line, “Wind oozing thin through the thorn from onwards”, might refer to the spirit of the lover coming from the skies, maybe paradise where she has been left there forever.

However, the last line of this stanza reveals a sense of loneliness as if it were the last time he will ever feel her delicate spirit.⁽⁷⁾

In brief, this stanza reflects Hardy's mood and decision that he must ignore Emma forever . Now Emma's voice is no more than an imaginary echo that always erecks his ears from time to time.⁽⁵⁾

For Hardy, and particularly in this poem, feels guilty of not taking care of the woman who has devoted all her youth and life for a semi-man who doesn't deserve her at all, especially when she was sick and she was in a terrible need of him. He was somewhat lost and his sorrows had left him with memories that appear to play great influence on his mind.

"After a journey," the second poem, has four stanzas. The journey in question is a voyage over time and space, as well as a voyage into the poet's mind. Here is a synopsis of the poem along with the writing process. The author and poet Thomas Hardy (1840–1928)'s wife, Emma Hardy (née Gifford), passed away at the age of 72 on November 27, 1912, at their Dorchester, Dorset, house, Max Gate. Her impacted gallstones, which were determined to be the cause of her death, had been the source of her illness for some time and her periods of excruciating pain.⁽⁵⁾

But, the Hardys had been experiencing significant strain in their marriage for a number of years before to this incident. Emma had her own chambers in the attic, and while they never divorced, they were leading essentially different lives in the same home. Thomas was primarily at blame because he had given in to the allure of celebrity and felt ashamed of the

simple, unremarkable woman who did not belong in the world he was living in. He was delighted by the attentions of other ladies, some of whom he flattered to a greater or lesser extent, and he liked to attend events and receptions alone.⁽³⁾

The free-thinking novelist and his far more conventionally minded wife had different ideologies; she had, for instance, been taken aback by Hardy's seeming attacks on marriage and religion in his last book, *Jude the Obscure* (1895). When it came to her last illness, Hardy's actions had been, at best, apathetic and, at worst, blatantly heartless. He even refrained from visiting her on the day of her death, even after learning that she was in grave condition.⁽¹⁾

But Hardy was shocked to learn how horrible of a husband he had been to her for a period of years, which made her death all the more shocking. This was verified when he discovered her diaries, where she had written negative things about him.⁽²⁾

Many focuses on themes of regret and reconciliation. 'After a Journey' tells of a speaker's semi- successful attempts to catch and interview the ghost of his dead beloved.

The speaker of the poem introduces himself as the ghost and says he has come to interview the listener. Despite the fact that she lacks a voice, he is nevertheless able to interact with her. He details the amount of work required to locate the ghost in the first stanza. She takes him to different places all the time. He is reminded of his current loneliness by several of these. When they do reunite, it will be in one or more of the locations where they shared moments together during her lifetime. The speaker is driven to tears by the noises and sights that are so familiar. The evenings and nights he gets to spend with her brighten his entire life. He doesn't mind that she needs to leave when the sun rises. He thinks she can transport him back to the

identical locations. They are not required to spend the remainder of their time apart. They might have fleeting glimpses that take them back in time.⁽⁶⁾

The speaker has a similar effect from his efforts. As he searches for the ghost, the speaker grows "lonely, lost." The "unseen waters" are mentioned by him. These are the words and ideas that the water speaks as though it is speaking to itself. He has a new perspective on the substance of the world.⁽⁷⁾

Hardy restates his statement that he has no idea where "you," the ghost, will appear next. He perceives this person—later identified as a woman—as being present everywhere. Whenever he turns to face her, he always sees her with her "not-colored hair" and "gray eyes." She appears and disappears without notice.⁽⁵⁾

The speaker continues, saying that he had once more "entered" the ghost's "olden haunts." When the ghost was living, she visited these locations. As said in the first stanza, he visits various locations in an attempt to find her and have a conversation with her. This endeavor has required a great deal of time and work.

During his "interview," the speaker poses questions to the ghost at various points in the poem. "What has [she] now found to say of [their] past?" is what he wants to know. The speaker wants to get some clarification on what transpired between them. He wants their relationship to come to an end. He speculates that the "dark space" the spirit resides in may have the answers. He thinks that their separation was compelled by time. Their connection was similar to "Summer" at initially. Everything was very pleasant. When fall arrived, everything was different.⁽¹⁾

The speaker informs the ghost in the third stanza that he is aware of what she is doing at this moment. He is being "led" by her to the locations they "haunted...together." In the lovely locations they used to know, they will be able to briefly reunite. Among them are the "cave just under, with a voice so hollow" and the "waterfall." This is yet another allusion to a section of the environment possessing speech. The speaker finds so much meaning in everything that it feels as though the world is speaking directly to him. The speaker receives an offer from the cave to return to that period of time, "forty years ago," when the ghost woman was "all aglow." The speaker is able to briefly ease them, saying that these were better days.⁽²⁾

In the last stanza, the speaker looks back in time when the day was fair.

The persona uses the word "woman" to describe his clear love; it is a materialistic word which pushes the reader to feel that the poet doesn't truly love his wife at all.⁽⁴⁾ This also shows that the speaker longs for the past and he implies that this elderly woman wasn't the one he fell in love with at first;

"Ignorant of what there is flitting here to see;
The waked birds preen and the seals flop lazily;
Soon you will have, Dear, to vanish from me;
For the stars close their shutters and the dawn whitens
hazily;

Trust me, I mind not, though Life lours;
The bringing me here; nay, bring me here again!
I am just the same as when;
Our days were a joy, and our paths through flowers"

The lines above shed some light on the way he looks at Emma. The lines show his longing for her, but when he states the phrase: "let me view you" the reader realizes that he only

wants to see her initial beauty ⁽¹⁾. The last stanza, reflects the romantic atmosphere that gather them together:

Or “it is only the breeze in its listlessness.”

Again the poet reveals and shows his striking feeling purely: It's the happiness and the precious love that has been lost. He has no clear thought in his mind. The speaker has just recalled the events of his passing days with Emma. The speaker utilizes the word "dissolve" and the phrase “heard no more again” to describe the lovely breeze which he thinks is his love's spirit and shows that the young lady might be dead. ⁽⁶⁾

The last line of this stanza “Our days were a joy, and our paths through flowers” reveals a sense of loneliness as if it were the last time he will ever hear her voice, however, reflects Hardy's mood and decision he must forget Emma forever. At any rate, Hardy has composed this poem as he feels guilty of not taking care of his romantic wife when she was sick as she is in real need of him. He is somewhat lost and his sorrow had left him with memories that to play great influence on his mind. ⁽³⁾

To sum up, it has become clear that both Hardy and Emma have loved each other for a period of time, but it was a temporary one. In other words, it was a destructive love for both. As for Hardy it appears to be so sad. The title of the first poem , "The Voice" can be interpreted as calling Hardy to his death. The man has no ambition and aspiration: he should die in a bucket of water because of mistreating the wronged lady who didn't deserve what had happened to her. She was an innocent creature who opened here heart for the man who didn't care about her. She has become the prey and her husband is the predator⁽⁴⁾. The man in his real conscience tried to recall his young promising love he had enjoyed and tasted. This love had been given by Emma freely, whereas Hardy exactly felt that he

had not given Emma what she really wishes and aspires and therefore, he tends to be melancholic and in his disposition as he had wronged her forever. Anyhow, The man seems to be selfish and his selfishness pricks and awakes the gloomy sides of his conscience. For Emma, she has a heart of crystal tinged with the passion of roses, whereas her husband is having a heart of stone colored with lust and selfishness.⁽⁷⁾

References

1. Abrams M.H.Ed. *English novelists and Poets*. Modern Essays in Criticism. London:O.U.P. London.1960.
2. Bateson. F.W. *Selected Poems of Hardy*.London Heinemann.1957.
3. Beer John. Thomas Hardy. *Hardy's Humanism*. New York. Manchester University Press.1968.
4. Bently .G. E. Hardy: *The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.1975.
5. Bronowski G. B. Hardy: *A Selection of Poems* and London: Penguin Books,1958.
6. T. S.Eliot. *The Sacred Wood*.London:Methven.1920.
7. Jardner. *Literature in Perspective: Thomas Hardy*.London.Montage House,1968.