

# Compare 4 of thomas hardy's poems



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In this essay I will compare *The Going*, *Beeny Cliff*, *The Voice* and *Your Last Drive* by Thomas Hardy. I will discuss the ways in which he presents an image of his late wife Emma.

*The Going*, like most of his poems about Emma, is written in the first person. Hardy is obviously speaking for himself. It is in a monologue form, addressing Emma asking question, that only she could answer. Similarly to this, in *The Voice*, it is almost as if Hardy is trying to communicate with Emma.

This poem, as with *The Going*, is also in the first person and Hardy imagines that Emma is talking to him, telling him that she is not the aged woman she had become through their marriage, but the woman she was when their "day was fair". Again, *Your Last Drive* is addressed to Emma. Within this poem, it appears that Hardy is still quite shocked at the death of his wife and is finding the experience quite surreal. For example, "all undiscerned - To be in a week the face of the dead". This poem tells of his wife's last escapade, and how unexpected her death was. One linguistic device Hardy uses in this poem, is that he shows both her and his points of view.

He juxtaposes the AB rhyme scheme with the sad tone of the poem. This creates a connection with the reader, and makes them empathise with him. *Beeny Cliff* tells the reader of a place where Hardy and Emma used to holiday. The seaside setting has connotations of romance, tranquillity and solitude. The poem also appears to show Hardy sees Emma as somehow connected with the sea.

" O the opal and the sapphire of that wandering western sea" While the words opal and sapphire describe azure colours and therefore distinctly represent the sea, they are also precious jewels and therefore this represents his regard of Emma. In *The Going*, Hardy refers to previous years when Emma's beauty attracted him. He then tells us of how he wonders why, in later years; they spoke very little to each other, not even of what appears to have been a joyful youth together. He ponders whether revisiting a place they went to during youth, " *Beeny Crest*", could perhaps have rekindled their love. It could be said that *The Going* is not a poem expressing grief over the death of his wife, but self-pity over the fact that he has been left alone.

He questions his wife, for example, " Why do you make me leave the house" an " Why did you give no hint that night", which seems almost as if he is blaming her. He implies that she did not forewarn him of her death, but left him " indifferent quite". He comments on how, as the day emerged, he was unaware of what would happen to her. He then asks her, why she makes him go outside, as, just for a moment he senses she is there. However he sees only " yawning blankness". Like *The Going*, *The Voice* also contains this accusational tone, the repetition of " you" seems reproachful.

Contrasting to this, *Beeny Cliff* presents Hardy as miserable and grief-stricken at the death of Emma, as he reflects on her life and the time they spent away together. " The woman now is elsewhere...

and will laugh there nevermore". *Your Last Drive* tells of how Hardy's wife went on a journey shortly before she died. There is an incessant sense of

regret running through this poem. I think that the ABABCC rhyme scheme reflects Hardy's state of mind.

ABAB represents two things intertwined, i. e. he and Emma whereas the CC is just one thing alone, i. e. him without her. Likewise, the structure of The Voice represents his psyche also.

It is made up of 4 stanzas, the first 3 of which have a lively anapaestic metre. These contrast with the final stanza, which has a less fluent rhythm, making it seem more monotonous and lifeless. I think this is because he is remembering how much he loved her and how happy she made him, but then he also has to accept that she is gone. Hardy's mind at this time seems disorderly.

His poems written in this period contain mixed tones, themes and emotions. For example, Your Last Drive shows both resentment and grief. "love, praise, indifference, blame". His emotions here are mixed and raw. This is the only poem of the four I have selected, that allow us to empathise with Hardy.

It shows us reason for his feelings, and the complete shock to him of what happened. "Nor have read the writing upon your face, 'I go hence soon to my resting-place;" Your Last Drive begins on a low note, the first stanza is full of words with negative connotations, "undiscerned", "dead", "never". This gives the reader an idea of what the poem is about and how cheerless it is. Similarly, The Going starts off with the same dismal tone. However, in The Going, Hardy seems a bit less reluctant to accept what has happened "Where I could not follow.

.. To gain one glimpse of you ever anon!" Contrasting to this, *The Voice* begins brightly, with Hardy's hope that Emma is contacting him. But as the poem ends, he realises that the "voice" is imaginary.

The vigorous sound at the start of the poem, expresses Hardy's hope and anticipation at the belief he can hear/feel her. It then appears to be too much for Hardy. This is shown in the third stanza, where "listlessness" rhymes with "existlessness" (he had to coin a word), and yet again, is the repeated phrase "no more again" in the last line. Finally, *Beeny Cliff*, like *The Voice*, has a positive tone.

Hardy is reflecting on his and Emma's shared youth and obviously has reason to be happy. The alliteration in the lines "flapping free" and "loyally loved", for example, emphasize his pleasure at reminiscing and have positive connotations.