

Compare and contrast a selection of thomas hardy's poetry essay

[Profession](#), [Poet](#)



Thomas Hardy was a profound poet and novelist of his time, being influenced by writers such as William Wordsworth. He was born in 1840 on the Egdon Heath in Dorset. His interest in Latin poets was influenced by his Mother, who provided for his education. He began reading, more intensely, studying French and Latin, as well as other work. When he was 22, he travelled to London, visiting art galleries, attending evening classes for French at King's college, attending operas and reading works of Charles Darwin, John Stuart Mills and Herbert Spencer, who all influenced his work.

This is where Hardy, became influenced by his surroundings, and well known writers, so he began writing poetry in earnest. In 1865 Hardy published his first article, ' How I built myself a house'. In 1870 Hardy was sent to plan a church restoration at St. Juliot in Cornwall. There he met Emma Gifford, sister-in-law of the vicar of St. Juliot. She encouraged him in his writing, and they were married in 1874. Many of his novels, and poems reflect his relationship and love for Emma. Emma Hardy died in November 1912, and was buried in Stinsford churchyard.

Thomas was stricken with guilt and remorse, but the result was some of his best poetry, expressing his feelings for his wife of 38 years. All was not gloom, however, in 1914 Hardy remarried, to Florence Dugdale, his secretary since 1912. Thomas Hardy died on January 11, 1928 at his house of Max Gate in Dorchester. I have read a selection of Hardy's poems including ' The Voice', ' The Visitor', and ' At Castle Boterel'. I will be comparing ' Domicilium', ' The Going of the Battery', and ' The Haunter' for this

assignment. The first poem I am going to analyse is 'Domicilium', meaning home.

This poem, is very descriptive, giving us the rich images of Hardy's childhood home. Throughout the poem, we enter Hardy's thoughts on his garden, and beyond. Nature is an element brought out often in this century, through poetry. He was thirteen when he wrote this poem, and we can see throughout the poem, Hardy's natural qualities for writing, for someone so young. The poem opens, setting the image of the surroundings around the garden, and he gives many references to trees, 'High beeches, bending, hang a veil of boughs'. He uses run-on-lines to emphasize his continuing thoughts.

He uses personification, with the use of parenthesis to give the trees life '(if we may fancy a wish of trees' and plants)'. The opening of the poem, is very beautiful and tranquil, and creates the image of the wild, open, and free garden, which reflects his own free spirit. We can sense from the first stanza, that Hardy loved nature, in its natural pure state. As the poem moves on into the second stanza, Hardy's love for flowers, and the vast knowledge of them is shown, 'Red Roses, lilacs, varieagated boxes are there in plenty, and such hardy flowers'.

He begins to describe the life beyond the controlled garden, into the wild and remote land beyond, '.. farther still a field; then cottages and last the distant hills and skys'. Hardy portrays that wild flowers have their own significant beauty. People were very much isolated, and through his rich imagery

creates the impression that people were often much closer to the land, than they were to people. As we are introduced to stanza three, the tone changes, as does the scene, as a human element is brought into the poem with his ‘.. father’s mother, who is now blest with the blest, would take me out to walk. He uses poetic language to make the poem flow here with a euphemism for death, which gives the poem different types of language, and texture to the poem.

Poets usually wrote poems, thinking they would be spoken aloud to audiences, so they found different ways of saying things, to create a more interesting poem to read, and hear. The land beyond the cottage, when his grandmother first settled there was ‘ O’er grown with bramble bushes, firze and thorn: that road a narrow path shut in by ferns, which almost trees, obscrued the passer-by.

The setting is such a contrast to how the land is now. Hardy gives us the feeling of change, as well as people growing, he reminds us that the land gradually grows with us too. This stanza shows us Hardy’s wonder and awe of the nature growing around him. The fifth and final stanza, opens with the continuous speech of his grandmother’s garden fifty years go, when she first settled there, ‘ Our house stood quite alone’, shows us the personal thoughts and ideas that went into the poem, and how the clear memory for him was a happy one to look back on. ... those tall firs and beechs were not planted’, is probably difficult to imagine, that the tree seed was ‘... dropped by some bird a hundred years ago. ‘

His grandmother's memories are enriched with fondness of pleasant days gone by. '... nightly bats would fly about our bedrooms,' I think, is exaggerated on the grandmother's part. He gives us the images of how 'wild it was when first we settled here'. It is a happy, tranquil poem, with rich images of Hardy's thoughts, and his Grandmother's memories.

It is a happy memory for him, and shows the strong family bonds he had, and the happy childhood spent at his 'Domicilium'. The next poem I have decided to analyse by Thomas Hardy is 'The Going of the Battery', which is an evident contrast from the happy tranquil tone of 'The Domicilium'. 'The Going of the Battery' is a song-like poem, with elements of sadness, and loss, as the poem examines, from the soldiers wives, and loved ones, being left behind as they go off to war. The thought of whether they will ever come back, ever see them again, is always there, and cannot be taken away.

Hardy's concern in this poem is not really with war, but more with the effect on the wives of the departure of their men. The poem is written in the first person as if spoken by the wife of a soldier. This is evidence, of Hardy trying to see the situation through the eyes of the women so deeply affected by the leaving of the men. It is a contrast to 'The Domicilium', as this was from the point of view of Hardy himself. The poem is written in blank verse, which is another contrast to 'Domicilium'. Each stanza is written in quatrains, and there is a definite rhyme scheme present.

The rhythm in the first and third line of each stanza, and the frequent alliteration, 'through mirk and through mire', 'great guns were gleaming',

echo the brisk marching pace of the soldiers, and the wives walking slowly behind them, trying to make each second count. The poem opens, giving us the images of what is about to happen ‘.. leave alone losing them, now in far battle, beyond the South sea!.. ‘ and we are given an idea on how the wives are feeling at this point. The opening of this poem, is a contrast to ‘ Domicilium’, which opened with descriptions of Hardy’s garden, and the nature growing around him, ‘... ound the back and sides high beeches, bending, hail a veil of boughs... ‘, all of which are tranquil, happy thoughts.

The poem continues, in the second stanza, giving images of the setting around them, ‘ Rain came down drenchingly; but we unblenchingly.. ‘ The gloomy mood of the women as they trudge along is contrasted with the enthusiasm and eagerness of their men ‘ stepping steadily only too readily’, almost as if the men do not realize that the swifter their pace, the sooner will come the parting from their wives. This fact does not apparently cross the soldiers’ minds, or if it does, they are not concerned about it.

Hardy uses interesting language, giving the audience a better image of what is happening, and how these women must feel. In the third stanza, we are given the images of the artillery, going to be used in battle. From reading this, the field guns, draped in tarpaulins, resemble monstrous animals, ‘ living things seeming there’. This is a comparison with ‘ Domicilium’, as the plants and flowers were brought to life through the images and thoughts of Hardy. Hardy uses personification, giving the artillery human features, ‘ Upmouthed’, ‘ Throats’, which adds to the idea of the machinery becoming

alive in battle, however ‘.. lank of sound, but prophetic to sight’, at the present time, as they wait for the overdue goodbye.

Its as if we can see that they will, soon enough, be heard. The Rhyme scheme appears again as we enter the fourth stanza, ‘ Gas glimmers drearily, blearily, eerily’. The gas-light, sheds faint and eerie light on the faces of the wives, ‘ pale’ both because of the light, and because they are fearful and stricken with heartache as they wait ‘ for one last kiss’. Their one last quest, to be brave and honourable but to not be heros. Heros will mean nothing to the wives, as all they want is their husbands to beside them again, to share another kiss.

We see a change of tone in stanza five, as a negative side is brought into the poem, as the husbands ‘... moved under the arch all we loved’. The audience feels empathy and sorrow for the wive as they leave them behind, maybe not for long, maybe forever. Now they can do nothing, and we can see the strong image of them standing there alone, not effected by the rain and gloom, by his language used in this stanza. This is similar to ‘ Domicilium’, as we have strong images here also, from the language Hardy uses. He was a profound writer, and this is obvious in these two poems I have studied, as well as the others.

The women are now alone, and this is a comparison to ‘ Domicilium’, when ‘.. Our house stood quite alone’. When Hardy’s grandmother grew up, we find out how it was very much different then. Hardy is also quite lonely in the poem of ‘ Domicilium also, recounting memories of his grandmother, who is

now 'blest with the blest'. Hardy experienced loss, and this is similar to 'The Going of the Battery', as many of these wives will too experience a loss of a loved one. As they retrace their steps, slowly and now alone, the women pray for the safety of their men, the last hope they now have.

Many people in times of sorrow and risk of death turn to God in their times of need, as if this is the last request they can now make. What everyone was thinking in stanza five, is spoken in stanza six, and it opens as one of the women despairingly speaks her fear that the men will never return, but the wife speaking contradicts this fear and asserts that God fate will guard the ways of the men and bring them home safely sooner or later, 'Some hand will guard their ways, bear them through safely, in brief time or long'.

The first and last stanzas of this poem make it clear that the wife speaking, is anxious about the fate of the men. She asserts her hope that they will be safe, almost as if saying they would not would affect what would happen. She must realize that soldiers are, in fact, often killed or wounded in battle. The seventh and final stanza, brings back the fear of them not coming home, 'voices haunting us, daunting us, taunting us'. In the night, 'when life beats are low', the women are in fear of their own voices echoing.

Their own imaginations or malicious spirits, give them no hope of what is to come in the near future. The questions unanswered, are they alive or are they dead? , plays on their mind every moment. The wife in this poem, and the others, however, try to be brave and to wait in trust in the 'some Hand' protecting the men, to see what will happen in the end. Only time will tell,

but we sense in this stanza, that they think of the worst. The poem only refers to war, in the way it represents danger to the men and possible heartbreak to their wives.

War is only present by the contrasting attitudes of the men and their wives, that war is exciting to soldiers but distressing to their wives, who try to come to terms with this distress, realizing that marrying soldiers necessarily involves risks, sorrow and mourning, feelings that they now have as voices haunt them ' in the night-time when life beats are low'. The poem throughout is a descriptive account, of a wife losing her husbands presence in their lives, and maybe forever, as they risk their own lives '.. in far battle, beyond the South Sea! .

It is a contrast to ' The Domicilium', as this was a tranquil, feel good poem, with images of Hardy's garden, and the thoughts of nature and his late Grandmother. The comparison with the loss of losing his Grandmother, mirrors that of the wives losing their husbands. However, Hardy looked back on his Grandmother, with happy and memories that have stayed with him. This will not be the case for the wives, if they in the end do lose their husbands. Being a widow, would generally in that century, mean that you would be alone forever, left to mourn.

The poems also, both have a different structure. It shows the vast ability Hardy had, being able to use the different skills of writing. It is impressive to be able to put yourself in the mind of someone else like in ' The Going of the Battery' like Hardy did, showing that he often thought of how people would

feel, and have empathy for them, just like we do when we read this poem. In 'Domicilium', however, it is from the prospective of Hardy. From both of the poems, you can see how much Hardy has changed in his style writing since 'Domicilium', and how he has progressed immensely upwards.

The final poem I analysed in depth was 'The Haunter', a moving poem, written by Hardy, from the perspective of his late wife Emma Hardy. When Emma died, Hardy felt guilt and sorrow, as he felt he never really truly appreciated her while she was on earth. He writes from Emma's perspective, as she lets him know that she is still there in spirit, and did feel neglected while she was alive. However, she lets him know that she always be there, by his side for eternity. This is how Hardy, hopes Emma feels, and when she died, he still felt that her presence was near. This is a comparison with 'The Going of the Battery'.

The wives in this poem, felt neglected and lost, as their husbands left for war. It was difficult for them to cope with this, and they too, just like Hardy, will experience loss, like he did with Emma. However, the wives are still able to communicate with their husbands, but in 'The Going of the Battery', they both yearn for a communication with each other. Hardy is trying to reassure himself that Emma forgives him and continues to love him. Though Hardy does not know it, Emma's phantom follows him in his movements each day, hearing, but unable to respond to, the remarks he addresses to her, in his grief.

It appears that they are haunting each other, Emma is physically haunting him, but Hardy dotes on memories and retraces their footsteps that they once walked before. One of the points that I feel Hardy is trying to propose is that he knows that she is there but that is not enough, he needs her physically, to comfort him and make him feel secure. The poem opens with us finding out that Hardy ‘.. does not think that I haunt him here nightly’. The first, second, and fifth stanza, are all of the same length, however, the third and fourth are in quatrains, which shows us how the tone changes here.

The rather intricate rhyme scheme of ‘ The Haunter’ adds to the haunting effect of the poem. As it is spoken by a female and with a complicated phrase structure, ‘ The Haunter’ manages to convey a scarier atmosphere simply because of the its narrator, his late wife Emma Hardy. She speaks to the reader, acknowledging that she is a spirit, speaking of herself as a ‘ haunter’ and a ‘ faithful phantom. ‘ She ‘ hovers’ and is invisible, and still very much close to Hardy, like his shadow, ‘ Hover and hover a few feet from him Just as I used to’. This is a comparison with ‘ The Going of the Battery’.

The wives though able to communicate with their husbands while away, they cannot be with them physically, and they yearn to know if they ever will have this physical feeling again with them. If they do not, they will be like Emma and Hardy, alone and lost in the world between the world of life and death. We learn of the communication she wishes to have with Hardy, just to let him know that she loves him dearly, ‘... cannot answer the words he lifts me... ‘ As we move on into the second stanza, the audience is given an insight into how Emma and Hardy’s relationship was, while she was alive.

It seemed that she was neglected, and left behind, as Hardy continued with his work. She wished to go with him then also, but never seemed to be asked. Now that she has gone, Hardy is guilty of the times that he neglected her, and now wishes for her presence beside him, ' When I could answer he did not say them: when I could let him know, how I wished to join in his journeys... '. This is a contrast to ' Domicilium' as Hardy, lost his grandmother, however, did not yearn to talk to her like he does now with Emma.

He feels guilty about the way he treated her, however, in ' Domcilium' he recounts his happy memories of her and his Grandmother, and seems to look back on them with a smile, '.. i once inquired of her how looked the spot when first she settled here. The answer I remember... '. It seems that Hardy has dealt with loss in his life, and now it has effected him deeply. As the third stanza opens, we sense the change in tone. Hardy brings us into the world of him and his ' Faithful Phantom' Emma, where they now travel to, back to where they used to go.

This is a comparison with the ' Domicilium' of the past setting of the garden and beyond. In both poems, we can sense the change, as time moves on, and the nature grows with us to. This is more evident in ' Domicilium' but the change is more evident in ' The Haunter'. As now Hardy travels to these places alone, and not with Emma the person, but with Emma ' The Haunter'. Hardy's deep love of nature appears in his choice of the places where he walks, the haunts of where him and Emma used to go to, '.. where only

dreamers know where the shy hares print long paces, where the night rooks go'.

In all these places Emma's ghost keeps as close as ' his shade can do'. This is a comparison with ' The Going of the Battery'. Even though the husbands are now separate from their wives, ' in far battle, beyond the South Sea! ', the husbands are close to the wives in their minds and souls every moment. The wives always have their husbands on their mind, of whether they are alive, whether they are dead. They also haunt the husbands, not physically, or in spirit, but in mind, as they are constantly praying that their husbands will return one day.

Into the next quatrain fourth stanza, we learn more of where they both travel too now. It is almost as if Hardy yearns for a sense of knowledge if she is ok. He travels to these places, trying to bring himself closer to Emma, as if he is lost, trying to find her, however, he never truly will, until they meet again in another life. This is similar to ' The Going of the Battery', as the wives now feel lost and alone, and like Hardy may not find their love again, until another time.

As the poem leads into the fifth and final stanza, the tone changes as the haunts are brought to a close, and we are given commands from Emma to ' O tell him! Quickly make him know If he but sigh since my loss befell him Straight to his side I go... ' She attends to his merest sigh, doing ' all that love can do' in the hope that ' his path' may be worth the attention she yearns for, and in the hope that she may bring peace to Hardy's life. In ' The

Going of the Battery' it is in past tense, however, ' The Haunter' is in present.

It is occurring while it is being read, and the audience can imagine this happening, as if we are being haunted also, not just reading the poem. It is an on going occurrence, and probably will occur again and again, till Hardy is reunited with Emma again. This is especially emphasized in the last stanza, where Emma is practically begging for assistance in her efforts at her interaction with Hardy, ' Tell him a faithful one is doin all that love can do... ' It is as if Emma accepts that Hardy has moved on to other things, but realises also that his thoughts are always with her, '... till that his path may be worth pursueing and to bring peace thereto'.

The theme of the missed opportunities gone by, is evident throughout this poem, which is a comparison with the wives in ' The Going of the Battery', as they too could have had memories that stayed with them, but the time has now gone, and they do not know whether they will get that opportunity again. They yearn for other good memories with their husbands, a good memory like in ' Domicilium', where Hardy recounts one of the many happy memories he had with his Grandmother.

The rhyme scheme present in ' The Haunter' is mirrored with the slow and closeness of a spirit, unlike ' The Going of the Battery', in which the liveliness of the rhyme scheme, almost like a song, contrasts with the sombre, self-pitying, and sorrowful mood of the wife, who is the voice of the poem. In ' The Haunter', there is a sense of ' could have been' and it is almost a lost

cause now. We can sense how close Emma and Hardy was, when she was alive, and how the closeness still lives on, even when she is gone.

Hardy used a feeling which every reader can empathize with, this longing to change the past, to add life and depth to his character, and make them come alive, in his mind, and now in ours. Throughout all of the poems, we can identify with all of them, being able to put our selves in their position, more so in ' The Going of the Battery', and ' The Haunter'. These two poems are voiced by characters who exhibit feelings of loss and not knowing of the future, because of their inability to communicate. The audience feels sympathy and can empathize with the voices in both of this poems, and we yearn to help them in some way.

Hardy has the ability to do this, through the language he uses, and the way he makes us feel involved in the situation, just by reading it. While the idea of Emma as the faithful phantom is of course, fictional, it is strikingly touching to the audience, and we want to help her in the commands she gives us, ' O tell him! Quickly make him know... ', but we are not apart of it, just as much as Hardy is also. He has no way of letting her know how he wishes to turn the time, and make things right, however, she forgives him for these times, because she loves him.

This is how Hardy hope she feels, and needs to believe this to be able to go on. This is similar to ' The Going of the Battery', as the wives have to have hope and courage, that one day they will see their husbands again, and be reunited ' for one kiss'. ' Domicilium' is different from both these poems, as it

is from Hardy's point of view. However comparisons lie between them all, as the closeness between his garden, is mirrored with that of his relationship with Emma. 'The Going of the Battery' and 'The Haunter', is from someone else's point of view, and is full of emotion and feelings of the voices behind the language.

His language and imagery is very powerful, that we can sometimes imagine just what he is imagining in his own mind, when he wrote the poems. This is shown very well, in the 'Domicilium' of the images of his garden and beyond. The three poems that I have analysed are excellent examples of his ability to show the universal emotions of loss, missed opportunities, and love, to create works which are both powerful and disturbing to the audience. In 'Domicilium' one of his earlier works, is more of an account of his garden and the fields beyond it.

Since this poem, when he was thirteen years old, we can see how much he has developed in his works, being able to put himself in the thoughts of someone else and be able to imagine things that are not really there, like Emma's spirit in 'The Haunter'. He brings across the feelings of the human spirit, that while reading them, the audience can relate to and empathize with. He is a profound poet and novelist of his time, and even reading these poems today, the ideas and thoughts he had are still relevant, and this I think is Hardy's main quality in writing, and when reading them they come alive once more.