

## At Castle Boterel.

This poem is written in 1913 after the death of Hardy's wife Emma, when he visited Cornwall very close to St Juliot where Emma lived and where they first met. The poem is a recollection of an incident that took place some 40 yrs before between him and Emma. In the poem he is travelling along a road while he recollects that past.

The general tone of this poem is that of nostalgia and regret. The poet tries to show in the poem that the past is able to survive simultaneously with the present in the form of vivid memory. But the recollection of past memories is always accompanied by pain and the bitterness of separation.

The poem marks therefore a powerful effort on the part of the poet to defy time's ability to erase memory by a constant recall of the past. Still the poet feels guilt and loss. He tries by all means to fix the memory of that cherished moment into eternity and to eternalise his love for Emma but, in the last stanza, as Emma's silhouette shrinks, he faces the stark reality that death has separated him from Emma forever and he feels bitter regret. Love can be said to conquer time in this poem, but that conquest is short-lived because while in the middle stanzas of the poem, Hardy gains more confidence in his memory, the end of the poem brings a fading effect to it. Time is viewed as a destructive force in this poem as it killed their love and then killed the woman too.

The first stanza of the poem opens in the present time with Hardy driving to the junction of a lane and highway in a 'wagonette' with rain. The soaked drizzly weather and the fading visibility creates a sense of desolation and unhappy present. As he looked behind, the present seems to fade and merge into a past moment and he gets a rewarding vision of his wife and himself on the hillside.

In the second stanza, he gets back several years ago on the same road when he and a girl were overtaken by night and the poet draws a direct contrast between the drizzly wet present of the first stanza with the dry season in his past recollection to show how, at that time he was happy. Then the verb 'climb' takes up the present tense to underline again the vividness of his memory which appeared to be tangible at that moment. The memory of Hardy seems full of descriptive details about the alighting from the poney which again underlines its vividness.

In the third stanza Hardy says that what he and Emma did or talked about then was of no importance except that "something that life will not be baulked of" was the only really important thing then the real importance of the occasion and that 'something was that he declared his love to her that day. What this "something" was is not clear but it seems to refer to a declaration of love.

The importance of that moment is emphasized in the 4th stanza. Even if it took only a few minutes, Hardy says that there was no other "time of such quality". The poet here claims that more than time, it is the quality of the moment that counts. He again defies time.

In this 5th stanza Hardy stretches the time-scale to a time before the appearance of humans. he wants to create a sense of permanence in the "Primaeval rocks", a permanence that time will not be able to eradicate. These rocks have born witness to their passage and it will remain engraved in them forever. So the quality of that moment will remain forever too.