

LITA3 Essay 1

Hardy and Shakespeare both write about the parting of those who love each other. However, the partings contrast greatly in that the love of Romeo and Juliet is reciprocated, whilst Marty and Giles were never a couple. This is emphasised by Romeo and Juliet being alive and together on stage and Giles being dead in 'The Woodlanders'. However, the image of death does play an important role in both extracts.

Death is the ultimate reason for the parting of those who love each other and this comes across strongly in the two extracts. It is both the reason Romeo and Juliet must part in extract C, as Romeo has killed a member of Juliet's family, and what will happen to Romeo if he stays. The threat of death is very foreboding in this scene, Juliet says the 'nightingale ... sings on yon pomegranate tree'. The reference to the pomegranate could be an allusion to the myth of Persephone who has to remain in the world of the dead for half the year as a result of eating some pomegranate seeds. In 'The Woodlanders', Marty is visiting the grave of Giles, the man she loved. So again death has an important role. Marty herself appears quite ghost like in this extract. She is a 'motionless figure' and 'a solitary and silent girl stood there in the moonlight'. This further emphasises the theme of death as Marty has almost died with her love, just like Romeo and Juliet at the end of the play.

Both extracts are set at night which highlights the secrecy of the love in each. Romeo describes how the 'more light and light; more dark and dark our woes'. The symbol of light here emphasises that light exposes the truth. This compares to 'A Streetcar Named Desire' when Blanche describes the parting of her and her first husband. She describes how the 'searchlight' went out when he died and from then on there has been no strong beam of light to expose the truth about herself. In fact, she has avoided any light so that she can create a façade of deceit. In comparison, Marty is visiting the grave at night because her love is secret also.

The love in both extracts the love is extremely strong. The closeness of Romeo and Juliet is shown through the conceit of the lark and nightingale symbolising night and day which is used in both their speeches. This compares to 'A Valediction forbidding Mourning' in which John Donne uses the conceit of a compass to show that although the couple are parting, they will always be joined together in some way and where one leans the other leans with them. Furthermore, Romeo and Juliet have almost an equal number of lines in the extract showing the audience their love is balanced.

In 'The Woodlanders', Marty's love is shown to be unwavering. This is shown in the repetition of 'I'll think of 'ee' and the length of time she waits for Grace not to show up, echoed in the long paragraph. Marty's love is almost like a religious love. She seems to worship Giles like he is a saint. She describes him as 'a good man [who] did good things! The use of the exclamative emphasises the importance of Giles to Marty. Furthermore, Marty describes herself as a 'pilgrim' and is said to have 'rejected with indifference the attribute of sex', highlighting that she has remained chaste for Giles, as a nun does for God. Marty worships Giles just as Jed Parry worships Joe Rose in 'Enduring Love'. Jed believes his love of Joe has been sent by God and like Marty his love is 'enduring'. Furthermore, Jed's love began with the death of someone and at the end of the novel he is willing to kill himself for Joe which compares to the death of Romeo and Juliet. This links back to the point that death plays an important role in love and partings.

In conclusion, the parting of lovers and the role of death is an important and timeless theme. Shakespeare was writing about it in Elizabethan times, Hardy wrote about it in the Victorian era and Ian McEwan is writing about it in the 20th and 21st century.