

Candidate 1

QUESTION		
A	<p>Thomas Hardy's 1913 poem 'The Phantom Horsewoman' illustrates the visions of a man who constantly sees a phantom phantom 'ghost-girl-rider'. Over four stanzas, the speaker reveals more of this man's fantasies.</p> <p>In critically assessing Hardy's poem, it is important to consider that of speaker. We are presented with a single-voiced, first person speaker:</p> <p>'Queer are the ways of a man I know'</p> <p>The use of first person in the poem's exposition elicits a narrative that is also directly concerned with the poem's subject, sharing sharing with the reader a curious story about 'a man I know'. However, there is ambiguity surrounding exactly who the speaker is, as he often speaks in a speculative manner about the poem's subject: 'they say he sees an instant thing', 'they might say more'. As a result, this suggests that the man the poem is describing is the talk of the town; a topic of conversation, and one that passes-by</p>	

can project theories onto. However, it is likely that, because the speaker is given access to the inner thoughts and emotions of the subject, he is an omnipotent narrator, with wholeness of seeing.

As well as analysing that of speaker, it is interesting to look at the poem's form, and how that aids our understanding of Hardy's poetry. The poem is constructed by four stanzas, each numbered as a chapter, ~~giving~~ giving the poem a greater sense of narrative, as if each component of the poem is being delivered in chapters to create suspense. Each stanza is nine lines in length — just setting off the formulaic or traditional structure of octets and sestets — and this gives the form curiosity, as if it is specially tailored to fit the man's story. Perhaps the fact that each stanza is nine lines in length is an extension of Hardy's treatment of 'Threes': nine lines in each stanza; three different rhyme schemes in each stanza. Indeed, at the end of each stanza, Hardy deploys the use of a

rhyming couplet which ~~adds to the overall~~ gives the poem a rounded structure and element of endearment, nodding to the romance of Shakespeare's rhyming couplets at the end of sonnets. Perhaps this suggests that the speaker looks upon the subject fondly, and has written the poem to pay homage to him.

In the poem's beginning, in its exposition, we learn much about the poem's focus. Hardy tells us that the subject stands 'in a careworn waze', therefore using ~~the~~ alliteration on the hard 'c' sounds to suggest an element of ~~forcefulness~~ forcefulness, of intensity, suggesting that the man is ill-at-ease, ~~as if~~ as if he has come to the shore to find something, or someone on the horizon. As the first stanza continues, we are given other windows into this man's life:-

' And looks at the sands
And the seawind haze!'

Through sketching out a moment of iambic pentameter over two lines, the rhythms of these lines mimic the sounds of the waves that the man is so intently looking toward. Indeed, the fact that these lines are enjambed suggests a gentle, lulling mood, as if the man has, in this moment, seen something of water perfection. This is exemplified by the anaphora on the word 'and' and the ~~an~~ assonance that stretches out these two lines ~~and~~ to really make them last — as if the man is really favouring this moment. ~~then, as if~~ hardly then water:

'Then turns to go

And what does he see when he gazes so?'

The ~~anaphora~~ chiasm not only mimics the man's physical action of turning away, and breaking this moment of tranquility, but it also holds the reader in suspense, as if we are waiting to hear where he goes, and this as a result builds ~~up~~ tension.

Still, the rhyming couplet unites the sense of ~~the~~ of togetherness and structure that the speaker possesses, making it more objective after moments of harmony and love.

In the second stanza, Hardy ~~uses~~ uses the majority of the lines to build up an impression of what exactly the man is looking at. He refers to this vision as 'an instant thing', suggesting that the sight is so potent that it is instantly there with him:

'A sweet soft scene'

Hardy uses sibilance on this line to suggest the depth of emotional feeling the man is overcome with when seeing such a vision. It also encourages us to empathise with the subject: Hardy goes on to say:

~~Warm, red, and keen,
A phantom of his own figuring!
The word~~

'Warm, real, and keen,

What his 'back years bring —'

The word choice of 'warm' suggests hope, love and comfort that contrasts with 'morrowless heads' to suggest that the warmth of this vision is what provides the man with his own bodily and emotional warmth. The word choice on 'real' further demonstrates the power of this vision, as the man deems it to be a genuine one, something tangible and physical. The stanza ends with the dash holding us in suspense, eagerly awaiting:

'A phantom of his own figuring!

The end stop of this line gives it a finality, a determination, and shows the strength of the man to gaze and dream so powerfully. It does, also, however, let in writing the definite, solid fact that this image — as real and glimmering as it may seem — is imaginary, it is 'a phantom'.

Stanza three provides us with just

how all-encompassing this vision really is:

'NA only there'

Does he see this fight,
But everywhere'

The fact that Hardy takes three lines to tell us of the all-encompassing nature of this means that it is all the more powerful, as 'but everywhere' is set out on its own to draw attention. This theme of omnipotence is continued:

'In his brain — day, night,
As if on the air

It were drawn more bright —
Yea, far from that shore

Does he carry this vision of heretofore:'

The caesura in the fifth line of the third stanza noticeably breaks the line's rhythm and flow, and intends to reinforce just how all-consuming this vision is. The words captured inside the parenthesis are therefore all the more important,

~~through the day~~ showing that this spirit is active at all times in the day.

As the poem draws to a close, we are told of the true beauty of this ~~spirit~~ 'ghost-gin rider'. ~~There~~ Hardy uses alliteration on 'though, toil-tried' to suggest the ~~feared~~ heaviness of the man's actions: at times, how he can sometimes be bogged down by other troubles; but the vision of the spirit consistently saves him:

'Time touches her not,
But she still rides gaily
In his rapt thought
On that shagged-and-shabby
Atlantic gait.'

The use of alliteration throughout these lines, the rhyme of 'shagged and shabby' and the return of iambic pentameter on the fifth and sixth lines of the fourth stanza serve together to mimic the trotting of the ~~gray~~ imaginary horse. Indeed,

the rhythms and sounds of these lines further the Romantic vision of the man, as his love will gallop on forever more. The fact that the iambic pentameter previously indicated waves is important, as now it symbolises the trotting of a horse to suggest that this fantastic vision ~~will~~ 'rides to the rising of the tide'; she gallops on into the sea, where he will find her wherever he needs.

Thomas Hardy's 'The Phantom Horsewoman' therefore gallops on into the sea, and, through various poetic techniques, suggests that the sea and the Horsewoman are at one with each other, in harmony in the subject's mind.