

3C #12: "Convergence of the Twain" by Thomas Hardy

Term: Irony--the expression of one's meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite, typically for humorous or emphatic effect

Example: "In a solitude of the sea/Deep from human vanity,/And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she."

Function:

In "Convergence of the Twain," Thomas Hardy explores the beauty and power of nature against the overconfidence of man. In a poem, with a rhyme scheme of "AAA," Hardy uses the catastrophic historical event of the sinking Titanic to demonstrate the vanity of man which challenges fate, resulting in death--a place where riches are no more. At the beginning, the "unsinkable" ship grows "in stature, grace and hue" where "jewels in joy designed/To ravish the sensuous mind" and mirrors that "glass the opulent (wealthy)." The "Pride of Life that planned her" refers to the vanity that built her--the technology created by man. Yet "in shadowy silent distance" the iceberg awaits. This represents nature's inevitable destiny in every part of life. Suddenly the poet shifts from the ship's former beauty to its present ruins, proving that despite its luxurious essence and wealth she now sits at the bottom of the deep sea. Now the "sea-worm crawls--grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent . . . and dim moon-eyed fishes near/Gaze at the gilded gear." The irony of it all is established in the former, fancy interiors now crawling with the beasts of the ocean where nature, "the sinister mate," collides and kills its victim. Hardy ends with a hyperbolic metaphor which condemns vanity to ruins: "And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres." This "convergence" of the two represents the tragedy of man's overconfidence in vanity which is ultimately surpassed by death (nature).