CHAPTER III

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

Hardy always finds that the quietness of Dorset rhythm of life in countryside helps him to do good work. Here he started writing Far From The Madding Crowd for Cornhill. The novel began to appear in the fresh month of 1874. The story had been so successful that he could at last afford to get married on 17 December 1878. He had gained a position as a vigorous exponent of the pastoral novel, whose characteristic theme was that in these sequestered spots great tragedies can be enacted as we find in the later novels and strong love and passions can be aroused equally as much in the cities and in the busy haunts of man. Far From the Madding Crowd can be put next not to Under the Green Wood Tree because of its poetic title and the natural background. He was often asked by educated people where did Wessex lay. And the press and public were kind enough to join him in the anachronism of imagining a Wessex population living under Queen Victoria- a modern Wessex of railway, penny post, moving and reading
machine, union work houses and labourers who could read and write.

Hardy’s interpretation of human personality is always combined with interpretation of nature. The very beginning of Far From the Madding Crowd, gives the impression of pastoral romance. We are taken out of the city life and Far From the Madding Crowd’s ignoble strife. The outward showy struggle of city life where people act madly and behave passionately is not present here. Hardy seems to support the theory of Wordsworth that rural people should be the subject of poetry and that was why Wordsworthian poetry seems to him so good as a “Cure for despair”.

Along with Bathsheba, the heroine of the novel, there are three male characters in the novel, viz., Gabriel, Boldwood and Troy. It is exactly the character of Gabriel that reminds the readers, the elegy of Thomas Gray Whence the title has been borrowed beautifully by Hardy.

“Far from the madding crowd’s ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stary
Along the cool sequestered way of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of the way.”

Gabriel Oak is the product of nature. Like Mother Nature he remains calm and cool always. His physical description and his special habits bring smile on the lips of the readers; Mr. Oak carries a watch about him and that may be called a small silver clock. In other words it may be called a watch as to shape and intuition and small clock to size. It is several years older than Oak’s grandfather. It has the peculiarity of going either too fast or not at all. The smaller of its hands occasionally slips round on the pivot and thus though the minutes are told with precision, nobody can be certain of the hour they belong to. He has a smiling face-

“When farmer Oak smiled, the corner of his mouth spread till they were within an important distance of his ears, eyes were reduced to chink”

Gabriel and Stephen along with Dick are the creation of Hardy in his young age. Particularly Under the Green Wood Tree and Far From the Madding Crowd begin with love and end with love. The main story of the second novel is the long relationship between Gabriel and Bathsheba. It is note worthy that both of the
protagonists do not have parents to guide them and the result is
totally different in their cases. While Bathsheba who is poor in the
beginning becomes autocratic when she gets money and even in
love relationship, she wants to move freely without caring the
result; she does not have control over her impulses and can go to
any extent to fulfill her pleasures; Gabriel on the other hand is
faithful, loyal and steady type of person. In the rural term he is
quite rich with two hundred sheep but he never loses hold over his
mind and instinct in the situation when he is poor. It can be said
that he is like Gabriel, the prophet and retains a balance between
reality and pleasure. In the first chapter when he sees Bathsheba,
he falls in love with her. But it is a dignified and controlled feeling
in him. He never gives his high feelings of self respect.

“He is merely a skillful farmer; he is also morally
stronger and better than most people”

Near the beginning of the story he says to Bathsheba, rather
flighty girl whom he is in love with, that he will do one thing in his
life – one thing certain, that is, love her and long for her and keep
waiting her till he dies. The fire of feeling burns steadily in his
heart but it does not burn his character. He is like an oak tree, grand cool and helping Bathsheba whenever she needs him but never imposes his love upon her. He waits and waits quietly and patiently in Millionic way,

“They also serve who stands and wait.”

There is a memorable scene between Oak and Bathsheba, when at cold night Oak puts more fuel to the burning fire and goes to sleep without opening the holes that serve as ventilators in the hut. He would have died of suffocation if his faithful dog had not barked to draw Bathsheba’s attention. She opens the door by force and sprinkles the milk upon him as she had no water with her that time, and brings him to senses. He finds himself in her lap. In the state of surprise and confusion he tells her his name and asks her name. She hesitates to speak it. He then asks her to give her hand which she happily does. He is too exited to hold the hand and leaves it quickly touching her fingers. Bathsheba, too for the first time in her life gives her hand to Oak and says-

“There that is long enough, said she, though without putting it away.’ But I suppose you are
thinking you would like to kiss it? You may if you want to”.

Hardy is stirred by what is momentous and moving and picturesque in life by its faces of heightened passion and spiritual illuminations. In consequence he is able to present the higher and pure emotions in a larger measure. Hardy analysis his character as it stood in the scale of public opinion. When his friends and critics were in tantrums, he is considered a bad man, when they are pleased, he is rather a good man; when they are neither, he is a man whose moral colour is kind of pepper and mixture. In his face one may see that many of the hues and curves of youth have tarried on to manhood, there even remain in his remoter crannies some relics of the boy. His height and breath are sufficient to make his presence imposing if they are exhibited with due consideration. But there is a way some men have rural and labour alike for which the mind is more responsible then flesh and snew. It is a way of curtailing their dimensions by their manner of showing them. He has a quality of modesty that seems continually to impress upon him. That makes him unassuming in his walks with a faintly
perceptible bend, yet distinct from a bowing of shoulders. This may be said to be a defect in an individual if he depends for his valuations more upon his appearance then upon his capacity to wear well, which Oak does not.

He has reached the time of life at which young is ceasing to be the prefix of man in speaking of one. He is at the brightest period of masculine growth, for his intellect and emotions are clearly separated. He has passed time during which the influence of youth indiscriminately mingles them in the character of impulse. The heroine Bathsheba stands completely in contrast with him in nature. In the beginning of the book, waggoner of Bathsheba makes a dispute with toll gatekeeper over two pence and the gate keeper does not allow them to pass if they do not give him the money. Oak is shocked to hear the dispute over such a small amount. He steps forward and hands two pence to gatekeeper to let them pass. But Bathsheba does not even try to thank him. When gatekeeper comments upon the beauty of Bathsheba, Oak says that she is not without faults. Piqued by her indifference he tells the gate keeper that her main fault is vanity.
This one word is most important feature of Bathsheba’s character. There are few protagonists of Hardy who think of sexual union in the very beginning with exception of Arabella and Alec.

When Oak observes Bathsheba with her aunt in his own village, like a spiritual gentleman he forms her picture in his mind, without exactly seeing her profile. At that time the financial situation of Bathsheba and her aunt is not good. Their cow has delivered a calf and they have to attend the animal without attendant. One can remember the statement of Hamlet when he says, “Nothing is good or bad but our thinking makes it so.” Hardy in that way highlights the character of Gabriel-

“In making even horizontal and clear inspection we colour and mould according to the wants within us whatever our eyes bring in. Had Gabriel been able from the first to get a distinct view of her Countenance, his estimate of it as very handsome or slightly so would have been as his soul required a vinity at the moment... Having for sometime know the want of a satisfactory form to fill an increasing void within him
his position more over affording the widest scope for his fancy, he painted her a beauty”.

Nature of man is fourfold according to H. C. Duffin. The course and the quality of man’s life are governed by four inward forces or quality. These are Passion, Reason, Emotion, and Instinct. They can be placed in an order of excellence. Passion is an exact word connecting the necessary intensity. It also denotes unreasoning element in the nature of man as it covers, love, religion and poetry. Reason and intellect needs no defining but it can be put at the second place. The emotions are those urging to action. Those prompting of the mind through the flesh that are due to our being a higher kind of animal, while the instincts hunger, sex, the will to live and so many other arise from the fact that we are just animal after all. This valuation of human nature may be taken as the gauge with to measure the character of mankind in life or in literature.

Gabriel is a fine combination of emotion and reason. Bathsheba soon makes appreciable inroads upon the emotional constitution of young farmer Oak. He finds pleasure in waiting for
her and his sentiments are depended without any corresponding effect being produced upon herself. He turns over his taste to black hair, though had sworn by brown ever since he was a boy. Hardy writes about his feeling.

"Love is the possible strength in an actual weakness. Marriage transforms distraction in to be a support... Oak began to see light in this direction and said to himself, ‘I will make her my wife or upon my soul, I shall be good for nothing.’"

Without parents, Gabriel has to talk of his marriage to the aunt of Bathsheba. As gentle man he at first wants to know from her aunt whether she would like to be married with him, and if she has got any other young man hanging about her at all. Her aunt in a casual way tells him that being a beautiful girl and educated as well, she must have several men. Getting this answer Gabriel tells her that he is only an everyday sort of man, and his only chance was in being the first comer. He takes leave and comes out. When Gabriel has gone about two hundred yards, he hears the voice of Bathsheba running to him. The dialogues she has with
Gabriel show her stupid to a great extent and her independent nature also. Here readers observe that she is a lady who is of a dominating nature and one of those early voters of feminism. She says that her aunt is wrong in telling him that she had several men. She has not a single man as her sweetheart. Oak is glad to hear it. She is also a passionate kind of lady whether in anger or in love. Here she tries to talk in a rational way. Oak tells her his future prospects in economical and social terms that he can make her happy, she will have a piano in a year or two. He will practice up the flute. They may have ten pound gigs for market, and nice flowers and birds, cocks and hens he means because they are useful. They will have babies and-

“A home by the fire, whenever you look up, there I shall be you and whenever I look up, there will be you.”

Bathsheba stops him and bids him to be improper. Shockingly she says that she does not want to marry him. She hates to be that man’s property in that way and she does not love him. She puts points of view in her own way and says that he is
better off than she. She has hardly a penny in the world. But she is better educated than he. He is a farmer just beginning and he ought in a common prudence, if he marries at all, to marry a woman with money who would stock a larger farm for her than he has now. She completely refused his pleas to think over again and laughs at him. Gabriel Oak like a man of healthy view and ego as well, says firmly that he will ask her no more. After the departure of Bathsheba, unfortunately he looses his sheep. At first he is shocked but he controls himself. Scarcely for some moments he loses his touch with reality and he never allows his emotion to transforms in to passion. He bears the loss with courage and bravery. He is a man whom misfortune improves rather than reduces. He meditatively looks upon the horizon of things without special regard to his own point of stand point of view in order. It is remarkable to note the sentence he speaks in thankfulness

"Thank God, I am not married; what would she have done in the poverty now coming upon me."  

The position of Gabriel and Bathsheba is reversed and the character of Gabriel is dignified by the reversal while the sting of
money makes Bathsheba more hot headed and passionate lady. One finds something of Gabriel in action at the hiring fair where attention is drawn to his basic quality, his indifference to fate. He comes as a saviour to Bathsheba’s brickyard and he enters Bathsheba’s service as a shepherd. She looks at him all surprised. Gabriel and his cold hearted darlings are face to face. She scarcely knows whether to be amused or to be concerned at his awkwardness. There is a room for little pity, also for a little exaltation: the farmer at his position and later at her own. She is not at all embarrassed as she had almost forgotten Gabriel’s declaration of love. The villagers later on tell Gabriel that Bathsheba came to that village just a few days ago. Her uncle became ill and doctor could not save him and he left the farm for her as he was a bachelor. Here readers come to know about the parents of Bathsheba and her father’s fickle and dominant behaviour. From his behaviour readers may got a clue about the nature of his daughter as well who plays fatally later on with gentle farmer Boldwood. Bathsheba’s mother was beautiful and he was very fond of her. He knew his wife and loved her but his nature
led him astray in a sense that he wished to love somebody else in
spite of knowing the beauty and faithfulness of his wife. He
divorced his wife and liked to live with her as her lover thinking
that she was his sweet heart and he was committing something
wrong. Certainly the seeds of this nature can be seen Bathsheba.
About the same time we have the first sight of farmer Boldwood,
one of Oak’s rivals for the love of Bathsheba. “Unlike Oak he is of
impressive appearance and attracts Bathsheba by his superiority
and his aloofness—very much as Knight scores over Stephen Smith
with Elfride. But where as Knight was a cold intellectual,
Boldwood is a man of overmastering passion.”

Bathsheba, because of her independent nature as we have
seen previously easily accepts a different gender role with dignity
and pride. She gives payment to all her servants. She talks in such
a cool and strange manner that it hurts Oak. He understands the
nature of the lady as an outcome of the social rise which had
advanced her from a cottage to a large house and fields. The words
show a proportionate increase of arrogance and reserves as she
addresses the servants.
“Now mind, you have a mistress instead of a master. I don’t yet know my powers or may talents in farming; but I shall do my best and if you serve me well so shall I serve you. Don’t any unfair ones among you suppose that because I am a woman, I do not understand the difference between bad goings on and good.”

She takes all responsibility of her uncle when she goes as a farmer in the corn market at Casterbridge. She intends to show herself, a practical women. She acquires enough confidence to speak and reply boldly. She has her sample bags and by degrees adopts the perfect manner. The farming softness and masculine firmness is combining in her. In arguing on prices she holds to her own firmly, as is natural in a dealer and reduces others persistently as inevitable in a women. The farmers shake their heads at her first appearance but they are happy to find a woman among them. In their views she lightens the old place as grain market. Gabriel Oak loves her and she is happy to evade him but here she finds one man whose strong personality holds her mind.
He (Boldwood) is a gentle man whose dignity makes him as a man. Married men of forty are usually ready and generous enough to fling passing glances at any specimen of moderate beauty, they may discern the way. Probably, as with persons playing whist for love, the consciousness of certain immunity under any circumstances from that worst possible ultimate, the having to pay makes them unduly speculative. By his behavior Bathsheba is convinced that he is not a married man. Bathsheba being a woman prey of self appreciations piqued by his behaviour when he overtakes them while coming from the market. He never turns his head towards her, passes as unconsciously and abstractedly as if Bathsheba and her charm are thin air. Hardy explains reasons of his behaviour with help of Liddy who tells Bathsheba that he met certain disappointment when he was a young man.

Bathsheba in a mood of spring folly takes valentine and to play with Boldwood, sends it to him who persisted in kneeling when common sense, said that he might follow suit with the rest. She is far from being seriously concerned about his nonconformity. It is faintly depressing that the most dignified and valuable man in
the parish should withhold his eyes. Hardy comments upon her action and thought,

“So very idly and unreflecting the deed was done. Of love as a spectacle Bathsheba had a fair knowledge, but of love subjectively she knew nothing.”¹²

Hardy devotes a whole chapter to an analysis of Boldwood’s character. The letter of Bathsheba lights of flame that eventually burns him up. The two words ‘marry me’ work like injections. He feels the symmetry of his existence to be slowly getting distorted in the direction of ideal passion. He is not able to find a motive behind it. When he goes to bed he places the valentine in the corner of his looking glass. He is conscious of its presence even when his back is turn upon it. It is the first time in Boldwood’s life that such an event has occurred. The man who had been living in reality giving up all thoughts of women, is forced to think of pleasure and allows his mind to roam in the fathomless world of imagination. Like Keats he swings between dream and reality. He dreams of a woman whose hand had traveled softly over the paper
bearing his name. Her unrevealed eyes had watched every curve as she formed it. Her brain had seen him in imagination. Why should she have imagined him. Whenever Boldwood doges, she takes a form and comparatively ceases to be a vision. When he awakes there is the letter justifying the dream? He opens the envelop again and again and reads aloud, ‘Marry Me.’

The solemn and reserved Boldwood closes the letter and puts in the frame of the glass. In doing so he catches sight of his reflected features wan in expression and insubstantial in form. He observes how closely compressed is his mouth and that his eyes are wide spread and vacant. Feeling uneasy and dissatisfied with himself for his nervous excitability, he returns to bed. He wants to discuss the matter with Gabriel, the new shepherd in the village and in the service of Bathsheba. In between readers again get the glimpse of Gabriel with strong and loyal feelings for Bathsheba. She had fired the servant for stealing and people in the Malt house talks very casually about her and against her for dismissing her bialy. Gabriel comes there with new born lambs on his shoulders and comes to know about the talks. Gabriel, who is one of the
quietest and most gentle man on earth, rises to the occasion with martial promptness and vigour. He places his fist in center of the table and warns everyone not to talk against the lady or he will smell and taste that. This shows his temperament. The person who had once proposed the lady still can’t hear practicality as; he is a true and loyal servant of Bathsheba.

Bold wood showed the letter to Gabriel to know the handwriting and he knowing the hand instantly tells about Bathsheba. He comes back to his house feeling twinges of shame and regret at having so far exposed his mood by these questions to a stranger. He places the letter on the mantelpiece sits down to think in the light of Gabriel’s answer. In the market next day he first time looks at her. To him woman had been remote phenomena rather the necessary complements; he had not deemed it his duty to consider. Now he observes her black hair, her correct facial curves and roundness of her chin and throat. Next he notices her figure, her skirt and the very soles of her shoes. Hardy writes,

“Adam had awakened from his deep sleep and behold, there was Eve. The farmer looked courage and
for the first time really looks at her.”

His heart begins to move within him. Boldwood, it must be remembered, though forty years of age, had never before inspected a woman with the very center and force of his glance. They had struck upon all his senses at wide angles. And first time he feels jealous when she talks to other male farmer. The complex of possession takes hold of him.

All this time Bathsheba is conscious of having broken into that dignified stronghold at last. His eyes, she knows, follow, her everywhere. This was a triumph and had it come naturally, such a triumph would have been sweeter to her for this piquing delay. But it has been brought about by misdirected ingenuity and she values it only as she values an artificial flower or a wax fruit. What has been done can not be undone and one can not avoid the barbs. Being a woman with some good sense in reasoning on subjects wherein her heart is not involved, Bathsheba genuinely repents that a freak which had owed its existence as much to Liddy as to herself, should ever have been undertaken, to disturb the placidity of a man, she respected too highly to deliberately tease. She thinks
of begging his pardon but in what way will it be proper? She has let
the fatal storm out in the life of a gentleman who did not have
any idea of romance and pleasure.

Only Eustacia Vye is the woman whose nature can be
paralleled with Boldwood. But he has simplicity of nature that
enables him far beyond Eustacia. He has no light and careless
touches in his constitution either for good or for evil. The stillness
which tricks casual observer more then anything else in his
color and habit, may have been the perfect balance of
enormous antagonistic forces positive and negative in fine
adjustment. If his equilibrium disturbed he is in extremity at once.

"If an emotion possessed him at all, it ruled him;
a feeling not mastering him is entirely latent. Stagnant
or rapid, it was never slow. He is always hit mortally...
there was a change in Boldwood’s exterior from its
farmer impassibleness and his face showed that he was
now living out side his defenses for the first time and
with a fearful sense of exposure. It is usual experience
of strong nature when they love.”14
Most of the protagonists in the novels of Hardy become the victim of pleasure principle i.e. love but they are not able to enjoy it. They hope that love will free them from the burden of this gloomy world. But-

“Love is a blind untamable force holding their mind and soul and dragging them to their grave. They keep the desire of ever lasting love in their heart. They might have faced life easily even if they would not have enjoyed it. But this tempest sweeps them off their feet only to fling them down, broken and despairing”¹⁵

The reason of their tragedy is that they lose touch with reality while falling victim to pleasure.

He decides to meet Bathsheba and talk about the intent of the letter sent by her to him. At the sheep farm house Gabriel and Bathsheba are busy. Gabriel, connecting these signs with the letter Boldwood had shown, suspects her of some coquettish procedure begun by that means and carried on since, he knows not how. Boldwood passes by with an utter and overwhelming sensation of ignorance, shyness and doubt. He can not read a woman, the
Cabala of this erotic philosophy seems to consist of the subllest meanings expressed in misleading ways. Every turn, look, word and accent contains a mystery. As for Bathsheba she is not deceived in to the belief that farmer Boldwood has walked on business or in idleness. She collects the probability of the case and concludes that she herself is responsible for Boldwood’s appearance there. It troubles her much to see what a great flame a little wild fire is likely to kindle. Up till now she lives in reality, is not a schemer for marriage.

“She resolved never again by look or by sign, to interrupt the steady flow of this man’s life. But a resolution to avoid an evil is seldom framed till the evil is so far advanced as to make avoidance impossible.”

His repressed feelings have become violent passion-

“I feel almost too much to think’, he said with a solemn simplicity, ‘I have come to speak to you without preface.... I wish I would say courteous flatteries to you,’ the farmer continued in an easier tone, ‘and put my rugged feeling in to a graceful shape;
but I have neither power nor patience to learn such things. I want you for my wife. So wildly that no other feeling can abide in me, but I should not have spoken out had I not been led to hope.”\(^\text{17}\)

Boldwood, in a mood of passion tries to offer all the masculine care and love and prosperity, a respectable person like him can provide. At the same time he is conscious of his age. She will have no cares- be worried by no house hold affairs. The dairy superintendence will be done by a man – he can afford it well. She will never have so much to look out of doors at hay making time, or to think of weather in the harvest. She will have a pony carriage of her own. Bathsheba, not being in the least in love with him, is eventually able to look calmly at his offer. It is one of which many woman of her own station in the neighbourhood and not a few of higher ground will be wild to accept and proud to publish. In every point of view, saying from poetic to passionate it is desirable that she a lovely girl, should marry this earnest and well- to- do respected man. Hardy very clearly points out the differing views of men and women about marriage and Bathsheba’s own new
financial aspects at the present. He is close to her doors. His standing is sufficient. Had she felt, which she did not, any wish whatever for the married state in the abstract, she could not have rejected him, being a woman who frequently appealed to her understanding for deliverance from her whims. Boldwood as a means to marriage age is exceptionable, she likes him but she does not want him;

“It appears that ordinary men like wives because possession is not possible without marriage, and that ordinary women accept husband because marriage is not possible without possession, with totally differing aims the method is the same on both sides.... Besides, Bathsheba's position as absolute mistress of a farm and house was a novel one and the novelty had not yet begun to wear off”\(^\text{18}\).

She finds Gabriel Oak an apt person to discuss the matter about Boldwood. She knows the character of Gabriel who does not include personal grudge in giving opinion about her or anybody. She comes to Gabriel so that he may support her against its
neighbor’s view regarding her’s and Boldwood’s discussion. There are twin emotions of pain and pleasure. He feels happy as she has not any attachment with Boldwood, there by a hope for him and he is realistic and sad for Boldwood and his befooling by Bathsheba. He is quite against such a thoughtless behaviour and the insult of Boldwood as a gentle man. The best feature in the character of Gabriel is that he never deviates from normal and realistic behaviour. The outstanding honesty of his character was such that on any subject, even that of her love for, or marriage with another man, the same disinterestedness of opinion might be calculated on. Thoroughly convinced of the impossibility of his own suit, a high resolve constrains him not to injure that of another. This is a lover’s most stoical virtue, as the lack of it is a lover’s most venial sin. Knowing he will reply truly, she asks the question, painful as she knows the subject will be. She feels hurt when he says that her conduct is unworthy of any unworthy, thoughtful woman and it does not have any concern with her denial of his own suit,

“My opinion is (since you ask) that you are
greatly to blame for playing pranks upon a man like Mr. Boldwood merely as a pastime. Leading on a man you don’t care for, is not praise worthy action.”

Oak’s superb calm and moral integrity result in his angry dismissal from Bathsheba’s farm and service. Hardy says that her beauty belonged rather to the demonian than to the angelic school and she uses her pranks again on Gabriel when her sheep are in danger. Now into Bathsheba’s life, one would have supposed sufficiently enriched by Boldwood’s passionate and Oak’s spiritual devotion, there comes the trumpery Troy with his lady killing attractiveness, heralded in Hardy’s fashion. Boldwood’s passion and Oak’s devotion fail to stimulate her senses and Troy succeeds in his mission. The irony is quite clear. Bathsheba did not love Oak and Boldwood and played with them and here she is a prey of Troy’s artful and faithfulness temperament. Troy who belongs to the groups of Wildeve and Fitzpiers possesses the same demonic personality and Bathsheba first time in her life finds it difficult to resist herself. Walking through the woods at night, Bathsheba knocks against an unknown man and then opening her dark
lantern to see who he is, is dazzled by the figure, glittering in scarlet and gold of stranger Sergeant.

“\nA hand seized the lantern, the door was opened the rays burst out from their prison and Bathsheba beheld her position with astonishment. The man, to whom she was hooked, was brilliant in brass and scarlet. He was a soldier. His sudden appearance to darkness, what the sound of a trumpet is to silence…..

‘The contrast’ of this revolution with her anticipations of some sinister figure in sombergarb was so great that it had upon her the effect of a fairy transformation.\(^{20}\)

The scene is vividly presented to the eyes, but still more vividly does Hardy penetrate beneath the material facts to reveal their psychological significance. His sudden appearance… transformation are the sentences that infuse the mystery and magic of love in the heart of Bathsheba first time in her life. The time he observes Bathsheba he expresses his love for her and Bathsheba, passionate like Boldwood loses her restraint and succumbs to him to the extent of madness. It is probably nothing
but convention that make one feel that a woman ought to resent being told by a stranger that she is beautiful and the fact that Troy’s methods are crude need not trouble us since Bathsheba is not a lady in higher sense. Bathsheba loves Troy in a way that only self reliant woman loves when she abandons self reliance. Later as the wooing proceeds, one understands her state of mind better. Oak as a candidate for her hand, has passed out of her mind. Boldwood’s persistence is moral not physical. Her young heart is in the haunt of pleasure and Troy catches her at the crisis. Having fascinated her by a dared devilry which to a woman of breeding would have been offensive, he completes his conquests with his broadsword.

All this infatuation is observed by Gabriel. He, a faithful man is troubled to see that she is getting in to the toils. He decides to speak to his mistress about it. At first he talks about Boldwood and Bathsheba refuses her relations with him. Now he comes to the point as sighs:

“I wish you had never met that young Sergeant Troy, miss.”

21
But she is not ready to hear any word against him and says forcefully that Sergeant Troy is an educated man and quite worthy of any woman. He is well bred. Oak is grieved to find how entirely, she trusts him. He requests her to consider before it is too late how safe she would be in his hands. Bathsheba second time, dismisses Oak and orders him to get out of the farm. She has already heard rumour about Troy’s relation with Fanny Robin. But she does not wish that any body should criticize him. Twice she scolds, Lydia, her maid servant about it and in infatuation, she bursts out:

“I love him to the very distraction and misery and agony! Closer-closer.... He is not bed at all.... My poor life and heart, how weak I am! She monad in relapsed desultory way, headless of Liddy’s presence, ‘O how I wish I had never seen him’! Loving is misery for woman always.22

Sergeant Troy like a conventional sergeant is fond of pleasure only when he is not at battle field. He does not love Fanny or Bathsheba. He deserts Fanny and Oak knows it that he
does not have any sincere feeling for Bathsheba as a wife. In the
great scene of the storm that threatens to destroy Bathsheba’s farm,
he not only drinks himself but forces the servants for that and they
go to sleep. Once again Gabriel’s steady work on the stocks is
worth more than some wild emotional, ‘I would die for you’, as
Bathsheba also realizes. After the two have worked together to
serve the stacks, only time and opportunity are required to make
them husband and wife when Bathsheba comes to understand his
inner self The figure of Oak rises grander than the storm, when,
love, life, every human seemed small and trifling in such close
juxtaposition with an infuriated universe.

Fanny comes back in to the scene only to die and to reveal
the true character of Troy, Bathsheba discover that with Fanny in
the coffin is a baby, her child by Troy, the breach is complete as
they had secretly married some months before this event. Before
vanishing and murdered by Boldwood Troy shows some finer
sentiment. It seems that his action is perhaps sincere like a man
who had not feeling for her and has none for Bathsheba. Nature
does not allow this facile and belated repentance and washes out
whole of Troy’s labour.

Bathsheba has passed through the gulf of fire and now begins to see life in real perspective. The woman who restores Fanny’s grave, is a noble development from the girl who preened herself in the mirror and sent farmer Boldwood the Valentine. Oak, too has risen. True man he has been and now his change has been mainly expansion with widening fortune. Oak the baliff of two farms, riding his cob over two thousand acres, is clearly the same man who had stood to be hired at Casterbridge Fair. But he wants the complete circle. When he is almost invited by Bathsheba to speak again of love, he makes no more, knowing the time is not yet come and there are still some taints of rich lady in Bathsheba. Boldwood is restored to hope by the disappearance of Troy. He does not remain passive and wrings from Bathsheba, a conditional promise the reappearance of Troy, just after the promise to Boldwood has a look of mechanism but Hardy prepares the coincidences with minute care. The event that takes place is tremendously effective. Certainly shooting of Troy is the most satisfying solution to that problem of Boldwood. No doubt it is a
painful consequence that Boldwood, a fine and sympathetic character faces the tragic imprisonment at the pleasure of His majesty.

Bathsheba draws strength from affliction, while all the others huddle back from the spectacle of sudden death, she takes command and Gabriel accepts her order only remembering afterwards that he ought to have given some himself. When he tells Bathsheba that he is going out, Bathsheba comes to the ground realities,

“What shall I do without you? Oh Gabriel, I don’t think you ought to go away. You have been with me so long—through bright times and dark times—such old friends as we are—that it seems unkind almost. I had fancied that you leased the other forms as master; you might still give a helping walk across at mine. And now going away?”

The event is calculated to do good by diverting her from the gloom of life. She is sad thinking a great deal about Oak and his wish to shun her. He who had believed in her and argued on her side when all the rest of the world was against her has at last
become weary and is leaving her to fight the battles alone. She decides not to lose Gabriel this time and breaking all the ego of self-reliant woman goes to settle the matters with him. She now clearly tells him that he ought not to have sent her that harsh letter. It shows he does not care a bit about her and is ready to desert her likes all the rest. She reminds him that she was the first sweet heart that he ever had and he was the first she ever had and she will not forget that.

Hardy gives a beautiful psychoanalytic description of their Camaraderie. It is a combination of love and life’s realities,

“They spoke very little of their mutual feelings; prettily phrases and warm expressions being probably unnecessary between such tried friends. There was that substantial affection which arises (if any arises at all) when the two who are thrown together begin first by knocking the rougher sides of each other’s characters and not the best till further on, the romance growing up in the intensities of a mass of hard prosaic realities. This good fellowship- Camaraderie usually occurring
through similarities of pursuits is unfortunately, seldom superadded to love between the sexes because men and women associate, not in their labour but in their pleasures merely.” 24
REFERENCES

1. Hardy notes down in his diary that one should read ‘Resolution and Independence’, the famous poem by Wordsworth, Life, 58.


5. Far From the Madding Crowd, 33.


7. Ibid, 36.

8. Ibid, 40.

9. Ibid, 47.

10. H. C. Duffin, Thomas Hardy, (Delhi: Doaba; 1993) 10, 11.

11. Far From the Madding Crowd, 91.

13. Ibid, 123.


15. David Cecil, Hardy the Novelist, (London Constables &
Company; 1947), 108, 9.

16. Far From the Madding Crowd, 130.

17. Ibid, 133, 34.

18. Far From the Madding Crowd, 137.

19. Ibid, 141.


23. Ibid, 388.

24. Ibid, 313.