CHAPTER III
SOCIOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CHARACTERS
3.1 Preliminaries
This chapter focuses on sociological background of the characters in the selected novels: *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. It intends to relate sociological background of characters to their linguistic behaviour as it has a bearing on the development of the novels under examination. As observed, a person’s sociological background affects his speech and his speech is a clear indication of his background. Some outstanding examples, one can find in both Hardy’s and Dickens’ novels. In *Pickwick Papers*, one of Dickens’ minor characters uses class dialect in much the same way as Hardy’s rustics, for example:

‘Vell,’ said Sam (Weller), ‘this is comin’ it rayther powerful this is. I never heerd a biled leg o’ mutton called a swarry afore. I wonder wot they’d call a roast one.’

Prior to background analysis of Hardy’s characters, let us define the term ‘rustic’ since it is applied to the majority of the minor
In each of Hardy’s novels, there are the major characters, some of whom are from diverse backgrounds; and the minor characters, belong to the rural background. They are simple and honest, straightforward but unsophisticated. The first novel of this type is ‘Far From the Madding Crowd’.

3.2 Far From the Madding Crowd (1874)

Far From the Madding Crowd was written in 1874. It is one of the famous Wessex novels of Hardy. The major characters in the novel are Bathsheba Everdene, Gabriel Oak, Sergeant Troy and Farmer Boldwood. The novel starts with Gabriel Oak and Bathsheba Everdene being introduced to each other. Oak asks for Bathsheba Everdene’s hand in marriage. She denies the proposal. After Oak’s sheeps are killed in a freak accident, he has to venture out and look for new job and finds Everdene’s farm in Weatherbury, where he becomes head shepherd. Bathsheba Everdene continues to flirt with Oak and also with the neighbouring landowner, William Boldwood, who ends up proposing to her. Her reply to him is also negative. Meanwhile, the young Sergeant Troy is introduced who also asks...
for Bathsheba’s hand in marriage. Bathsheba accepts his proposal. At the end of the novel readers find that Troy had also seduced and impregnated a young milkmaid who died in childbirth. Boldwood becomes crazy and kills Sergeant Troy because he falls in love with Bathsheba. Bathsheba refuses him and the matter ends by her betrothing to Oak.

Illustration 3: Map, Far From the Madding Crowd (Macmillan Publisher, Ltd)

As Hardy’s novels reflect Victorian society, it is natural that it mirrors the very institution of marriage and family which is at its centre. In this connection Shihada comments that FMC has the plot concerning marriage adultery and death. The element of marriage exists due to the Victorian social emphasis on marriage and family. None of Hardy’s characters avoid marriage. Even Sue Bridehead
who refuses Victorian marriage laws weds Phillotson and then Jude. In FMC, Bathsheba Everdene, the heroine, refuses William Boldwood respectfully by contrasting her character with his. She sensibly refuses the hero Gabriel Oak in the beginning of the novel:

‘Mr. Oak,’ she said, with luminous distinctness and common sense, ‘you are better off than I. I have hardly a penny in the world—I am staying with my aunt for my bare sustenance. I am better educated than you—and I don’t love you a bit: that’s my side of the case. Now yours: you are a farmer just beginning, and you ought in common prudence, if you marry at all (which you should certainly not think of doing at present) to marry a woman with money, who would stock a larger farm for you than you have now.’ (Hardy, FMC, UBSPD, p.39)

*Far From the Madding Crowd* has a wide assortment of characters and includes a broad social spectrum. Gabriel Oak is the protagonist of the novel and the bailiff of Bathsheba Everdene. He is originally a shepherd; but he gains the post of bailiff after losing his sheep. As a worker, Oak is loyal and devoted to Bathsheba despite her rejection of him as a husband. He has a strong sense of duty and ability to endure hardship, as well as good self-respect, simplicity and honesty, straightforwardness and humour. At the beginning of the novel he says to Bathsheba:
'I shall do one thing in this life—one thing certain—that is, love you, and long for you, and keep wanting you till I die.' (Hardy, FMC, UBSPD, p. 39)

On the negative side, Oak is a bit tactless. Hasan, in 'Thomas Hardy: the Sociological Imagination' states that Oak displays lack of tact towards, Bathsheba Everdene: “In his romance with Bathsheba, Gabriel’s innate goodness and purity are accompanied by an embarrassing lack of tact.”² To prove this, he has cited following example:

*Oak held it longer this time—indeed, curiously long.*

'How soft it is—being winter time, too—not chapped or rough or anything!' he said.

'There- That's long enough,' said she, though without puling it away.

'But I suppose you are thinking you would like to kiss it? You may if you want to.'

'I wasn't thinking of any such thing,' said Gabriel simply; 'but I will—‘That you won't!' She snatched back her hand. Gabriel felt himself guilty of another want of tact. (Hardy, FMC, UBSPD, p. 32)

Bathsheba Everdene is the female protagonist of the novel, whom her aunt Mrs. Hurst describes as ‘too wild.’ Bathsheba is susceptible to the woman’s vices of jealousy and flattery but that does not make her exceptional. She inherits her farm from her father. Her
exceptional qualities include romantic temperament, self-confidence, efficiency, sympathy, innocence and candour.

According to Lucas, she was a relatively new idea for Thomas Hardy, because she lost her parents and lived alone with her aunt. He adds further that Hardy might have been ambitious with her character. He views her character in her relationship with other three male characters in this way:

"It is in Bathsheba's relationship with the three men, however, that Hardy's meaning emerges at its richest. Risking oversimplification for the moment we might say that Oak appeals to Bathsheba's 'simple country nature', Boldwood to that air that accompanies her social rise 'from a cottage to a large house and fields', and Troy to the improbable romanticism of town-bred bankrupt gentleman-tailors."

Sergeant Frank Troy is an antagonist, though not discernibly a villain. Misra attributes Troy's character as 'a very clever person', 'full of activity' and 'He spoke fluently and unceasingly.' Troy 'could be one thing and seem another.'

'He was a fairly well-educated man for one of middle class-exceptionally well educated man for a common soldier. He spoke fluently and unceasingly.' (Hardy, FMC, UBSPD, p.161)
He is described as a philanderer, a man with roving eyes who breaks hearts remorselessly; but he admits to both Bathsheba and Boldwood that he liked Fanny Robin. However, he admits this much after Fanny dies. The characters speak for themselves and perhaps for Victorian society by criticising Troy:

“He is not good enough for ‘ee.”

“His being higher in learning and birth than the ruck o’ soldiers is anything but a proof of his worth. It shows his course to be down’ard.” (Ibid. p.182)

Farmer Boldwood is a gentleman farmer in a nearby village and a professed bachelor, although he yields that up when he meets Bathsheba. Boldwood is a confirmed bachelor until he receives Bathsheba’s valentine, which he comically takes seriously. Bathsheba has meant her valentine to Boldwood as a joke on him. Misra adds further details to the description of Boldwood’s character in ‘The Tragic Heroes of Thomas Hardy’. Accordingly:

‘Boldwood was an earnest, well-to-do and respected man. He was a very kind-hearted person. He helped Fanny Robin when she was a poor and helpless child. He took her and put her to school and later got her a place in Farmer Everdene’s establishment.’

He has the air of a true country gentleman. He has a wild and uncontrollable passion for Bathsheba. He is a strong gentleman who is fair in all his dealings. He has a sympathetic nature. These are the
principle characters of this novel. The following are the minor characters, who work on the farm:

Fanny Robin is the adopted servant of Bathsheba Everdene who marries and then is deserted by Troy. She is an innocent woman noted for purity and concentration in love, used by the philanderer Troy.
There are some minor characters in the novel whose dialect we shall study and compare.

Joseph Poorgrass is a self-conscious, modest, bashful but humorous rustic. He is a carter on Bathsheba’s farm. He has a taste for strong drink. He has timid and superstitious nature.
Jan Coggan is a respectable, young rustic who can narrate interesting stories with a sense of humour. He is middle-aged, twice married person. He is master of shearer.

Henery Fray is an amusing rustic character. He is middle aged. He is a farm hand who aspires to be Bathsheba’s bailiff. He always signs his name as ‘Henery’ though the paper spelling is Henry.
Cain Ball is another amusing rustic character - under-shepherd to Gabriel Oak.
Matthew Moon is another general farm hand.
Laban Tall is a young farm hand, henpecked by his older wife. He later becomes the clerk of the parish.
Mrs. Hurst is Bathsheba’s aunt.


Liddy Smallbury is Bathsheba’s maid and Jacob’s wife.

Jacob Smallbury is Bathsheba’s farmhand. He is a son of old maltster. He is sixty-five years old with semi-bald head.

Bill Smallbury is Bathsheba’s second farmhand.

Maryann Money is Bathsheba’s chairwoman.

Mrs. Coggan is a maid employed by Bathsheba.

Beside the colloquialisms mentioned in the last chapter, the researcher notes the straightforward and unsophisticated speech of the women as in Chapter IX in FMC:

(Mrs. Coggan) “Never was such a hopeless man for a woman!” (Ibid. p.78)

Mrs. Coggan then describes to Bathsheba who had been courting Boldwood before then, and her speech is unchanged:

“Jane Perkins worked at him for two months like a slave, and the two Miss Taylors spent a year upon him, and he cost Farmer Ives’ daughter nights of tears and twenty pounds of new clothes; but Lord—the money might have been thrown out the window.” (Ibid.)

Liddy is a peer of Bathsheba and she gossips as following:

“How sweet to be able to disdain, when most of us are glad to say “Thank you!” I seem I hear it. “No, sir—I’m your better.” or “Kiss my foot, sir; my face is for mouths of consequence.” (Ibid. p.79)
In any event, they are hardly afraid to speak their minds. Boldwood asked Bathsheba to marry him. Note the sudden exclamation at the close of his speech:

‘I am now forty-one years old,’ Mr. Boldwood went on. ‘But you will just think-in kindness and condescension think - if you cannot bear with me as a husband! I fear I am too old for you, but believe me I will take more care of you than would many a man of your own age........how much you are to me!’ [Rather presumptuous, although forty-one years is far from old] (Ibid. pp. 124-125)

Gabriel Oak is a rather straight talker as well. He does not pretend to anything, as he tells her. It reveals the lack of education and sophistication of the characters, or the affront to Victorian social mores. In the first line, there is also the customary usage: bain’t.

‘I mean this, that if Mr. Boldwood really spoke of marriage, I bain’t going to tell a story and say he didn’t to please you. I have already tried to please you too much for my own good!’ (Ibid. p. 129)

The following passage describes Oak in very picturesque language:

‘He had just reached the time of life at which ‘young’ is ceasing to be the prefix of ‘man’ in speaking of one. He was at the brightest period of masculine growth, for his intellect and his emotions were clearly separated: he had passed the
time during which the influence of youth indiscriminately mingles them in the character of impulse, and he had not yet arrived at the stage wherein they become united again, in the character of prejudice, by the influence of a wife and family. In short, he was twenty-eight, and a bachelor.’ (Ibid. p. 15)

The use of abbreviations is also characteristic of Hardy’s rustic dialect. They are noticeable in the following passages:

‘If he marry her, she’ll gie up farming.’ (Ibid. p. 187)

“But we’ll gie ’em another song? said Grandfer Cantle. (Hardy, RN, UBSPD, p. 56)

“No, because I shall hae the crooked sixpence.”

(Ibid. p. 66)

It was a second to remember another phase of the matter. The sheep were not insured. All the savings of a frugal life had been dispersed at a blow; his hopes of being an independent farmer were laid low – possibly for ever. Gabriel’s energies, patience, and industry had been so severely taxed during the years of his life between eighteen and eight-and-twenty.

Readers and critics alike may avail themselves of inferences to the background and ideas of other minor characters as given above through rustics like Jacob Smallbury, Henry Fray and Jan Coggan meet in the malt house in Chapter No.8. The characters are often
revealed through the habit of speech. Following quotation shows it aptly:

‘Ay, at the time he thought of nothing but high things,’ added Bill Smallbury. ‘One day Parson Thirdly met him and said, ‘Good morning, Mister Everdene; ‘tis a fine day!’ “Amen” said Everdene quite absent-like, thinking only of religion when he seed a parson.’ (Ibid. p.67)

3.3 The Return of the Native (1878)

_The Return of the Native_ was published in 1878. The setting for _Return of the Native_ is, like Emily Bronte’s _Wuthering Heights_, a wild and mostly uninhabitable place like Egdon Heath. In his introduction to the novel, Williams describes the Heath as ‘too wild for any farming of a normal kind.’ Egdon in the novel is no mere tract of heather, the romantic stage setting for violent emotions. It is a living soil which nourishes innumerable snakes and rabbits and butterflies. Like Casterbridge, it is redolent of history, though only the faintest survive here—the Roman Road, the barrows, the ‘stone arrowheads used by the old tribes on Egdon’ and the ancient inhabitants; forgotten Celtic tribes …dyed barbarians.” The major occupation is turf or furze cutting, except for Diggory Venn, who was formerly a dairyman but changed to selling red dye for the farmers.
Clym is central character, who returns from Paris. He was trader of diamond in Paris. He plans to open a school for children in his native place. Temporary blindness makes him cut furze, but at last he turns to preaching. He explains to Timothy Fairway and Humphrey, about his return to Egdon:

‘I was endeavouring to put off one sort of life for another sort of life, which was not better than the life I had known before. It was simply different.’

‘True; a sight different,’ said Fairway.

‘Yes, Paris must be a taking place,’ said Humphrey.

‘Grand shop-winders, trumpets and drums; and here be we out of doors in all winds and weathers—’

‘But you mistake me,’ pleaded Clym. ‘All this was very depressing. But not so depressing as something I next perceived—that my business was the idlest, vainest, most effeminate business that ever a man could be put to.’

Protagonist Clym Yeobright felt that he was not suited to the work he was doing in Paris (selling diamonds) and that’s why returns to his home of Egdon Heath to teach in school. However people didn’t think that he would teach in school properly. They doubt about him:

“He’ll never carry it out in the world,” said Fairway.

“In a few weeks he’ll learn to see things otherwise.”
"'Tis good-hearted of the young man" said another.
"But for my part, I think he had better mind his business." (Hardy, RN, UBSPD, pp.175-176)

Illustration 4: Map, 'The Return of the Native' (Macmillan Publisher, Ltd)

Clym’s ideas come from books rather than from direct experience with people. Lucas calls him ‘naïve’. His dream of a school for his own people, and his intention to ‘go native’, after returning from
Paris are impossible. But Lucas compares Clym Yeobright with Percy Shelley:

*Clym’s almost Shelleyan-like desire is for an escape from life itself.⁸*

*Clym hardly knows himself. Although he believes that he is a controlled and rational person, he becomes rash after he falls in love with Eustacia Vye. Furthermore, while believing that he is right, he mistreats those whom he thinks are wrong. In addition, while he insists on her promise of marriage, Eustacia insists on his promise of going abroad, which illustrates the unilateralism of expectations in relationships that ultimately causes these relationships to fail.*

“Is there any place like it on earth?”

“It is very beautiful. But will you be mine?”

“I will be nobody else’s in the world—does that satisfy you?”

“Yes, for the present.” (Hardy, RN, UBSPD, p.201)

Their relationship continued with the assumption on his part that she would marry him and her granting that they would proceed to Paris in future:

“No. Besides, it would interfere with my schemes. Don’t press that, Eustacia. Will you marry me?”

“I cannot tell.”
Clym loves his home turf of Egdon and his people. At home, Clym’s is most influenced by his mother. Despite his marriage to Eustacia, and especially after she dies, Mrs.Yeobright exerts her influence on him very strongly.

Clym is very much sensitive. His thinking and studying affect him physically [he loses his sight temporarily] and his ideas are rather impractical, as villagers pointed out above. Furthermore, he seems to be unaware of the ideas of others. Yet, he does not appear to be thoughtless, although he is rather simple-minded. For instance, although he does not agree to take Eustacia to Paris, he agrees to take her from Egdon Heath.

Clym may lack a sense of self that is necessary to survive. However, he is not as self-interested as Damon Wildeve. Ironically, he himself has failed with his mother and with Eustacia, the two people he loved most.

In the end, Clym dedicates himself to others, hoping to spread truth and comfort and to teach all men to love each other. He is more successful in loving all mankind than at being a son or husband.

Eustacia Vye is the second major character of this novel, and is more outstanding than Thomasin Yeobright. Eustacia lives at Egdon
Heath with her grandfather Captain Vye. She is dissatisfied with the area, being a Budmouth citizen. Budmouth is a ‘fashionable seaside resort’. Her discontent with Egdon is shown in her illicit romance with Wildeve, her marriage with Clement Yeobright [in order to leave for Paris] and in her speech. Shihada wrote in his book *Thomas Hardy’s Novels: A Feminist Perspective* that “Eustacia wants Clym to go back to Paris and take her out of the suffocating and monotonous life at the Heath.” When Clym refuses to do that, she begins her relationship with Damon Wildeve, “who promises to help her to get out of Egdon Heath secretly.” She thinks:

> “How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me! ... I do not deserve my lot!” (Hardy, RN, UBSPD, p.354)

Eustacia wants to be loved to madness. Love was to her a cordial affair which could drive away the eating loneliness of her days. And she seemed to long for the abstraction called passionate love more than any particular lover.”(Ibid. p.75) Hardy describes her being sensuous and earthy:

> “As far as social ethics were concerned Eustacia approached the savage state, though in emotion she was all the while an epicure. She had advanced to the secret recesses of sensuousness, yet had hardly crossed the threshold of conventionality.” (Ibid. p.100)
In her speech to Clym, at one instance, she displays a fear of passing time. But her words also show a feeling of futility about the relationship with him. “See how our time is slipping, slipping, slipping!” (Ibid. p.202) On the other hand, her character is often best displayed, negatively, when she interacts with Diggory Venn, who remains honest and caring:

“The woman that stands between Wildeve and Thomasin is yourself.”

“I am unwell,” she said hurriedly. “No—it is not that—I am not in a humour to hear you further. Leave me, please.” (Ibid. p.97)

Venn urges Eustacia to give up Damon Wildeve:

“Your giving up Mr. Wildeve will be a real advantage to you, for how could you marry him? Now she cannot get off so easily—every body will blame her if she loses him. Then I ask you—not because her right is best, but because her situation is worst—to give him up to her.”

“No—I won’t, I won’t!” she said impetuously. (Ibid.)

Hardy describes Eustacia’s character contrastively. Some critics claim that he did thus to emphasise her inner conflicts which seem to torment her. On the positive side, she is a free and independent spirit; but on the negative side, she is emotional and passionate. The heart’s needs have become an obsession with her. She lives solely for romance, however, all too expressively recognises that love itself is fleeting: she is terrified of time. Her most blissful moment,
the decision to marry Clym, is disturbed by fear and doubt that the love will not last. Eustacia is one of the most realistic characters in the novel. She is unable to lie about herself. She is also perceptive and intelligent, and certainly unfit for life at Egdon. When she first meets Clym, she explains to him that she is depressed by life. This is revealed through her dialogue with Clym:

‘Do girls often play as mummers now? They never used to.’

‘They don’t now.’

‘Why did you?’

‘To get excitement and shake off depression,’ she said in low tones.

‘What depressed you?’

‘Life.’ (Ibid. p.150)

The last word ‘life’ is simple but it may well sums up all her difficulties. Life has become a prison for her, from which she sees Clym Yeobright as her deliverer. Life fails to provide Eustacia with the satisfaction she craves for.

Damon Wildeve presents strong contrast with Hardy’s typical honest country folk. He has given up his career of engineer to open an inn at Egdon Heath. Wildeve has a lust for money and women. He is at once desired by both Eustacia Vye and Thomasin Yeobright. Some would describe him as thoughtless but he is at least self-motivated. From the onset, he has or seems to have no
family connections or friends. Hardy compares him with Rousseau. Wildeve has a penchant for gambling and remarks once in the novel that in London a waiter continued to gamble from small stakes till bigger ones, became wealthy and moved to India as governor of Madras (now Chennai).¹²

At the beginning of the novel, he is engaged to Thomasin Yeobright. Wildeve is too sophisticated for Egdon, like Eustacia. But Eustacia’s character is stronger and more determined. Wildeve seems to lack her standards and depth of feeling. He seems to gamble with his life and the lives of those near him. In the course of the novel, Hardy shows Wildeve acting reckless. Stewart describes Wildeve in these terms:

‘...he treats his wife Thomasin unkindly; when Mrs. Yeobright sends gifts of money to Thomasin and Clym respectively, he intervenes with a malicious prank which an odd combination of circumstances makes the occasion of a yet more serious estrangement between Mrs. Yeobright and her daughter-in-law.’¹³

Thus, he is the adverse of Clym Yeobright. Whereas Clym cares about his countrymen, Wildeve just can’t take other people’s needs too seriously.

Wildeve wants a life of ease and pleasure, which cannot be got from the harshness of life on the heath. He dies and nobody mourns him;
he leaves behind a widow and daughter. The widow is of course Thomasin, whom Hardy called ‘the good heroine.’

Somewhat like Wildeve, Thomasin’s personal history is scanty. Hardy describes that she has no parents or close friends. Her only relations are Clym and Mrs. Yeobright. In some ways, she resembles Mrs. Yeobright; also, she is clearly affected by Clym’s opinions.

As the essential Victorian heroine, Thomasin Yeobright is young, inexperienced and innocent. She is less passionate than Eustacia, she lacks her cousin Clym’s intellect. She seems even to be less sophisticated than Wildeve. She lacks her aunt’s insight as well. Uncomplicated as she may be, however, she is no fool. She marries Wildeve with her eyes opened; she has a pretty good idea of his faults.

Hardy gives her an easier life than his other characters. She weds Diggory Venn at the end of the story and seems fulfilled as a wife and mother eventually. She appreciates Diggory’s deep, slow, and silent commitment to her. Whereas other characters try to fight with their fates, she seems to be contented with it. Though Diggory Venn is suitable match for her, her life is not without its sorrow. Although she is drawn to Wildeve, he does not belong to Egdon Heath, and ultimately she cannot be happy with someone who is so foreign to
(and contemptuous of) the land, ideas and people that her life is tied to.

This also shows in the course of the novel how she agrees with her aunt about climbing the social ladder. Thomasin accepts Wildeve for his seeming social position as much as Eustacia accepts him out of her desire to escape the Heath. Williams makes a point on this in Thomas Hardy’s *The Return of the Native*:

> My aunt...will want me to look a little higher than a small dairy-farmer, and marry a professional man."^{15}

However, when speaking to Venn, Mrs. Yeobright claims that Thomasin decided to herself:

> ‘But as she was unwilling on her own account to be your wife, that settles the point without my wishes being concerned.’ (Hardy, RN, UBSPD, p.102)

Despite his anti-Christian sentiment, Hardy may have been influenced by the New Testament (“Blessed are the peacemakers”). Thomasin both dislikes and seeks to avoid any conflict and acts like a peacemaker. At one point in the novel, she tries to make peace between Clym and Mrs. Yeobright and, at another, between him and Eustacia Vye.

Thomasin seems to represent continuity more than the other major characters in the novel. Clym does not remarry, but Thomasin
remarries. Furthermore, she prefers to care for her child herself rather than let a nurse care for it, perhaps demonstrating the importance of motherhood in the plot. Yet, later, when she is with Diggory, she lets him carry her child for her.

Mrs. Yeobright, Clym’s mother is a strong and stubborn woman. She has her own way to handle people on her judgments. Her comments are worth studying:

“Strangers don’t see you as I do, said Mrs. Yeobright;
They judge from false reports.” (Ibid. p.117)

Furthermore, she always forgives because of a deep love for both Thomasin and especially her son, Clym. She possesses a strong sense of fairness too, and she endeavors to be polite with Damon Wildeve in spite of her feelings for him. Mrs.Yeobright exhibits the same sensitivity to her niece as social approval. Shirley Stave explains:

'Although she herself is a woman, she accepts cultural (i.e., patriarchal) definitions of gender and allows herself and other women to be limited and define by men, as she reveals when Thomasin and Wildeve’s marriage cannot take place because of its legalistic technicality [the license]; Mrs Yeobright considers the matter disgraceful and Thomasin ‘ruined.’"
Mrs. Yeobright lives an unpretentious and simple life in Egdon. Like elder people everywhere, she attempts to manipulate the younger generation and make them follow her ideas, as she does with either Clym or Thomasin. Her devotion to her son Clym (born Clement) leads her to send him to Paris to sell diamonds. She basically wants him to live a more secure life than hers. Mrs. Yeobright is the last representative of her generation. Even at Egdon, she begins to change. For Hardy, she may well embody both the faults and virtues of a particular time and place that’s rapidly passing away.

Notgrass has analysed Hardy’s intention of showing Mrs. Yeobright, a useless, utterly dependant and unsympathetic woman. She writes that “Hardy shows the impending failure of women who rely solely on men for satisfaction, and although Mrs. Yeobright begs for pity, the author gives her little.”¹⁷ The following selection shows Mrs. Yeobright in such light, after Clym departs:

No sooner had Yeobright gone from his mother’s house then her face changed its rigid aspect for one of blank despair. After a while she wept, and her tears brought some relief. (Hardy, RN, UBSPD, p.214)

Her speech, which implies self-pity but no self-awareness, also shows her in this light:

“Some widows can guard against the wounds their children give them by turning their hearts to another
husband and beginning life again. But I always was a poor, weak, one-idea’d creature—I had not the compass of heart nor the enterprise for that.” (Ibid. p.217)

The last major character of RN is Diggory Venn. He appears strong and silent but he is not what he appears to be. Although other denizens of the heath think that he has low social status. He can return to being a successful farmer at any time. He is also skillful at concealing his feelings, especially when he is courting Thomasin Yeobright. Furthermore, he shares the art of persuasion with Thomasin. Hardy has written a chapter to show Venn’s attempt to persuade Eustacia Vye from seeing Damon Wildeve and to persuade Mrs. Yeobright to give him a second chance at marrying Thomasin. In Book One, Chapter 10, appropriately called Desperate Attempt at Persuasion, though his intention is to talk to Damon Wildeve, Diggory Venn speaks to Eustacia Vye first. A selection of his dialogue has been given below:

Vye has the ability to ‘drive away trouble’ but she denies it.

“Yes, there is trouble in a household on account of him, and I have come to let you know of it, because I believe you might have the power to drive it away.”

“I? What is the trouble?”

“It is quite a secret. It is that he may refuse to marry Thomasin Yeobright after all.”
“I do not wish to listen to this, and you must not expect me to interfere.’
“But, miss, you will hear one word.”
“I cannot. I am not interested in the marriage and even if I were I could not compel Mr. Wildeve to do my bidding.” (Ibid. p.95)

Misra (2005) has called Venn “son of the soil” because, like Thomasin and Mrs. Yeobright, he grew up on the heath. Venn entered the trade of reddleman from Thomasin’s original rejection of him as a groom. Towards the close of the novel, however, he returns to dairy farming in order to be acceptable to her again. Misra has gone further by comparing him with Gabriel Oak, who also weds at the end of the story. Venn seems magical but he is no less human than the other characters. Unlike Clym and Damon Wildeve, Diggory Venn looks at love practically and combines his outlook with Clym’s sense of justice.

The rustics in Egdon Heath serve as a group rather than as individuals. They give background to the characters. They play the role of comments. They also serve as a comic relief, Johny Nunsuch, Susan Nunsuch, Charley, Grandfer Cantle, Christian Cantle, Timothy Fairways, Humphrey, Sam are rustics.
3.4 The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886)

_The Mayor of Casterbridge_ was published in 1886. It is a detailed account of the life and death of the main character, Michael Henchard. It is also the account of Henchard’s rise and fall, from a hay-trusser to the Mayor of the town of Casterbridge. Classical literature follows the Greek and Roman style of drama, in which there is a rising and falling action around a climax. The climax is certainly the conflict between Henchard and Farfrae, which also facilitates the rise and fall of Henchard. Though he mistakes Farfrae, the genius Scotch visitor to the town, for Joshua Jopp, Henchard filially admits him to the process and they become friends. Henchard’s business prospers under Farfrae’s management. Farfrae’s successes lead to Henchard’s jealousy, although Henchard refuses to act too hastily against him. Henchard uses Joshua Jopp as an agent against Farfrae in business, playing on Jopp’s jealousy. The skimmity-ride follows when Jopp receives Lucetta’s letters and uses them against Lucetta with the support of her enemies in Casterbridge. At the end of the novel, Henchard becomes poor and is taken in by Abel Whittle, whose mother Henchard was kind to. Henchard dies and leaves a note in his room.

Before describing the major characters, let us take time to offer the following comparison. Hardy may have intended it. Simply put, the characters of William Boldwood and Michael Henchard are approximately peers. Both are about forty-years old. Both characters are strong, well-built and somewhat attractive. They are
silent and reserved characters. Furthermore, the objects of their respective loves were off limits. Neither could Henchard marry Lucetta nor could Boldwood marry Bathsheba. Hardy may have intended a statement about such characters this way.

Historically, Casterbridge was the town of Dorchester. It is described as the ‘centre of an agricultural community.’ It exists by the seasonal changes in corn trading, which makes or breaks the farmers engaged in it. Williams adds a further description of Casterbridge from the following in Brown, “Casterbridge is an image of Dorchester, the nearby town of Hardy’s youth, and his presentation of it derives from local recollection a turning from the precarious present to a stable past.”

Henchard, the protagonist, sells his wife and daughter at a local fair for the paltry sum of five guineas. Feminist researchers may point to subjugation of women through the auctioning of Susan and Elizabeth-Jane in the plot, but we should look more closely as it is also an example of the kind of consumerism that was prevalent at the time. There are shops and stalls in Casterbridge displaying wares very simply for sale and the attitude of ‘use and throw’ must abide there. Besides, Susan continued to object to her husband’s actions until, in despair she agreed to be sold.

Misra has given a very thorough and humanistic account of Henchard’s character in *Tragic Heroes of Thomas Hardy*. He begins
with Henchard from the beginning of the story and describes his transformations as Mayor and Corn Merchant.

In the beginning, Michael Henchard is poor but proud of his abilities. He is very energetic but he has the instinct of a perverse character. He is firm, strong and determined. He is a man of strong likes and dislikes. He has temper. He is stern and taciturn.\textsuperscript{20}

As the Mayor of Casterbridge, he is dignified, strong and powerful. As a corn-merchant he is intelligent, energetic and man of his word, but he is impulsive, obstinate and intolerant. He is kind and affectionate to his employees, but firm in his dealings.\textsuperscript{21}

Henchard arrives at Casterbridge at the onset of the story and enters the tent of Mrs. Goodenough, a furmity woman. She adds rum to the drink and he gets intoxicated. He then sells his wife Susan and their newborn daughter Elizabeth Jane for five shillings. Soon after that when he comes to consciousness, he takes on oath that he will not drink for 20 years. During this period he evolves into the Merchant and Mayor of Casterbridge.

He meets Donald Farfrae, a young Scot, by accident and cajoles him into staying on as the manager of the corn sale for the town, after Farfrae explains to him about crop rejuvenation. Slowly Donald Farfrae takes place of Henchard. Tables turn and the mayor of Casterbridge has to work as hay-trusser. Lucetta Templeman
arrives and originally accepts to marry Henchard until she learns of the sale of his family; then, she agrees to marry Farfrae instead. She is the second foreigner to arrive at the town. Her background is Bath, an old Roman settlement with saunas and Jersey, an isle in the English Channel with old French settlements. Lucetta’s original surname was Le Seuer.

Illustration 5: Map, The Mayor of Casterbridge (Macmillan Publisher, Ltd)

'The Mayor of Casterbridge is essentially the story of one man and his relationships and rise and fall. Hardy has intently titled the novel the Life and Death of the Mayor of Casterbridge: A Man of Character. As testament of his character and influence, when he is absent, the other characters always seem to be talking about him or wondering how to deal with him. ‘Never a big dealing in wheat,
barley, oats, hay, roots and such-like but Henchard got a hand in it.\textsuperscript{22}Henchard has a special moral code of his own.

Irving Howe states that character “indicates energy and pride of personal being.” The word character also implies consistency. Those three terms—energy, pride, and consistency—clearly summarise Michael Henchard. He has incredible energy which is expressed in his action. Seemingly through his actions, Henchard rushes headlong, bounding from one impetuous act to another. He may regret an action, such as auctioning his family, but he never tries to take back anything he has done. Instead, he may do something else, equally rash, in order to make amends for his first action. For example, he readily takes Susan back into his life and just as readily admits his guilt when he is confronted by the furmity woman.

Henchard’s second quality is his pride. Hardy points out Henchard’s pride throughout the novel, starting with his initial description of the main character on page 1. Henchard’s walk is that of a skilled countryman—not that of a general labourer—and “in the turn and plant of each foot there was, further, a dogged and cynical indifference personal to himself…”

Henchard’s combination of energy and pride results in his becoming a prosperous merchant and the town leader. However, the combination also proves self-destructive. He is driven to outdo
Farfrae, and this leads to the break-up of their friendship and partnership and ultimately to Henchard’s bankruptcy. However, in the heat of his anger, Henchard still remembers his former friendship. In the midst of his victory, Henchard makes an about-face:

Henchard looked down upon him in silence, and their eyes met. ‘O Farfrae!—that’s not true!’ he said bitterly. ‘God is my witness that no man ever loved another as I did thee at one time. And now—though I came here to kill thee, I cannot hurt thee!’ (Hardy, MC, UBSPD, pp.325-326)

Consistency is the third quality of Henchard’s character. He is seemingly unchanging from the beginning of the novel until the end, and only his fortunes change. He changes from hay-trusser to the Mayor of Casterbridge and then to worker and then to hay-trusser, until he leaves Casterbridge to die.

His wife Susan points out this consistency several times as she and Elizabeth-Jane seek their “distant kin.” In Chapter IX, she says, “He was always so.” Henchard tells people exactly what he thinks of them and they know exactly what to expect of him.

Susan Henchard-Newson is a contrast with her husband Michael Henchard. She is passive and bitter whereas, Michael is active and enthusiastic. Hardy describes Susan as fatalistic. She is resigned to
whenever life brings her— even being auctioned off to another man whom she accepts as her new mate. Social mobility is a motive with Susan as well as with Elizabeth Jane. Susan leaves with the sailor in hope of finding a better life for Elizabeth-Jane, and returns to Henchard with a hope to help the second Elizabeth-Jane get ahead in life. Susan’s decisions affect the events and lives of the characters in the novel. At the onset, she decides to enter the furmity tent of Mrs. Goodenough. She accepts to be auctioned and exclaims that she is dissatisfied with her current partner. She leaves behind a note detailing Elizabeth-Jane’s birth and names both daughters Elizabeth-Jane, which confuses Henchard.

The Elizabeth-Jane who appears later in the novel is not really the daughter of Michael Henchard, but she is the daughter of Newson; hence, her real name is Elizabeth-Jane Newson. She endeavours to be a proper young Victorian woman. When she appears at the fair ground, she warns her mother against re-entering the furmity tent because the old woman is not respectable. Further, she views the figure of Donald Farfrae, whom she eventually marries, as respectable. Some believe that she is obsessed with the idea:

“Don’t speak to her,” she begs her mother, who has recognised the old, and by now shabby, furmity woman and wants to enquire whether she’s seen or heard anything of Henchard.” When they come to Casterbridge, she suggests that they should lodge at Three Mariners, because she has just seen a young
man go in there (it is in fact Farfrae) and ‘he is respectable.’ He is the only person in the novel who grows and changes, she works very hard at educating herself academically and socially. Henceforth, as Mayor, Henchard is crossed when she reverts to the dialect.

‘Bide where you be,’ he echoed sharply. ‘Good God, are you only fit to carry wash to a pig-trough, that ye use such words as those?’ (Hardy, MC, UBSPD, p.158)

She always tries to improve herself. She grows into a gentle, kind-hearted woman.

Elizabeth-Jane touches all the other main characters in the novel. She appears first, as a child, then friend, and later, wife. She serves as a sounding-board for the others. Elizabeth-Jane is a patient listener and confidante, she offers protection and advice.

While Michael Henchard represents energy in the novel, Donald Farfrae represents reason. He thinks more than he feels. He has a sharp business mind and writes every transaction in ledger books:

Letters and ledgers took the place of ‘I’ll do’it’, and ‘you shall hae’it’; and, as in all such cases of advance, the rugged picturesqueness of the old method disappeared with its inconveniences.
Henchard makes deals with handshakes; Farfrae makes them with contracts. Henchard uses brawn and personality; he even challenges Farfrae to a fight to the death. Farfrae uses intelligence and logic. John Paterson has noted that part of the Henchard-Farfrae fracas is the conflict between primitive or traditional and modern ways of doing business. Farfrae’s skill at business is highlighted in the following:

‘Yet I’ve done very well this year. O yes...you see that man with the drab kerseymere coat? I bought largely of him in the autumn when wheat was down, and then afterwards when it rose a little I sold off all I had! It brought only a small profit to me; while the farmers kept theirs, expecting higher figures—yes, though the rats were gnawing the ricks hollow. Just when I sold the markets went lower, and I bought up the corn of those who had been holding back at less price than my first purchases...I sold it a few weeks after, when it happened to go up again! And so, by contenting my sel’ with small profits frequently repeated, I soon made five hundred pounds—yes!’...‘while the others by keeping theirs in hand made nothing at all.’ (Hardy, MC, UBSPD, p.193)

Farfrae’s skill in business is due to his practical sense. He is described as sagacious, far-sighted, calculating and alert, which are essential characteristics of business people anywhere, especially in
the modern world. Even his rival Joshua Jopp admitted it: "He has such a knack of making everything bring him fortune."

By including old Scottish songs [Farfrae’s second feature was his love for Scotland, apparently] Hardy added a ‘romantic’ aspect to the character of Donald Farfrae. These ballads are mentioned in the next chapter as sociolinguistic features. He is also described as a ‘perfect gentleman’ in so far as his methods and relationships lacked anything underhanded, compared with the antics of his rival Joshua Jopp.

Farfrae’s entrepreneurial skill is augmented at the fair in which his show is successful and popular with townspeople compared to Henchard’s which collapsed. He was a thoughtful and sober man, who never took to drinking liquor or boisterous displays of character. He was helpful to Henchard after they split up too.

In analysis, Sengupta (1994) weighed Henchard’s passion against Farfrae’s reason. Notice the difference in the way the two men feel towards each other. Henchard’s emotions toward Farfrae are strong ones that range from love to anger to hatred to jealousy. Farfrae’s feelings about Henchard are mild ones that range from respect to friendship to annoyance to pity to mild indifference. He is admirable in his basic honesty and good will. For example, he suddenly accepts Henchard’s offer against his own interest to ‘see the world.’
'I never expected this—I did not!' he said. 'It's Providence! Should any one go against it? No; I'll not go to America; I'll stay and be your man.' (Ibid. p.82)

These qualities win him the respect of most of the people - rich and poor alike - in Casterbridge. But he is also callous in his disregard of Henchard’s feelings. He is suited to everything of Henchard’s, even his house and furniture, and goes so far as to paint his own name over Henchard’s on the signpost when he takes over Henchard’s business.

Lucas describes Lucetta as “of good family, well-bred and well-educated.” Shihada describes Lucetta as a wronged woman. She is a free spirit and an unconventional woman, and the only character who has been romantically involved with Henchard. However, as Shihada later explains, she is out of place in a prim Victorian society. “She collapses in a hysterical fit while watching the skimmity ride which is used to publicise her past.”^25 The ride is the villagers’ way of exposing the type of character or life they consider to be scandalous (by Victorian standards). So she suffers a fatal stroke at seeing her effigy in the skimmity ride. The noted feminist Beauvoire explains as follows:

“The woman who does not conform devalues herself sexually and hence socially, since sexual values are an integral feature of society.”^26
Lucetta suffers for her individualistic, unconventional and nonconforming life. Like Elizabeth-Jane Newson, Lucetta is determined to be respectable. But she is also bored and trying to escape her boredom. Like Henchard, Lucetta is also self-destructive. She writes letters to Henchard and meets him after her marriage.

Lucetta occasionally acts like a snob in the novel. She endeavours to act like the ‘great lady of Casterbridge’ and, eventually, causes Joshua Jopp, the former grain manager, to plot to destroy her—which leads to the skimmity ride—and causes the townspeople to humiliate her.

Richard Newson is the sailor who first buys Susan Henchard in Casterbridge for five guineas and then supposedly drowns at sea. Although Hardy intended to use his character to highlight Henchard’s weaknesses, he did not develop Newson’s character fully. However, whenever he appears in the novel, Henchard’s life takes its downturns. By contrast, Hardy makes Newson vanish in the novel to allow Susan Henchard to enjoy peace of mind and mend her relationship with Michael Henchard. In very Victorian manner, Susan prefers to re-marry Henchard due to public opinion.

Joshua Jopp has been compared to a Dickensian villain [but he lacks the dimensions of, say, Bill Sykes in Oliver Twist. However, he hides and appears in dark places or at night and is compared with rats. It is due to his grudges against both Henchard and Lucetta, he
plots their downfalls respectively. He helps to instigate the skimmity ride as a weapon against Lucetta. Henchard later resides with him, which leads to his eventual downfall.

In contrast with him is Abel Whittle. Abel Whittle appears twice in the novel. At first, he receives verbal abuse from Henchard after he continually arrives late for work. The second occasion is at the conclusion, when he recalls Henchard’s kindness to his mother and helps him. In the end, he announces that Henchard has died. Whittle is a simple man but a faithful one. He stays with Henchard at the end because of the latter’s kindnesses towards his mother.

Several minor characters appear in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*; they provide information about major characters. They successfully carry the impression of their leaders. These people such as Mother Cuxsom, Nance Mockridge, Christopher Coney and Solomon Longways stand outside the windows of the hotel, drink in the Three Mariners Inn, or gather at the side streets of the town. They serve as a kind of Greek chorus in the novel. [In Greek dramas a group of actors appeared on stage to comment on the action and fill in plot details.]

Sengupta (1994) comments that the main role of the chorus in the novel is to provide the reader with “a perspective on the main action.” Therefore, beside a perspective of action through the eyes of main characters, Sengupta mentions the means available to them,
such as the skimmity ride used to expose Lucetta. Among the characters aforementioned, three of them stand forth as the main voices of the chorus—namely, Mother Cuxsom, Christopher Coney, and Solomon Longways. At the point in the novel when the characters first meet Farfrae, Christopher Coney describes Casterbridge realistically:

‘When you take away from among us the fools and the rogues, and the lammigers, and the wanton hussies, and the slatterns, and such like, there’s cust few left to ornament a song with in Casterbridge, or the country round.’ (Ibid. p.67)

Nance Mockridge, though not a major member of the chorus, has a worthy speech on the re-marriage of Henchard and his ex-wife Susan, which like Coney’s remarks, bears the resemblance of prophesy or philosophy:

“She’ll wish her cake dough afore she’s done of him. There’s a blue-beardy look about ‘en; and ’twill out in time.” (Ibid. p.106)

There is a legend about the character of Bluebeard. He was an infamous lady-killer and murderer of his wife, a character created by the author.

The town chorus here maintains the traditions and superstitions of Wessex life. Significantly, they are the only true Wessex citizens in
the novel. All of the other characters are outsiders who have immigrated into the region.

3.5 Tess of the D’Urbervilles (1891)

Thomas Hardy wrote *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* in 1891. It was one of his last novels as he later decided not to write novels after the poor reception of it and of *Jude the Obscure*. The title character, the novel’s unusual heroine, is Tess Durbeyfield. Her father, John Durbeyfield, learns early in the plot that their family is related to the D’Urbervilles. He sends Tess to claim as much but she injures their horse and puts the family into financial trouble. To compensate she goes to the family of the antagonist, Alec Stoke-D’Urberville to seek employment and works for his aunt. Later, Alec seduces and rapes her. Tess bears a child, Sorrow, who later dies from illness. Tess overcomes her loss by working as a milkmaid, where she meets three other girls, among whom are Marian and Izzy Huett.

A farmer’s apprentice Angel Clare arrives and Tess falls in love with him. Despite being a modernist, Angel refuses to wed Tess because of her relationship with Alec. Angel leaves her for one year and Tess finally consents to wed Alec due to her family’s financial matters. Angel returns later, although both Alec and Tess think that he abandoned her. Finally, Tess kills Alec in a rage and must later hang for it. She meets Angel and escapes with him temporarily, but in the end she is caught and asks him to look after her little sister.
Tess Durbeyfield is the young daughter of a rural working class family. At the beginning of the novel, Tess Durbeyfield is sent to claim kinship with the wealthier side of her family, the d’Urbervilles, when her family faces imminent poverty. Some writers claim that Tess represents mythical symbols such as Demeter or Ceres, the Greek pagan goddess of the earth as when Angel, himself perhaps written as an allegory, refers to her as “Daughter of Nature” (XVIII). Angel calls her “Artemis” in Chapter XX, another metaphorical reference.

Illustration 6: Map, 'Tess of the D’Urbervilles'

After being seduced by Alec d’Urberville, she bears his child, which dies in infancy, and must leave her home to start a new life elsewhere. Although Tess is dutiful and obedient as the novel begins, she gains great strength and fortitude through her suffering,
but remains unwavering in her love for Angel Clare and is prepared to do anything that Angel might wish.

Hardy traces Tess’ life from the age of sixteen until she dies in her early twenties. Tess is an unusual girl, full of contradictory emotions and actions. Cornelia Cook comments that Hardy wanted to demolish the role of the passive heroine in the English novel [he was referring to Bathsheba Everdene, but she may have been a prototype or archetype for his later heroines]:

“Bathsheba’s character as a ‘self-reliant’, ‘deliberative’ and sexually aware woman is a challenge to the ‘doll of English fiction’ which Hardy vowed to ‘demolish.’”

On the one hand, Hardy portrayed her as feisty and independent; on the other, she’s shy and easily victimized. An outstanding example is when Angel Clare is watching Izz Huett and other dairymaids at work and admiring them, Tess warns him not to think of marrying her:

‘Marry one of them if you really do want a dairywoman and not a lady; and don’t think of marrying me!’ (Hardy, Tess, UBSPD, pp. 156-157)

In The Life of Thomas Hardy, Florence Hardy wrote that Tess follows a more balladic sense than novelistic sense, in so far as the heroine resembled a balladic heroine.
Tess of the D’Urbervilles, whatever else she may be, is the deserted maiden who finally murders her seducer with a knife in the effective ballad way. And she, with the love-stricken trio—Marian, Retty and Izz—is a milkmaid; and milkmaids, in balladry, folk song and folk tale, are somehow peculiarly subject to seduction.

Her independence and will is expressed in her first rejection of Alec as a suitor, and her sense of duty towards her family particularly after she (feels that she) has been responsible for their fate. Tess is the eldest child of her family and, as such, she is very conscious of her duty towards and the welfare of her family. Towards the hour of her execution, she urges Angel to care for her little sister, Lisa-lu.

Her character is caught between the old and new social orders, independence and dependence, spirituality and passion. In his portrayal of Tess, Hardy begins with the melodramatic Victorian stereotype of the “innocent seduced”, a girl whose life is ruined by those less sensitive than she is. Tess can be compared to a hunted animal [a comparison of most attractive and sexually aware women of her age in every society and every age of history]. She’s very beautiful and men always chase her. People are seen judging, pursuing, or rejecting her. Tess doesn’t try to change people; she respects their dignity and lets them make their own choices, though she’s there to help them in times of need.
Tess’s character is affectionate, sensual and smart despite her limited education. This is demonstrated by her answer to her brother’s question about the world. She thinks seriously about self-development:

‘Did you say the stars were worlds, Tess?’
‘Yes.’
‘All like ours?’
‘I don’t know; but I think so. They sometimes seem to be like the apples on our stubbard-tree. Most of them splendid and sound—a few blighted.’
‘Which do we live on—a splendid one or a blighted one?’
‘A blighted one.’ (Hardy, Tess, UBSPD, p.42)

This attracts her to Angel Clare. Hardy notes in Tess ‘At first Tess seemed to regard Angel Clare as an intelligent rather than as a man.’ (Hardy, Tess, p.141)

Tess endeavours to live a modern life but she ultimately reverts to traditional beliefs such as Fate. She seems to be fresher and even cleverer than either Angel or Alec. But she has been compared to the Hellenistic goddess of the earth. Her character has been assessed as arising from her mother’s rustic fatalism and her father’s heritage. In evidence, there is the following passage from the novel:
Between the mother, with her fast perishing lumber of superstitions, folklore, dialect, and orally transmitted ballads, and the daughter, with her trained National teachings, and Standard knowledge under an infinitely Revised Code, there was a gap of two hundred years as ordinarily understood. (Ibid. p.34)

Her father descended from the D’Urbervilles, a rebellious and temperamental clan, which influences Tess. Yet her ability to survive seems, to Hardy, to arise from her peasant origins.

Tess’ relationships with Angel and Alec are major focal points in the novel. The greater part of the plot depends upon these relationships, as Victorian social life between the sexes included courtship and marriage. Though Alec appeals to Tess’s sensuality, she rejects him. Her preferred lover, Angel Clare, is continuously seeking the ideal. But he refuses her due to his own adherence to traditional values, especially after she confesses about Alec.

Tess’s darker side is irrational and occasionally violent, as when she kills Alec towards the end of the novel. Hardy attributes this half of her nature to her primitive origin, the D’Urbervilles. Alec, though not legally a D’Urberville, exhibits the same characteristics to some extent. Hardy blames Tess’s noble blood but her temper is also a survival tool.
As Alec and Angel are opposites in nature, so they bring out the opposites in Tess’s nature. Angel brings out the ideal of giving and sweetness in Tess while Alec brings out her sensuality and her fury. At the end of novel, she gets furious because of Alec’s lies and stabs him. She acts more tenderly with Angel. Tess errs in allowing Angel’s disappointment, perceived according to his own ideals of her, to affect her so deeply.

Tess is a tragic heroine. That is, as a heroine, she shares the tragic flaw of the tragic hero, like Henchard, and finally dies. Yet, the most important is the fact that Tess is herself. She is unfailingly unpretentious. Tess always reminds Angel and Alec that she is a poor, simple dairymaid. She does not try to become a grand lady. Tess’ goals are to be happy and to make those she loves happy, to try to live a good and giving life in a difficult world.

Angel Clare is a clergyman’s son who has disappointed his family by failing to enter the ministry. Like Hardy he seems to have experienced a religious crisis that prevents him from believing in all the articles of the New Testament. Although it’s not stated specifically, Angel seems to be an atheist. He doesn’t believe in the supernatural, and so he follows human moral codes rather than those said to be “divine.” Our first impressions of Angel are very positive- he seems kind, honourable, bright, and open to new ideas. Angel Clare may have been duly named because of his moral character, in contrast with Alec, who is a rough, barbaric type.
Angel is more sophisticated and takes no advantage of women. Even when he arrives at Talbothays, where Tess and her fellow milkmaids are working, he only watches or speaks to them casually. Later, after he rejects Tess and tries to propose Izz Huett, we see him in a much less favourable light. He shares some traits with all other characters. Both men are self-centred and unstable. Angel goes from a loving husband to a man who criticises and rejects his wife. Angel isn’t an unbelievable character but a highly complex one who learns to match his ideals with his practices.

The son of a parson and the youngest of three brothers, Angel did not enter college as his siblings, despite his superior intellect, but rather diverged from the career path his father intended for him, the ministry, to study agriculture so that he might become a farmer. Despite holding more liberal opinions than his father and brothers, Angel Clare is nevertheless equally dogmatic and obstinate. He has a deeply theoretical mindset; it is this quality that causes him to reject Tess when he comes to know about her past that contradicts his idealistic view of her.

Alec Stoke-D’Uberville is not really Tess’s cousin. But he is her seducer. He may be considered among the least complicated characters of the novel, because he is straightforward with regard to what he wants and how he attains it. Some consider him to be narcissistic but he is certainly self-centred. Towards the end of the novel, he convinces Tess to be his mistress by promising to care for
her destitute family. Furthermore, after he loses Tess he takes up Evangelism but he quickly abandons it with the hope of claiming her again.

Perhaps apropos of Victorian literature [and melodrama, to which Alec’s character is attributed] one rather mean trick at seduction is the carriage ride. At first, Alec tells Tess to hold onto him; but many readers and critics exclaim that he intended to ‘frighten her out of her wits and force her to yield to his kisses.’ (Ibid.)

Alec D’Urberville was a youth of twenty-four years, with swarthy complexion and the heavy back moustache which is characteristic of the melodramatic antagonist. Although Alec seduces Tess, he’s not a complete villain. Even before he rapes her, he cannot win her attention, gratitude, or respect. Like Angel, Alec is in conflict with nature. His modern home, the Slopes, is more like a plaything than a working farm, and he doesn’t seem very comfortable with the natural life around him. Even the strawberries at the Slopes are “forced” to grow by man-made contrivances. While Alec is driven by his sensuality, it doesn’t ultimately satisfy him.

As Hardy points out, Alec’s whole personality doesn’t change, he just finds a new and different forum for his vehemence. He becomes a preacher out of boredom with life as a dandy and also perhaps as a reaction to the death of his mother.
Even though he has done much harm to Tess, he does offer to marry her. When he learns she’s already wed, he still wants to help her and her family. Alec admires Tess for not kowtowing to him; at the same time he wants to dominate her again.

Alec may not be aware of the method of relating well to others in the novel, as he only relates to Tess. Hardy’s primary interest in him is his temptation of Tess. By contrast with Angel, Alec appears to be a pragmatist and interested in helping those he desires in his life, such as Tess. Furthermore, Alec is in his own perverse way unhypocritical. Alec has no shame about sex, which to Hardy was a positive trait in someone living in the repressed Victorian age.

John Durbeyfield and his wife Joan are Tess’s parents in the novel. Hardy depicts them as lazy. They bear the responsibility of Tess’s problems. When John Durbeyfield learns that he has (supposedly) descended from the D’Urbervilles, his pride makes him feel superior so much so that he neither works nor accepts help from others. When Tess wants to baptise her child from Alec, she cannot because her father treats it her as an act of shame.

Joan Durbeyfield is basically a dreamer but unlike her husband, she was born of peasant stock and seems tougher, more hard-working. Unlike John Durbeyfield, Joan is very pragmatic about the realities of life. Though she raises her children cheerfully, she doesn’t hesitate to leave them with her eldest while she goes drinking with
John at Rollliver’s Inn. She has a fatalistic peasant philosophy and believes that whatever happens was meant to happen and can’t be avoided or changed. This keeps her from being ambitious, guilt-ridden and melancholy.

Together, Tess’s parents force Tess to accept responsibility beyond her age. Despite Tess’s apprehension of working for the D’Urbervilles, her parents’ inability to provide real security for the children forces her to accept the situation. A shocking realisation of Joan Durbeyfield is that she almost sets Tess up to be seduced; and then, after Tess returns home pregnant and unwed, Joan cannot understand why Tess did not force Alec to marry her.

Izz Huett, Retty Priddle and Marian are Tess’ friends at the dairy farm. They don’t stand as individuals, but as a group they represent a chorus that reflects, comments on and empathises with Tess’ love for Angel. They all are infatuated with Angel but know they’ll never win him, as they’re poor farm girls with no sophistication or education. They also believe, far more than Tess, that she is worthy of Angel.

Tess’s friends at the dairy are almost hopelessly in love with Angel Clare. Hardy described the room they shared with each other in this manner:

The air of the sleeping-chamber seemed to palpitate with the hopeless passion of the girls. They writhed
Izz Huett is the coolest and least talkative. Angel later asks her to go off to Brazil with him but retracts the offer when she speaks honestly and says that no one could love him more than Tess. Marian is duller but kinder; she drinks a lot after Angel and Tess’ wedding but she is still to help Tess to find a job at Flintcomb-Ash after Angel abandons Tess. Retty, the youngest of the three, is hypersensitive and tries to kill herself when Angel marries Tess. After this we hear little about Retty. Izz and Marian want to reunite Angel with Tess. When they see her with Alec they write to Angel and warn him that he’d best return.

Most important about these girls is that they could easily be jealous and malicious. They are compassionate and generous to Tess. Unlike most of the other characters they don’t disparage her or use her for their own benefit. They are the finest and the most charitable representations of country folk in the novel. They also bring comic relief to this very serious novel particularly in their romanticizing over Angel.
3.6 Jude the Obscure (1895)

'Jude the Obscure' was Hardy’s last novel, written in 1895. It is a story of a poor, lonely orphan boy called Jude Fawley. Jude gets kind support from his teacher Richard Phillotson, his teacher Phillotson marries his educated cousin Sue Bridehead. Jude is admitted to his aunt Drusilla’s house and he works on a neighbour’s farm as a scarecrow, but his sympathy to birds and animals puts him into trouble with Troutham, the owner of the farm. Jude eventually leaves for Christminster to be an architect. He meets and marries Arabella Donn, which causes him downfall. Meanwhile, Sue leaves Phillotson, and lives with him a while, then returns to Phillotson. Jude and Sue are socially criticised for living together without being married. Jude’s employers always dismiss him when they find out and landlords also evict them. Little Father Time observes the problems he and his siblings are causing their parents. He hangs Sue’s infants and himself.

This situation pushes Sue into a crisis of religious guilty. Sue learns it as a judgment and goes desperately back to Phillotson. Jude is tricked by drink into remarrying Arabella. After one final, desperate visit to Sue carried out in horrible weather; Jude becomes seriously ill and dies alone.

The setting for this last Wessex novel is Berkshire, an arable and natural terrain. Henceforth, Jude’s first employment is scarecrow on Farmer Troutham’s farm. He is paid six pence traditionally but is
finally asked to leave because he is kind to animals. Jude reads the Classics as suggested by his mentor, Richard Phillotson, who marries Sue Bridehead, Jude’s cousin. Sue’s attitude reflects Hardy after he studied other famous writers such as Charles Darwin. The prevailing social philosophy, which was familiar to George Bernard Shaw then, was *Darwinian Socialism*.

Jude Fawley is a lower-class young man, a village stonemason in the southwest English region of Wessex who dreams of becoming a scholar at “Christminster”, a city modelled on Oxford, England. Jude learns the classics and soon thereafter, he becomes a stonemason, believing that the occupation will offer him work continuously. It is possible that his character was inspired by Hardy’s apprenticeship as a youth. He is sent to Christminster for some Greek and Latin grammars. He is idealistic and imaginative, with ambitions of becoming a student at Christminster University.

‘Ever since his first ecstasy or vision of Christminster and its possibilities, Jude had meditated much and curiously on the probable sort of process that was involved in turning the expression of one language into those of another. He concluded that a grammar of the required tongue would contain, primarily, a rule, prescription, or clue of the nature of a secret cipher, which, once known, would enable him, by merely applying it, to change at will all words of his own speech into those of the foreign one ... He learnt for the first
time that there was no law of transmutation, as in his innocence he had supposed. (Hardy, Jude, UBSPD, pp.34-35)

Illustration 7: Map, 'Jude the Obscure' (Macmillan Publisher, Ltd)

Education has mostly been associated with formal or school learning at every level. Although he could learn as an apprentice stonemason, Jude keeps up hopes of attending college at Christminster [Oxford]. However, he journeys to Melchester, is supposed to enter the church; but he wants to be near his cousin,
Sue Bridehead. Jude himself has a great deal to learn about himself and the world in which he lives.

Sue Bridehead, Jude’s cousin, is an intelligent, sensitive, refined and rather unconventional young woman with whom Jude is in love. She marries Phillotson, but she leaves him and she lives with Jude. Later, she remarries Phillotson. Sue lives in Christminster, according to Drusilla Fawley, but her home and livelihood there are not mentioned:

*His grand-aunt had gruffly replied that she was his cousin Sue Bridehead, of the inimical branch of the family; and on further questioning the old woman had replied that the girl lived in Christminster, though she did not know where, or what she was doing. (Ibid. p.96)*

*Sue’s father ..... had gone back to London, but the girl remained at Christminster. To make her still more objectionable she was an artist or designer of some sort in what was called an ecclesiastical warehouse, which was a perfect seed-bed of idolatry, and she was no doubt abandoned to mummeries on that account. (Ibid. p.108)*

Lawrence has attributed to her all the wrong traits of modern women, and claimed that Sue retreated at the brink of any
relationship with men. A prime example is when she at first refuses to marry Jude:

‘I think I should begin to be afraid of you, Jude, the moment you had contracted to cherish me under a Government stamp, and I was licensed to be loved on the premises by you—Ugh, how horrible and sordid! Although, as you are, free, I trust you more than any other man in the world.’ (Ibid. p.318)

Sue has summed up the side of her character:

When I first knew you Jude I merely wanted you to love me. I did not exactly flirt with you; but that inborn craving which undermines some women’s morals almost more than unbridled passion - the craving to attract and captivate, regardless of the injury it may do the man - was in me; and when I found I had caught you, I was frightened. And then - I don’t know how it was - I couldn’t bear to let you go- possibly to Arabella again - and so I got to love you, Jude. But you see, however fondly it ended, it began in the selfish and cruel wish to make your heart ache for me without letting mine ache for you’. (Ibid. p.434)

However, Hardy accounted for her character in the following manner:
“...there is nothing perverted or depraved in Sue’s nature. The abnormalism consists in disproportion, not in inversion, her sexual instinct being healthy, as far as it goes, but unusually weak and fastidious. Her sensibilities remain painfully alert notwithstanding, as they do in nature with such women.”

Richard Phillotson is a kind schoolmaster with academic ambitions. He keeps Sue as a pupil-teacher under his training and later marries her. He has a kind nature and attempts to help both Sue and Jude. He is a man of two lives. He is raised in Marygreen and becomes a teacher there, later essaying to teach at Christminster but he eventually fails and returns home. The following quotation both explains Phillotson’s background and his aspirations:

‘You know what a university is, and a university degree? It is the necessary hall-mark of a man who wants to do anything in teaching. My scheme, or dream, is to be a university graduate, and then to be ordained.’ (Hardy, Jude, UBSPD, p.8)

She was a pupil-teacher under me, as you, know, and I took advantage of her inexperience, and toled her out for walks, and got her to agree to a long engagement before she well knew her own mind. Afterwards she saw somebody else, but she blindly fulfilled her engagement. (Ibid. p.284)
For more analysis, the researcher turns to Misra and Tragic Heroes of Thomas Hardy. Misra analyses Phillotson as the true tragic hero of the novel. Phillotson spent some time in Christminster (Oxford) like Sue. Misra explains that Phillotson’s flaw is his essential goodness.

Apposed to both Jude and Sue is a country girl, Arabella Donn. She is a coarse, sensual young woman who works on her father’s pig-farm and also as a barmaid:

“she was a fine dark-eyed girl, not exactly handsome, but capable of passing as such at a little distance, despite some coarseness of skin and fibre. She had a round and prominent bosom, full lips, perfect teeth, and the rich complexion of a Cochin hen’s egg. She was a complete and substantial female animal –no more, no less” (Hardy, Jude, UBSPD, p.46).

She marries Jude, then divorces him and marries Cartlett. After Cartlett dies, she remarries Jude. Arabella is earthy, realistic, perhaps sensible but also sultry and deceitful. She uses feminine wiles and emotions to make Jude marry her:

“Yes! And what shall I do if you desert me!”

“O Arabella—how can you say that, my dear! You know I wouldn’t desert you!”
Little Father Time is Jude and Arabella’s son. He is a solemn, rather anxious, pessimistic child with a prematurely aged appearance. The above mentioned dialogue with Sue Bridehead reveals something of his character, as does his later act, which is to kill himself and the other children in remorse. Little Jude feels that he is guilty and responsible for their misfortunes. Father Time starts by asking:

‘Can I do anything?’

‘No! All is trouble, adversity and suffering!’

‘Father went away to give us children room, didn’t he?’

‘Partly.’

‘It would be better to be out o’ the world than in it, wouldn’t it?’

‘It would almost, dear.’

‘Tis because of us children, too, isn’t it, that you can’t get a good lodging?’

‘Well – people do object to children sometimes.’

‘Then if children make so much trouble, why do people have ’em?’

‘O – because it is a law of nature.’

‘But we don’t ask to be born?’

‘No indeed.’ (Ibid. pp.409-410)
Aunt Drusilla Fawley is Jude’s great-aunt with whom he lives in Marygreen as a boy after he is orphaned. Mrs. Edlin is an elderly, kindly widow who is a companion to Aunt Drusilla. George Gillingham is a friend of Phillotson’s. He is also a schoolmaster. He tries to give Phillotson advice on his domestic difficulties. Physician Vilbert is a ‘quack’ doctor who practices in and around Marygreen. Vilbert deceives Jude that he will bring texts on Latin and Greek grammars if Jude finds customers for his medicines:

‘Got any orders, lad?’
‘Yes.’
‘And the Latin and Greek grammars?’ Jude’s voice trembled with anxiety.
‘What about them?’
He was an unsophisticated boy, but the gift of sudden insight which is sometimes vouchsafed to children showed him all at once what shoddy humanity the quack was made of. (Ibid. p.33)

Mr. Donn is Arabella’s father. Anny is a childhood friend of Arabella. She is coarse and cunning as Arabella. Anny’s nature is revealed around the scheme to trick Jude into marrying Arabella:

‘So it turned out a good plan you see!’ remarked the girl to the wife. ‘I knew it would be with such as him. He’s a dear good fellow, and you ought to be proud of un.’

‘I am,’ said Mrs. Fawley quietly.
'And when do you expect—?'
'Ssh! Not at all.'
'What!' 'I was mistaken.'
"O Arabella, Arabella; you be a deep one! Mistaken! Well, that’s clever—it’s a real stroke of genius! It is a thing I never thought o’, wi’ all my experience! I never thought beyond bringing about the real thing—not that one could sham it!'
'Don’t you be too quick to cry sham! ’Twasn’t sham: I didn’t know.’ (Ibid. p.73)

Cartlett is Arabella’s second husband whom she marries in Australia, although she was still married to Jude then. He is a coarse, red-faced man. He keeps a tavern. Uncle Joe and Tinker Taylor are drunkards usually accompany Jude in Christminster and they drink together.

3.7 Conclusion
As Sociolinguistics is the science that relates language and speech of characters with society, the main objective of this chapter is to explain the sociological background of both the major and minor characters of Hardy’s novel. Generally speaking, Hardy’s characters come from a certain background. They are predominantly rustic, dwelling in a certain region of Britain—the southwest, which is called Wessex, and spoke a dialect distinct from the standard
language. As the researcher has pointed out earlier, Hardy preferred his home territory to London; so, in actuality, his characters reflected this background and only a few selected characters, like Sue Bridehead, spoke the standard language.

In Chapter IV, the researcher intends to highlight the linguistic features of Hardy’s dialect and the speech of his characters.
REFERENCES

5. Ibid. p.38.
10. Ibid. p.65.
11. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid. p.119.