

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Triumph of Social Conventions over Human Impulse
in Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd*

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Letter of Recommendation

This is to certify that Mr. Mukti Ram Paudel, a student with exam Roll No. 1039, campus Roll No. 25/063 and TU Registration No. 9-2-48-3123-2002, has completed the thesis entitled “Triumph of Social Conventions over Human Impulse in Hardy’s *Far From the Madding Crowd*” under my supervision within the given period in accordance with rules and regulations specified by the Department of English, and I, therefore, forward it to the research committee of the Department for final evaluation.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Victorian Age and Hardy's Literary Pursuit

In the history of English literature the period roughly between 1830 to 1901 is known as Victorian Age. Queen Victoria accessed to the throne in 1837, and gave her name to the period that lasted until the end of the century. It was the age of rapid and wrenching economic and social changes. Industrialization took place because of national excessive technological possibilities. The pace and depth of such changes fostered a mood of nationalist pride and optimism about future progress in the mind of English people. The unregulated industrialization and development produced social stresses, class conflicts, and widespread anxiety about the ability of the nation and individual. The mushrooming industries extended the wealth for an expanding middle class by urbanization but brought massive poverty in slum neighborhoods.

The Victorian Age, for all its conflicts and anxieties was controversial in matters of religious, political and socio-cultural discourse. Therefore, England was approaching severe dissimilarities in those changes that had no parallel in earlier history. Till now the term 'Victorianism' is frequently used in a derogatory way, to connote narrow-mindedness, gender discrimination, and an emphasis on social convention and respectability.

The Victorian Age was the great age of English novel. The glory of late 19th century English literature was the publication of social novels. The main objective of those novels was the creation of conventional society. The issues dealt in those novels were mostly about the social problems. Instead of human desire accepted by romanticists, Victorian literature enunciated the greatness of human morality. Nineteenth century industrialization had great impact on Victorian novels.

Marxist's theory of class struggle had become the platform for the novelists in performing their writings. Some of the writers raised the issues of dialectical materialism to which Marx viewed as the structure of every society. On the other hand, nineteenth century novels like of George Eliot and Thomas Hardy had great influence of Darwin's controversial theory of 'organic evolution'.

Thomas Hardy born in June 2, 1840 in a small thatched cottage in Higher Buckhamton, Dorsetshire is a universally acclaimed novelist and poet of Victorian Age. He was educated at local schools from 1848 to 1854, and afterwards privately. His father was a professional architect. Hardy also followed his father's profession and later became an ecclesiastical architect. In 1863, he won the medal of the Royal Institute of British Architects and in the same year won the prize of the Architectural Association for design. But literature had a fascination for him during his middle ages. In 1867, he left London for Weymouth and there he wrote some stories and came under the influence of George Meredith, one of the towering figures of 20th century literature. In 1880, he finally forsook the pencil for the pen. Like Thackeray, Stevenson and Rossetti, Hardy's training in art has been of enormous service to him in the construction of his novels. His work as an ecclesiastical architect laid the real foundation of his success as a novelist, for it gave him an intimate familiarity with the old monuments and rural life of Wessex.

Desperate Remedies, Hardy's earliest novel, was published in 1871 and constructed on the lines indicated to him by George Meredith. In three successive years; 1872, 1873, and 1874- Hardy produced three masterpieces: *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and *Far From the Madding Crowd*. But since 1897, he wrote no novels. He abandoned writing novel for poetry and drama. At that time the praise of his verse was sweeter to him than the praise of his fiction.

So, at the age of fifty-five, Hardy's career as a novelist ceased and he turned to his early love verse and was known as a great and prolific poet of Victorian literature. *The Dynasts*, his greatest and longest epic-poem, appeared in three parts. Its stage is whole Europe; its atmosphere is war. It is the vast work with its hundred-and-thirty scenes. The whole episode is shaken by battle and volcano-bursts of history. Hardy defends himself against the charge of pessimism so often hurled against him in his latest volume of poetry appeared in 1922 under the title of *Late Lyrics and Earlier*.

In his old age, Hardy turned his hand to drama and produced many tragedies and comedies. He died in 1928 leaving a great influence on the writers of new generation.

A Short Look into Hardy's critics

Long considered one of England's foremost nineteenth century novelists, Hardy established his reputation with the publication of *Far From the Madding Crowd* in 1874. It was the first of his so-called "Wessex novels", set in a fictitious English county closely resembling Hardy's native Dorsetshire. The novel, whose title was borrowed from Thomas Gray's famous poetic work *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, initially appeared in *Cornhill* magazine and was Hardy's first work to be widely reviewed. In the novel, we suppose Hardy the man of nature and prudery. In this regard Daiches writes:

Far From the Madding Crowd uses a wider canvas and takes a closer look at the nature and consequences of human emotions. There is still an idyllic element present, but misfortune, coincidence, and the intrusion into the pastoral scene of an element of sophisticated selfishness from the outside world combine to make this love story much more tangled and more violent in its light and shade. (1075)

As a novelist, Hardy set his novels in the rural scenes. He portrayed his characters almost rustic. Some critics tended to praise *Far From the Madding Crowd*'s evocation of rural life or its universality of theme. "Hardy was almost too eager to deploy his hard-won knowledge and sophistication alongside more intimately known rural scenes and customs remembered from childhood" (Vance vi).

Hardy is equally praised for his regionalism in fiction. In most of his novels the scenes and characters are taken from the Wessex countryside. *Far From the Madding Crowd* is one of the best examples of local color fiction. In this regard Abrams defines local color fiction as "the detailed representation in prose fiction of the setting, dialect, customs, dress and ways of thinking and feeling which are distinctive of a particular region, such as Thomas Hardy's "Wessex" or Rudyard Kipling's India"(153). The Wessex setting is almost a theme in itself, with the changeless rhythms of nature and agrarian life set against the vicissitudes which confront the characters.

Hardy's intense love of nature and topography is one of his primal aspects in writing novels and short stories. In *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Hardy has created an imaginary Victorian Wessex out of various elements of Southern England for his own literary purposes. His love of the earth is an intensely personal and local one. In fact, by the assemblage of ecological and socio-cultural aspects of Wessex, Hardy presents the significance of the country's life. He drew the great majority of his settings from Dorset, or as he called it, Wessex, and especially the settings of the more important events in the novels generally accepted to be his best. So, he is supposed to be an interpreter of nature. In fact, his interpretation of nature gives us the clue to his outlook on relationship between man and nature. "The selective use of the Wessex environment and the increasing range and scale of settings later in his career

reflect Hardy's primary interest in examining, by means of his fiction, the nature of the relationship between man, the community and the environment" (Birch 352).

However, his love of nature is nothing mystic or transcendental as in that of romanticists. He never believes that nature has a separate life, a soul, of her own. He loves nature for her beauty, and not for any mystic qualities that she might have.

Far From the Madding Crowd was Hardy's first novel to receive considerable critical attention. It was widely reviewed in England and also marked an important stage in the growth of Hardy's international reputation. As being one of the Victorian realists, Hardy maintained his recognition as a great social critic. He showed the great contrast between individual instinct and social ethic:

As you start to think about this story bear in mind those novels usually focus on tensions between individuals and society. [...] One thing that you might well conclude from your reading of the novel is that there is little to find fault with about the attractive farming community in which it is set. By contrast, the characters, with the exception of Gabriel are seen to be fairly extreme in their behavior. Love is at the centre of the story, but it is a love that creates problems. (Peck 8)

Like Hardy's other novels, the role of fate or chance in *Far From the Madding Crowd* is predominant. His characters are puppets in the hands of fate. Chance plays an inevitable role in the framework of his novels. Hadn't Bathsheba sent Valentine's letter to Mr. Boldwood, the story might have turned to different tract. If Fanny had been buried the same evening and her dead body had not been placed in Bathsheba's house for the night, Bathsheba would never have been able to verify the identity of the woman with whom her husband had a love-affair before his marriage nor would she have known that she died in childbirth. That awful scene between Bathsheba and Troy

would not have taken place either. Hardy's interpretation of the human situation is a continuous struggle between man and omnipotent fate. His characters are doomed to fate, which is ultimately responsible for their misfortunes. For Hardy we human beings are such creatures to be befitted in the circumstances, where we are born. Fate is the common enemy of all. In a just vision of human life, all men alike are seen as brothers, banded against untoward Fate. Hardy embodies it in various forms. Sometimes, it appears as a natural force like the weather or as some innate weakness of character like sexual temperament. In *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Gabriel Oak is ruined as his two hundred sheep are killed being driven by a dog to a deep gorge. Likewise, Bathsheba happens to suffer several misfortunes because of her uncontrolled sexual drive.

Bathsheba Everdene is at the heart of the novel's engagements with incipient social change. Modern feminist interest in Bathsheba and Hardy's other women characters represents a continuation and development of late nineteenth century social, cultural and political debate in which Hardy himself played an important part as a novelist. "Bathsheba's relationship with Oak is an index of her initiation into the community" (Hassan 26). Though she is stirred by emotion previously, later she realizes her role in the society. As she says to Gabriel: "I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears, Pride ruled my will: remember not past years'" (Hardy 308). After Boldwood's insanity and Troy's death, the field is left clear for Oak to have his conjugal life, for Bathsheba to be reconciled. "For Bathsheba to be fully reconciled to the community she must have adequate relation with Gabriel Oak who is the community's best self, its point of articulateness" (Hassan 27).

Initially, Bathsheba is portrayed as a vain and superficial character. Her actions reveal her to be powerful and independent, which is not a typical characteristic

of a woman of her time. Such pride and willfulness allows her to act on her impulses. A young man of sound judgment and general good character, Gabriel Oak, upon hearing her remarks and seeing her outlook, becomes more curious and serious to her. He proposes her to be the life-long partner of himself. Then, Gabriel Oak has an inside determination that he will make her his wife. He confronts his intense love to Bathsheba thinking that love is a possible strength in an actual weakness and marriage transforms a distraction into a support. But Bathsheba turns away by ignoring Gabriel's intensity.

Besides her distraction with Gabriel, Bathsheba has an inhuman relation with Farmer Boldwood. To his surprise Bathsheba sends the Valentine to Boldwood with the seal "Marry Me" (Hardy 77). Her intention in sending the Valentine is just for fun. But Bathsheba herself expects no deal of untoward consequences. On receiving the letter Boldwood becomes obsessed in love with Bathsheba. This simple and seemingly trivial act of Bathsheba affects the story significantly. Her unfair deal causes Boldwood's entire character to change from a solid and wise man to an obsessed and damaged character.

An impulsive woman in nature, Bathsheba flirts with so-called handsome and dashing young man named Sergeant Troy. He is a soldier who comes to Bathsheba frequently and appreciates her beauty. She only wants to hear positive and flattering comments about her. Troy is a perfect gallant who is capable to satisfy her expectations of being constantly praised. Once she leaves for Bath so that she can resist her wild passion. At midnight she goes to Troy for elopement without considering the general rule of society. It is most venturesome for a woman at night and alone to have such a long drive.

Bathsheba's days after her marriage to Troy are suspicious. Troy exploits her physically and emotionally. But, later on, she learns Troy's relationship with Fanny Robin. Fanny dies while she is giving birth to the child fathered by Troy. Finally Troy says Bathsheba that she is not his wife morally. Even if Fanny is dead, Troy confronts that he loves Fanny and she is more to him in comparison to Bathsheba. Everything makes Bathsheba think Troy is no more than a charming character and a handsome man. She regrets her marriage with Troy.

Towards the final chapters of the novel, Bathsheba seems to grow into a more conventional woman. She begins to realize her flaws and starts to learn more about from her mistakes. Reformed Bathsheba is able to overcome all the rejections and begins to think about Gabriel's devotion. She changes herself from a superficial character to a more wiser and conventional one. She sets her happiness after getting married to Gabriel Oak, her long admiring lover.

So many critical approaches have been made to the novel but it has not yet been analyzed in terms of the effectiveness of social conventions in one's life, which in one of the major messages in the novel. In this work of research, attempts are being made to deal with the novel orienting the discussion to futile endeavors to violate social convention made by the humans. Bathsheba is such a character who is trying to go beyond the limits set by social conventions and who comes down to earth with the realization that social conventions are much stronger than individual impulses and that they can not be overcome with our unpremeditated attempts.

The questions that are to be dealt with this work of research are: why Bathsheba tries to go beyond the limits set by social conventions, how powerful our social conventions are though man-made and how much a person suffers if he/she

tries to violate the social conventions. Realism will be taken as the tool to deal with the subject matter.

The solutions to the problems will be sought with the hypothesis that social conventions are much stronger than anyone's willful nature and any attempts to violate those conventions result in great repentance, frustration and self realization. Rousseau says, "Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains" (qtd. in McRae and Boardman 79). Though his attitude is in favor of personal freedom, the reality is different. After anyone's birth, he/she is slowly and constantly nurtured with certain social norms and values. One's place and position in the society is fixed with how much he/she sticks to the system of the particular society. In the beginning of the novel, Bathsheba moves forward according to her personal will. She does this so that she can expose her vanity and pride of her beauty. She wants to be rebellious and extraordinary without thinking about her social and gender role in the community. Being trained in learning through suffering process, Bathsheba develops her character and accepts her role as a female in the society. The development of her character towards the final chapters of the novel reinforces the ideas that vanity is futile and that rebellion will ultimately be put down for the good of the community. On the other hand, she learns that no one can easily go beyond the limits set by conventions in the society.

CHAPTER TWO

Realism: Theory and Practice

Realism vs. Idealism

The term 'Realism' first used in France in the 1830s for literature is viewed as a belief concerned with representing the world as it is rather than as it ought to be.

Realism means 'truth-ism' in its literal sense. It is an outlook through which we see the life and everyday scenes as objectively as possible in an unpainted way. Although realism is not bound to any particular century or group of writers, it became the dominant mode of literature especially in the late 19th century European novels.

Realism is a mode of fiction that began especially in France in the 1830s with the novels of Honoree de Balzac. Balzac and Gustavo Flaubert were the leading and outstanding French novelists who perfected the realist novels. George Eliot introduced realism into England, and Williams Dean Howells introduced it into the United States. Their works especially try to depict the real life in the form of literature. So, in its pure form realism is defined as an unidealized outlook and a scientific assessment of everyday life.

Critics of the realistic perspective to fiction claim that realism in its deeper level places great value on the quality of society. On this ground, Raymond Williams in *Realism and the Contemporary Novel* writes:

When I think of the realist tradition in fiction, I think of the kind of novel which creates and judges the quality of a whole way of life in terms of the qualities of persons. The balance involved in this achievement is perhaps the most important thing about it. It looks at first sight so general a thing, the sort of thing most novels do. (584)

So the realistic perspective in fiction should offer the integrated relationship between an individual and the society. An individual is a product of society: every aspect of personal life is radically affected by the quality of the society.

Realism in art mostly reflects the way in which everybody sees the world. Broadly defined as a faithful representation of social reality, realism in fiction is a mode of writing that explores the ways human beings are trapped in social system that shapes and molds their lives, for good or ill. As stated earlier, a work of realistic fiction is a faithful representation of contemporary society:

Realism observes and documents contemporary life and everyday scenes as objectively as possible in low-key, unrhetoical prose and reproduces the flavor of colloquial speech in its dialogue. Though the realist writers may portray characters from all social levels, they often look to the lowest social class and take cruelty or suffering as their subject. (Ousby 322)

In contrast with romanticism and idealism, which embrace heroic and exotic subjects, Realism emerged as a movement in art and literature against the credo of bourgeois literature. The literature of Enlightenment and Romanticism was explicit with the sentiment of the people of feudal society. But the 19th century realistic fiction portrayed the everyday life of lower class people. Realism portrayed men and women in actual, everyday, and often demoralizing situation. It examined the social consequences of capitalism and middle-class materialism, the plight of the working class, and subjugation of women, among other matters. In tackling this aspect Lukacs argues “Both the great thinker and the great realist see the inhumanity of capitalist society, that all the harmony within man, his every creative expression, is being ruthlessly crushed” (906).

A lot of forces contributed to the rise of realism. In science, Charles Darwin demystified earthly existence by rejecting the biblical view of creation. He came to conclusion that the various species, including human beings, evolved from simpler organisms. The Christian view was that each and every form of animal life had been originated separately. By discovering the theory of 'organic evolution' Darwin challenged the biblical view of the creation of man and beast. Darwin drew attention to the great similarities between man and beast as he argued all living beings had once been evolved from the same organism (Gaarder 409). He believed that humans were not an exception to the rule governing other species. His idea raised a storm of controversy. Some people objected that Darwin's theory made human beings ordinary products of nature rather than unique beings. The spread of democracy also encouraged the realists to take an interest in ordinary people. The camera, newly invented in the 1830s, probably inspired the realists in their goal of truthful accuracy. All these influences combined to make realism as style intent on scientific objectivity in its projection of the world as it is.

American realism, as an artistic phenomenon, can be connected with the philosophical approach advocated by John Dewey. His belief was more than an elusive chimera-which remained a useful and useable name for a body of facts. In art this approach leads both artist and spectator towards the kind of work which presents the world as everyone would see it. American realism prevailed after the Civil War (1861-1865). Before the war, idealists championed human right, especially the abolition of slavery; after the war, all Americans' life changed in a remarkable way. With industrial development, the US economy became more focused on factory production. With the industrial development, the United States was transformed from a small, young, agricultural ex-colony to a huge, modern industrial nation. At the same time the constant influx of immigrants provided a seemingly endless supply of inexpensive labor as well.

All such economic, social and political changes that took place in post war life allowed the rise of American realism.

In contrast to European realism, American realism did not start out as a movement with clearly defined goals. Like romanticism, realism emerged late in American culture. Although it had emerged in Europe as a movement in 1840s, Americans were not well aware of this development. But after American Civil War the term realism was used, but not consistently as a movement before the 1880s. American realism was later developed as a distinct form of its own sharing some goals with European realism. Both American and European realism focused on the common place or the striving for objectivity in representation of the things (Cayton and Williams 565).

The leading 19th century French novelist and critic Emile Zola initiated a distinct form of literary realism known as naturalism. It is a mode of fiction and an artistic movement emerged in response to the subjectivism of Romanticism. Naturalism is sometimes regarded as an extension of realism. It gives more accurate description of life than realism. Commenting on the similarity and difference between Naturalism and Realism Gloria K. Fiero writes:

Somewhat like realism, naturalist fiction was based on the premise that life should be represented objectively and without embellishment or idealization. But naturalists differed from realists in taking a deterministic approach that showed human beings as a product of environment or hereditary factors over which they had little or no control. Just as Marx held that economic life shaped all aspects of culture, so naturalists believed that material and social elements determined human conduct. (88)

Naturalism, a philosophical thesis and a product of post-Darwinian biology in the nineteenth century, held a belief that everything and every happening are natural. A man is not free in society instead he is a victim of nature. In fact, naturalism is such a mode of fiction with a philosophical thesis that a human being exists entirely in the order of nature whose character and behaviour are completely determined by two kinds of forces, heredity and environment. We human beings are the subjects to the social and economic forces in the family, the class and the milieu into which we are born. Zola did very much to introduce the theory of naturalism in literature (Abrams 270).

Regarding realism in philosophy, it is mainly divided into two schools: extreme realism and epistemological realism. Extreme realism holds the idea that universals exist independently of both the human mind and particular things whereas epistemological realism represents the idea of theory that particular things exist independently of our perception. This position is in direct contrast to the theory of idealism, which holds that reality exists only in the mind (Lagasse 2369).

Realism can be explicit if we compare it to idealism. They are studied in a contradictory way as their positions in art, literature and philosophy are variant. Idealism is a set of beliefs and attitudes that places special value on ideas and ideals as products of the mind, in comparison with the world as perceived through the senses. In art, idealism is the tendency to represent things as aesthetic sensibility would have them rather than as they are.

The rise of realism appeared as an antithesis of romanticism and idealism. Eighteenth century sentimental novels bred only the happiness for the people of feudal class. Bourgeois influence was growing in those novels of idealistic mode. They talked rarely about the ordinary people. The position of working class people

was marginalized. In reaction to the exotic and hypothetical version of idealistic fiction, realism began as a new style to focus on the everyday lives of the lower classes.

In ethics, idealism implies a view of life in which the predominant forces are spiritual and the aim is perfection. In philosophy it refers to efforts to account for all objects in nature and experience as representations of the mind and sometimes to assign to such representation a higher order of existence. The treat of idealism in modern times has largely come to refer to the source of ideas to man's consciousness, whereas in the earlier period ideas were assigned a reality outside and independent of man's existence. Nevertheless, modern idealism generally proposes supra-human mental activity of some sort and ascribes independent reality to certain principles, such as creativity, a force of good, or an absolute truth.

Reality and Romance

'Real' means having an objective existence as it actually exists as a thing, and reality means the representation of things as they actually are. A realist is a person who accepts every truth naturally as it is without pretending it is different. What is different to reality is romance. Reality is also in contrast to ideals and illusions. So, reality is a phenomenon that is actually experienced or seen. A person who claims to be a realist should have sensible and practical idea of what can be done, achieved and accepted.

In contrast to reality, romance is an exciting feeling that is highly imaginative and emotional and concerned with ideals rather than reality. In its pure sense romance is associated with pleasant love affair. In regard to romance in literature, it began from Middle Ages. In English literature during Middle Ages some writers and poets perfected writings of romantic allegories. Generally

speaking, romance, in the first place, delights and entertains the rulers without bringing them face to face with realities. In the second place it builds the division between aristocrats and working class people:

Romance was the non-realistic, aristocratic literature of feudalism. It was non-realistic in the sense that its underlying purpose was not to help people cope in a positive way with the business of living but to transport them to a world different, idealized, and nicer than their own. It was aristocratic because the attitude it expressed and recommended were precisely the attitude the ruling class wished (no doubt usually unconsciously) to encourage in order that their privileged position might be perpetuated. (Kettle 208)

Romance is evocative of glamorous world- the world that escapes from a humdrum of reality. The primary function of romance is to highlight the standards and sanctities of aristocrats. Romance is sometimes satirized not for its own sake but because it hinders the person from telling the truth about life in all its aspects.

Romanticism is a term loosely applied to literary and artistic movements of late 18th and early 19th century. With Rousseau, the romanticists held that humans were by nature good but were corrupted by society. They set forth the idea of nature man; the man who was close to nature and unspoiled by social institutions.

Romantic heroes tend to challenge rather than champion the social and moral values of their time. Romantic hero is a figure of superhuman ambitions and extra-ordinary achievements. For romanticists a work of art is a direct expression of poet's soul.

Romanticists loved the genre of poetry through which they viewed that they could express their inner feeling in an idealized way:

The romanticists stressed emotion and sentiment. They believed that these inner feelings were only understandable to the person experiencing them. In their novels, romantic writers created figures who were often misunderstood and rejected by society, but who continued to believe in their own worth through their inner feelings. (Spielvogel 679)

Thus, while talking about realists and the persons who embrace romance, they differ in their perceptual and conceptual parameters. Romancers are those who prepare themselves to escape from the reality. They live by dreams and illusions. Glamour, fantasy and illusions are the premise of their livelihood. But realists are serious in nature; they prepare themselves to be adjusted in the society. One of the most important qualities of a realist is his bondage to society.

Realism in Literature

There were many forces in the rise of realism. Inequities of class and gender had existed throughout the course of history. Nineteenth century capitalism, materialism and industrialization brought massive change in English people. The prevailing industrial capitalism in England had left no room for the working class people. Therefore, social criticism was inevitable for pointing out those realities of poverty and inequality. In fact, nineteenth-century writers pointed those conditions and described them with unembellished objectivity. This unblinking attention to contemporary life and experience was the basis for the style known as literary realism.

The nineteenth-century novelistic genre had gained popularity for confronting the true picture of contemporary society. Most of the realistic writers championed in depicting the photographic reality of the society. As the novelistic

genre allows the writer to project the whole aspects of one's life, realists choose it as a style means of their artistic expression. "More than any other genre, the nineteenth-century novel- by its capacity to detail characters and conditions- best fulfilled the realist credo of depicting life with complete candor" (Fiero 82).

Nineteenth-century realistic novels were revolutionary in the sense that they played an inevitable role in defense of repressed human values and frustrated humanity. More than this, these novels portrayed the brutality of bourgeois culture and glorified honesty, humbleness and devotion of ordinary characters from working class. Modern realists have also great influence of narratives of 19th century realistic fictions. In regarding this matter Lukas argues:

It is no accident that the leading realists of our time have succeeded in obtaining a popular audience because their revolt is profound; for they really detest the destruction they see about them and do not merely dress up slogans in a formalist literature. [...] The revolt of the leading realists is the most significant development in the art of the bourgeois world today. This revolt has produced important art in a period most unfavorably to art, a period of a general decline in bourgeois culture. (907)

The emergence of realism in literature was possible only because idealism and romanticism mounted a critique of fragmentation of the individual in bourgeois society (Kettle 210). So, the impulse towards realism in prose literature was part of the breakdown of feudalism and of the revolution that transformed the feudal world. "Realism thus appeared as in part a revolt against the ordinary bourgeois view of the world; the realists were making a further selection of ordinary material which the

majority of bourgeois artists preferred to ignore. Thus 'realism' is a watchword, passed over to the progressive and revolutionary movements" (Williams 582).

More than any other genre, novel is more oriented toward the every detail of social discourse. The language and speech used in the novel has social meaning. The writer is always trying to find more things to say, more ways to say it so that the readers can understand the diversity of human voice, knowledge and experience. A novel can be a realistic fiction only when it opens the veil of contemporary society. In this regard, Ian Watt writes:

If the novel were realistic merely because it saw life from the seamy side, it would only be an inverted romance; but in fact it surely attempt to portray all the varieties of human experience, and not merely those suited to one particular literary perspective: the novel's realism does not reside in the kind of life it presents, but in the way it presents it. (215)

A realistic novel can be defined as the representation of the real world. The history and development of novelistic genre is closely associated with the concept of realism. We find the meanings and applications of any novel confusing if we do not consider realism with it. "Realism is a word that anyone studying novels can not avoid using, or at least trying to come to terms with" (Walder 17). Except novels, any other literary genre like poetry and drama seem irresponsible to address themselves more closely to the real life situation. Nineteenth-century realistic novels were successive as they described the detailed accounts of a person and his attachment to the family and even to the society. "The serious realists seek to depict the social life of their day with uncompromising verisimilitude and thus reject any pretence of harmony in life and of beauty in human personality" (Lukacs 906). Here,

Lukacs argues that the goal for all great artists is to provide a picture of reality; but they do this not by slavish copying.

Unlike romanticists, who intend to be isolated from community, realists place special value on the discourse of society. In the work of art, especially in novels, realists paint the picture of the community as it is rather than as it ought to be. They choose the characters from all social levels. Therefore, the community and its people are at the centre of the realist novels. “The realist novel needs, obviously, a genuine community: a community of persons linked not merely by one kind of relationship- work or friendship or family- but many, interlocking kinds” (Williams 589).

Realism, as defined as a record of contemporary society has been a kind of practical and responsible discipline for great writers and thinkers. However, realism is so complex; it is very difficult to say at once whether any work of art is realistic or not. In the realist novel character is more important than action or plot. The advocacy of the realists is to the interlocking relationship between an individual and community. On commenting this Williams argues:

Realism, as embodied in its great tradition, is a touchstone in this, for it shows, in detail, that vital interpretation, idea into feeling, person into community, change into settlement, which we need, as growing points, in our own divided time. In the highest realism, society is seen in fundamentally personal terms. The integration is controlling, yet of course it is not to be achieved by an act of will. If it comes at all, it is a creative discovery, and can perhaps only be recorded within the structures and substance of the realist novel. (590)

Most of the novels contain, fundamentally, a conception of the relation between individuals and society. In them the characters are aspects of the society and the society is an aspect of the characters. This means the balance between individuals and society; general way of life and individual persons are seen closely and absolutely. In such novels people are supposed to be integrated by ignoring their personal wills. So, more than anyone's private affair, social aspect is at the centre of realist novels.

France's leading and outstanding realists Balzac and Gustave Flaubert advocated novels having characters from all social and economic levels. The British novelist Charles Dickens became very successful with his realistic novels focusing on the lower and middle classes in Britain's early Industrial Age. His novels such as *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield* are about the hypocrisy of middle class people and the sufferings of the poor (Matthews and Platt 493). On the other hand, George Eliot's *Middlemarch* can be taken as a notable realistic novel. The concept realism had been common style for nineteenth century English novelists like George Eliot, Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Thomas Hardy and so on. As Ray T. Matthews & F. Dewitt Platt in *The Western Humanities* write:

English novelists also wrote in the new Realist style. Like their French counterparts, they railed against the vulgarity, selfishness, and hypocrisy of the middle class, but unlike the French, who were interested in creating unique characters, they spoke out for social justice, England's most popular writer of Realist fiction was Charles Dickens (1812-1870), who favored stories dealing with the harsh realities of urban and industrial life. (493)

Realist artists sought to show the everyday life of ordinary people and the natural world with photographic realism. They often employed a masterful use of dialect, regional culture and photographic scenes of specific locality to their novels. Most often the characters of the novels are factory workers, peasants, soldiers, housewives, and so on. Sometimes the subjects are too ordinary, too harsh, or too ugly to be interesting.

When we see Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd* through the light of realism, we find it working with the realistic perspective of Victorian society. The triumphant outcome of the novel is Bathsheba's acceptance of social conventions- the reality of society- that lies at the heart of the novel. The novel presents the life of the country folks as accurately as possible. The young beautiful lady Bathsheba Everdene is more interesting character in the sense that she leads her life out of social convention. Unlike Gabriel Oak, other characters such as Bathsheba, Troy, Fanny and Boldwood leave their track of social adjustment. They work into the scheme of their private affairs. Throughout the novel characters are presented going through chaos and order, non-adjustment and adjustment, suffering and peace, tragedy and comedy evil and good, and life and death. So, in coming chapter, attempts are made to deal with how realism works throughout the novel.

CHAPTER THREE

Characters' Attempts to Violate Social Conventions and Their Ultimate Failure

Victorian Social Conventions and Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd*

Society is a system in which each of the people is given the particular role in social and moral ground. Victorian society was quite traditional but rich in its culture. However, everyone was questioning to the relevance of such socio-cultural practices. Though the country was heading towards modernism, people's behavior and expectation were not changing.

According to Victorian social convention, wives were expected to be submissive, husbands to be protective and children to be obedient. Victorian females were supposed to be passive and restrained in their emotion. The terms decency, chastity, patience, and morality were almost approximated to the female character. Victorian tradition and prudery placed excessive emphasis on the chastity of women. Those women, who left their house in night time, were put on moral question. Sex before marriage, if known, was considered as a sinful act. Especially, women's proper sphere was within the four walls of the home; any contact with the outside world was supposed to corrupt and spoil them. Their sole business was to look after the children and comfort their husbands.

Victorian society expected more from males as it gave decisive role to them. The husband in a family was supposed to play the role of protector for the whole family. A family without a male member was thought to be weak and powerless one. So, it is worth noting that Victorian society was accelerated by male-centered culture. However, one who is either male or female had to be patient and emotionally controlled to fit for the society.

In Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd* Bathsheba Everdene is a beautiful young woman without a fortune at the beginning. She meets Gabriel Oak, a young farmer, and saves his life from a disaster one evening. He asks her to marry him, but she refuses because she does not love him. Upon inheriting her uncle's prosperous farm she, moves away to the town of Weatherbury.

A disaster befalls Gabriel's farm and he loses his sheep; he is forced to give up farming. He goes looking for work, and in his travels, finds himself in Weatherbury. After rescuing a local farm from fire he asks the mistress if she needs a shepherd. It is Bathsheba, and she hires him. As Bathsheba learns to manage her farm she becomes acquainted with her neighbor, Mr. Boldwood, and on a whim sends him a valentine with the words "Marry Me" (Hardy 77). Boldwood becomes obsessed with her and becomes her second suitor. Rich and handsome, he has been sought by many women. Bathsheba refuses him because she does not love him, but she then agrees to reconsider her decision.

That very night, Bathsheba meets a handsome soldier, Sergeant Troy. Unbeknownst to Bathsheba, he has recently impregnated a local girl, Fanny Robin, and almost married her. Troy falls in love with Bathsheba enraging Boldwood. Bathsheba travels to Bath to warn Troy of Boldwood's anger, and while she is there, Troy convinces her to marry him. Gabriel has remained her friend throughout and does not approve of the marriage. A few weeks after his marriage to Bathsheba, Troy sees Fanny, poor and sick; she later dies giving birth to her child. Bathsheba discovers that Troy is the father. Grief-stricken at Fanny's death and riddled with shame, he runs away and is thought to have drowned.

With Troy supposedly dead, Boldwood becomes more and more emphatic about Bathsheba marrying him. After a few days Troy reappears and he sees

Bathsheba at a fair and decides to return to her. Boldwood holds a Christmas party, to which he invites Bathsheba and again proposes marriage; but just after she has agreed, Troy arrives to claim her. Bathsheba screams, and Boldwood shoots Troy dead. He is sentenced to life imprisonment. A few months later, Bathsheba marries Gabriel, now a prosperous bailiff.

In the beginning chapters of the novel, in contrast to Victorian social convention, Bathsheba acts on her impulse; she develops a sort of chaos in her society. Her movement and temperament are far beyond those of a normal lady. Upon inheriting her uncle's large farm, she acts as if she became independent, and hires many workers for the farming. Now the mistress Bathsheba initiates to keep her relation with the outer world. In course of her traveling, she meets Sergeant Troy and falls in love with him so quickly. The reason Bathsheba falls in love with him is that he gives her all the praises and compliment that she wants and expects from males.

Bathsheba appears before us as a light-hearted and playful character with flexible and imaginative manners in matters of keeping affairs with males. She easily changes the depth of her relation with males or she does not mind even quitting it. Her motives in sending the Valentine to Boldwood also reveal another part of her character. But she is unprepared for its consequences. This simple and trivial act of Bathsheba causes Boldwood's entire character to be a hopelessly obsessed one. After reading the valentine letter Boldwood turns out to be crazy of her. He cries out of happiness. As we read:

The substance of the epistle had occupied him but little in comparison with the fact of its arrival. He suddenly wondered if anything more might be found in the envelope than what he had withdrawn. He jumped out of bed in the weird light, took the letter, pulled out the

flimsy sheet, shook the envelope-searched it. Nothing more was there.

Boldwood looked, as he had a hundred times the preceding day, at the insistent red seal: 'Marry me,' he said aloud. (Hardy 79)

Throughout the novel there are many occasions when a girl like Bathsheba is put forward with the great deal of unconventional behavior. In the novel, Boldwood's obsession in love with Bathsheba, Fanny's pregnancy before her marriage, Troy's culprit and Bathsheba's superficiality are all considered rather unconventional behavior. Almost all the characters are punished one way or the other; Fanny and Troy by death, Boldwood by insanity and imprisonment. However, Bathsheba suffers more than others. Hardy saves his heroine Bathsheba from death or other form of punishment just to make her realize the significance of social conventions. After being rejected many times by Troy, Bathsheba realizes how shallow her marriage with Troy is and will ever be. It is worth mentioning that Bathsheba learns through suffering. Finally she proposes Gabriel, a rewarded hero who is almost ready for emigrating. She stops him and they are pleased in having themselves as husband and wife.

Violation of Cultural Boundaries

Far From the Madding Crowd is one of Hardy's Wessex novels for the setting to this novel is provided by the counties to which Hardy gave the name of Wessex as a whole. In the novel, Hardy has purely considered a detailed account of the occupations, recreations, simple joys and sorrows, superstitions, customs, traditions, and of the social life in general of the countryside of this region. Hardy's treatment of rural life is quite typical in this novel. It is characterized by the minute observation of both seamy and pleasant side of rural life. According to him rural life is happy and peaceful but there is also much ugliness, turmoil and the intrusion of evil. Hardy has

presented such phenomena as realistic as possible. James Gibson in his *Introduction to Far From the Madding Crowd* mentions that Hardy makes the culture and lifestyle of his rustic community a major theme of his story. He also makes us aware of the tradition, workfolk and rural scenes of his community (xxv-xxvi).

It is an obvious fact that Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd* is a pastoral fiction set in a traditional rural area as he calls Wessex. In the novel the rural dwellers follow a number of occupations such as farming, sheep rearing, harvesting, hay-making and bee-hiving. Despite the pastoral reality, Hardy's predominant theme of the novel is the revelation of mankind's predicament in the universe. As the novel was published serially, characters and events of the novel have been introduced in the scenes where they have their roles to play. Hardy introduces his characters as life-like as they befit the context of the novel. The central action of the novel is the expression of the central characters. The trait, characterization, and conception of each character are developed on the basis of the stress of circumstances. Through this novel Hardy has left a vision how variably a community is structured.

The novel unfolds firstly with the description of Gabriel Oak and his strange meeting with a girl named Bathsheba Everdene. Gabriel Oak is a young man of twenty-eight and still a bachelor. He is the man of sound judgment and good character. Oak, a shepherd of his own flock of two hundred sheep, is good at sheep rearing. As a charming beautiful girl Bathsheba travels to Oak's farm house many times by wagon, we find her very strange in her posture. "The girl, who wore no riding-habit, looked around for a moment, as if to assure herself that all humanity was out of view, then dexterously dropped backwards flat upon the pony's back, her head over its tail, her feet against its shoulder's, and her eyes to the sky"(Hardy 14).

As stated earlier, from the beginning chapters of the novel, Bathsheba is introduced as a vain and superficial young woman. Her main fault is her vanity. Before going to bed in the evening, she looks at her face in the mirror. Although Gabriel learns all the eccentricities about Bathsheba, he begins to think about her and prepares himself to propose her for marriage. Bathsheba seems to be unusual from the very beginning. She is very much conscious of her beauty and has a vain desire to be looked at, to be admired and to be desired by men. All her behaviors and temperament indicate that she is an instinct-led woman. The extent to which Bathsheba is shown in the novel is ambiguous, and that leads us into confusion whether she is masculine or feminine. She seems not to have been in touch with any culture. Commenting on Bathsheba's such ambiguous traits Mistichelli writes:

In *Far From the Madding Crowd* uncertainty or ambiguity about sexual identities and roles becomes a recurring motif, especially in connection with the heroine, Bathsheba Everdene. Time and again in the novel, one encounters situations where outright confusion or some reversal of expectations about Bathsheba's sex produces significant revelations about her character and introduces important turns in her life. (53)

Bathsheba displays odd temperament towards the male characters in the novel. Although she saves Gabriel's life from suffocation in a hot hut, she is indifferent to his marriage proposal. She is not ready to tell even her name to him. It'd better let alone her thought of considering Gabriel's contention of marrying her. Gabriel is innocent to see the new light in direction of begging Bathsheba's hands. In course of his frequent meeting with her, he tries to convince her to marry him. However,

Bathsheba turns her deaf ears to him in matters of marriage, thinking that she is better educated and more mature in her business of farming. As she says:

‘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 26)

As quoted above, without a moment’s hesitation, we can say that she is an arrogant and imprudent woman. Her response to Gabriel’s kind dealing sets her character as a bullying woman, which is never accepted in existing social conventions. By his continuous hard work Gabriel is grown to be a farmer from a mere shepherd, but he is fixed in his devotion to her. As the young woman comes to milk the cows near his hut Gabriel’s love and passion increase. He is determined to make her the life-long partner of himself so that he can resist his passion. As he says: “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 26).

Gabriel-Bathsheba relationship begins to go into depth since the time Gabriel loses his flock of two-hundred sheep and gets employed in Bathsheba’s farm. Upon inheriting her uncle’s large farm Bathsheba moves to a place called Weatherbury, more than twenty miles off, leaving that neighborhood. She employs Gabriel as a shepherd. Oak’s friendship circle rises as he extends his mobilization at different public places.

An episode of Fanny's indulgence with her soldier lover poses a tension in the novel. Fanny Robin, an ancestral servant maid of Weatherbury disappears for sergeant Troy, who comes there in Bath as a soldier in The Eleventh Dragoon-Guards, with the hope that he marries her. Fanny's illegitimate sexual relationship with Troy is quite striking and it results in her own death while giving birth to child in the workhouse. According to Victorian social convention, pre-marital sexual relation is a great sin in anyone's life. Through this episode Hardy tries to reflect the vulgarity and vile and corrupt nature of Middle class people. Though Hardy was firm in the revelation of that reality, Leslie Stephen, the editor of popular *Cornhill* magazine seems to be quite worried. As Professor Vance in his Introduction to *Far From the Madding Crowd* writes:

He worried a little as to whether Fanny Robin's illegitimate baby was strictly necessary, though Hardy stood firm on that point, got him to tone down direct references to sexuality which might alienate the respectable (and largely female) middle- class readership on which the *Cornhill* depended. For this he has been condemned as a prude, blaming the reading-public for his own squeamishness. (vi)

As mentioned earlier in chapter one, no female was supposed to be an heiress to the property. Neither they were allowed to reach the extent of high emotion nor they could have been independent as their own. From the very beginning of the novel Hardy's heroine Bathsheba seems to be longing for autonomy and independence. More than this she is a vibrant, self delighting and energetic woman who always embraces the world of glamour. She wants to have her beauty eulogized. She is like a gypsy moving from place to place. She shows her active presence in corn market fair and other public places. Besides this, her role as a proprietor of the large farm with

many employees leads us to the conclusion that Bathsheba is not a woman of ordinary novelty. The following speech made by Bathsheba to her farmhands clarifies how bold and authoritative she is:

‘Now mind, you have a mistress instead of master I don’t yet know my powers or my 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 (if there are any such, but I hope not) suppose that because I’m a woman I don’t understand the difference between bad goings-on and good.’ (Hardy 65)

When Bathsheba hears of farmer Boldwood’s arrival at her farm house she inquires one of her farmhands Mrs. Coggan about Boldwood. She regrets her inability of meeting with him:

‘Who is Mr. Boldwood?’ said Bathsheba.

‘A gentleman-farmer at Little Weatherbury.’

‘Married?’

‘No, Miss.’

‘How old is he?’

‘Forty, I should say-very handsome-rather stern-looking –and rich.’

(Hardy 59)

For the first time Bathsheba meets Boldwood in the corm market. In order to attract his attention towards her, she sends a valentine to Mr. Boldwood with a seal “Marry Me” (Hardy 77), pretending she loves him. Being obsessed with that beautiful letter farmer Boldwood visits her time and again with an offer of marriage. He becomes wild in his love with Bathsheba and speaks out: “My life is a burden

without you,' he exclaimed, in a low voice. 'I want you-I want you to let me say I love you again and again!'" (Hardy 99).

Gabriel Oak, who serves Miss Everdene faithfully, does not like her treatment to Boldwood. He suggests that she do not play such a mischievous trick upon Boldwood. But Bathsheba misunderstands his kind suggestion and she warns him instead. "I cannot allow any man to – to criticize my private conduct!' She exclaimed. 'Nor will I for a minute. So you'll please leave the farm at the end of the week!'" (Hardy105). Bathsheba angrily tells him that she does not even want to see his face anymore. Without any remorse Gabriel leaves her farm. But later, he is again invited by Bathsheba herself at a time of great misfortune when her sheep are almost finished by dying of swelling. It is obvious that Bathsheba is not such a person who has a firm stand on her decision. It also proves that she behaves unusually. As J.W Beach remarks:

The discovery of Bathsheba in the role of a personage capable of giving employment to the shepherd her discharge of dishonest bailiff and her payment of the laborers on person, her appearance in the corn market to do business with men, and at the head of the table at the harvest festival as patrol of the feast-all these are incidents in building up a personality of unusual impressiveness. (qtd. in Gibson, Hardy and His Critics 363)

In spite of her willful nature, Bathsheba seems to be capable of handling all sorts of business with great confidence like a male figure. While doing so, she takes no concern of general rule of society. It is her challenge to the contemporary social supposition that females are simply the passive products of society.

Once in the evening while Bathsheba is just outside the farm staring, she encounters a man brilliant in brass and scarlet. She finds her skirt hooked with that man. Instead of unfastening her cloth from an unidentified man, she allows herself to be drawn into conversation with him. The man is sergeant Troy, a soldier of Eleventh Dragoon – Guards with whom Fanny Robin hopes for courting previously but fails to do so because of her going to wrong church:

For a moment Bathsheba thinks of leaving her skirt behind in order to free herself – in a Victorian context a titillating idea in itself – but Troy’s continuing flattery of her beauty, embarrassing, is also intriguing, and she allows herself to be drawn into conversation with him, a first premonition of the mingled fascination and distress which will typify her later connection with the dashing sergeant. (Carpenter 342)

In their meetings Troy satisfies Bathsheba’s expectations of being constantly praised and flattered. “It is probably nothing but convention that makes 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 no ‘lady’” (Duffin 12). Showing her vanity she only wants to hear positive and flattering comments about her. She would get smug with such remarks without ceremony. ““Thank you for the sight of such a beautiful face!”” (Hardy 128). Indeed Troy is a good looking handsome soldier who visits Weatherbury frequently for mere pleasure. He wants to make beautiful Bathsheba his easy prey for fulfilling his dream. He understands Bathsheba’s real gravity and appreciates her beauty:

“I’ve seen a good many women in my time’, continued the young man in a murmur, and more thoughtfully than hitherto, critically regarding her bent head at the same time; ‘but I’ve never seen a woman so

beautiful as you. Take it or leave it- be offended or like it- I don't care.'" (Hardy 129)

Why Bathsheba is fascinated with Troy is because of his skillful sword practice. Her adventurous spirit is fully aroused when she sees him playing of sword. Troy, the lady-killer, is able to win over Bathsheba by his marvelous demonstration of swordsmanship. But she fails to feel and acknowledge the sincerity and intensity of the passion both of farmer Boldwood and Gabriel Oak.

The most radical and striking side that goes beyond the general rule of society is her riding to Bath alone to see Troy during the night. She does not want anyone to know that she has been to Bath. Later, everyone reads the news that Troy and Bathsheba are married in Bath secretly. Before leaving Weatherbury for Bath, Bathsheba pretends that she has a plan to visit Liddy, her personal servant. In response to her farmhands' doubt she questions with an exclamation whether a lady can not move an inch from her door without information. Commenting on this remark of Mistress one of the workers suggests to Bathsheba: "'But how was we to know, if you left no account of your doings?' expostulated Coggan, 'and ladies don't drive at these hours, miss, as a general rule of society'" (Hardy 168).

After all, Bathsheba is vehement in her love with Troy. She is ready to kick up every social norms and values for Troy. She does not like people commenting Troy's character. We feel pity for the reason that Bathsheba is not capable of understanding Troy's real intention. When she meets Troy and they are married, we can see once again a chance encounter of them which will become of supreme importance in the course of Bathsheba's life.

Learning through Suffering

The whole plot of *Far From the Madding Crowd* undergoes in the pattern of 'learning through suffering'. In the novel the plot moves from courtship and seduction towards tragedy with the painful casting out or destruction of some characters. At the end, it turns to be a more serene conclusion with suitable man marrying the heroine and the rural community celebrating the event. Hardy uses the 'learning through suffering' process, making both of his main characters undergo it. In the early chapters of the novel, emerging from the experience of the loss of his farm, having gained through his ordeal of misfortunes, Gabriel reaches the point of stoic sublimity.

The tragicomic pattern is built around the process of learning through suffering. After her disappearance from Weatherbury, Fanny comes back into the story to die. Fanny is a woman like Bathsheba who defies the conventions of her sex. She actively pursues Troy and becomes sexually intimate with him outside of marriage. Unlike Bathsheba, however, she dies tragically defeated of her purposes. Pregnant with Troy's child but abandoned by him, she represents the likely fate of women who are careless of their place. However, she is presented chiefly as a victim and the object of our sympathy rather than of our judgment.

On the scale of our judgment, farmer Boldwood is a self-deceived and self-ruined man. In getting a valentine letter, he is fixed on the words "Marry Me" (Hardy 77). Boldwood conducts his courtship of Bathsheba on the premise that she is a treasure to be prized. Though Boldwood's feelings are heartfelt, they show how much he is dominated by presuppositions about his role in courtship and marriage and too little about what Bathsheba needs and wants. So, he is locked into his own sexual attitude and perceptions that make him an inappropriate mate for Bathsheba. At the time when Troy reappears in the scene after a long time and claims Bathsheba his

wife, furious Boldwood kills Troy out of jealousy. Then, Boldwood himself turns out to be insane and is pronounced of life imprisonment.

More important to the novel, indeed its very focus of interest is Bathsheba's maturation through suffering. She develops from a state of moral solipsism and narrow vision to one of moral expansion and wider sympathy. "Bathsheba is judged for her errors springing from vanity and she wins ultimate approval for having purged them through suffering" (Jones 423).

There is only Gabriel who can have the sound judgment of weather. Everyone along with Troy is celebrating a huge feast being almost drunk in Bathsheba's farm. Gabriel goes there to warn the possible danger of thunder and storm on the naked and unprotected Ricks of wheat and barley. Gabriel with a mood of helping his mistress struggles alone to save the Ricks from the storm while other workmen and Troy are lying unconscious showing no sign of responsibility. Since then Bathsheba praises Gabriel and has a doubt of Troy: "'O, I know it all-all', she said, adding slowly: 'They are all asleep in the barn, in a drunken sleep, and my husband among them. That's it, is it not? Don't think I am a timid woman and can't endure things'" (Hardy 199).

In the great scenes of her dying sheep and the terrible storm, Bathsheba seems to have realized the importance of mutual help. Bathsheba thanks Gabriel for his kind devotion. Remembering the moment of her marriage to Troy, she begins to think the matter in a new light. She explains the circumstances under which she marries Troy: "'And I was grieved and troubled...'. She cleared her voice, and waited a moment, as if to gather breath. 'And then, between jealousy and distraction, I married him!' She whispered with desperate impetuosity" (Hardy 200). So it is clear that after doing his best, Gabriel is able to save Bathsheba's property. Both Gabriel and Bathsheba try to understand each other wiping out all their disillusionments. She suggests that he do not

misunderstand her. She begins to realize that the devotion of Gabriel is well-contrasted with the treachery of Troy. Regarding this matter Duffin comments:

In the great scenes of the storm that threatens to destroy Bathsheba's farm his steady work on the stacks is worth more than some wild emotional 'I would die for you', as Bathsheba realizes. After the two have worked together to save the stacks, only time and opportunity are needed to make them husband and wife. (12)

Through long time suffering and after her exposition to three different kinds of suitors she finally finds true worth in Gabriel's love:

She is exposed to three different kinds of amatory experience: the steady, enduring though unexciting, love of Gabriel; the obsessive, frustrated, almost insanely self-centered doting of Boldwood; and the exciting, romantic, physical attraction of Troy. Bathsheba rejects Gabriel and Boldwood in favour of Troy, and but learns through suffering that Gabriel's love is the only love which many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown, beside which the passion usually called by the name is evanescent as steam. (Gibson, Introduction xxi)

Love is the main force which causes suffering throughout the novel. It causes accidental death to Fanny and Troy, insanity and imprisonment to Boldwood and unexpected suffering to Bathsheba. For Boldwood, Bathsheba is a dream. On getting the valentine he becomes a man of overmastering passion. The valentine, which Bathsheba sends him in a fit of spring folly, lights a flame that eventually burns him up.

Conviction breeds convictions, but Troy is always involved in gambling and drinking. Even after his marriage he does not seem to be the master of the farm. He

spends his wife's money gambling on horses. When the news of Fanny's death comes in Weatherbury, Bathsheba begins to understand the relationship between Troy and Fanny. Bathsheba orders one of her farmhands to bring Fanny's dead body for burial in Weatherbury churchyard. But it is too late for burial that very day. Therefore, the coffin is kept in Bathsheba's farmhouse. Bathsheba finds Fanny dead with her baby. Bathsheba becomes suspicious about Troy's relation with Fanny. She finds the match between the color of dead Fanny's hair and the color of a small curl of hair she noticed at the back of Troy's watch. When Liddy informs that Fanny's lover was a soldier, Bathsheba easily guesses that her husband is responsible for the tragedy of Fanny Robin. Since then her heart is not at rest. Her curiosity and excitement in her bosom to know about Troy allows her no peace.

More important to the novel and in fact the core of learning through suffering is Troy-Bathsheba's final declaration of their feeling to each other at the time Troy kisses dead Fanny. Bathsheba flings her arms around Troy's neck wildly from the depth of her soul and exclaims: "Don't-don't kiss them! O, Frank, I can't bear it-I can't! I love you better than she did: kiss me too, Frank-kiss me! *You will, Frank, kiss me too!*" (Hardy 237) Troy disengages himself from her, feeling astonished at her outburst. Troy, loosening her tightly clasped arms from his neck, looks at her in bewilderment and replies that he will not kiss Bathsheba. As he confronts to Bathsheba:

'This woman is more to me, dead as she is, than ever you were, or are, or can be. If Satan had not tempted me with that face of yours, and those cursed coquetries, I should have married her. I never had another thought till you came in my way. Would to God that I had; but it is all too late! I deserve to live in torment for this!'" (Hardy 237)

Bathsheba cries out of disappointment and agony. Sobbing pitifully she asks Troy of her value in his life. In response to her question he says: ““you are nothing to me-nothing. A ceremony before a priest doesn’t make a marriage. I am not morally yours’” (Hardy 238). On hearing such remarks Bathsheba can not stand anymore on such talk. She is overcome by a powerful impulse to run away from him. She waits no other remarks but goes out. By citation, we read:

Her obsessive jealousy of Fanny is paralleled by Boldwood’s obsessive jealousy of Troy, and her hatred of her rival is finally overcome by an act of reconciliation, the tending of Fanny’s grave, an act which binds together these two women who have loved too well and been exploited by Troy with his ‘winning tongue’. (Gibson, Introduction xxx)

Bathsheba’s life is now troubled by the gloomy memories of her past. She can not think anymore about her life. She undergoes the enlargement of her husband’s absence from hours to days with a slight feeling of surprise, and a slight feeling of relief. Taking further no interest in herself as a splendid woman, she acquires awakening contemplating her probable fate as a singular wretch. At the moment there is a rumor that Troy is dead by drowning. But he reappears in the scene claiming Bathsheba his wife while Bathsheba, Boldwood and other farmers are celebrating Christmas Eve party at Boldwood’s farmhouse. Troy is shot dead by Boldwood. It is more interesting to note that Bathsheba takes her husband’s corpse alone to her house for burial. Then, Bathsheba begins to see the new light in her companionship with Gabriel Oak, who has faithfully waited like the oak of his last name.

Bathsheba’s Recuperation into the Premise of Social Conventions

Social conventions are the laws of society on which human civilization depends. They are inescapable if we wish to have meaningful relationships with the

people around us. It means that our lives are governed by such conventions set by the society. A society is such a forum on which we perform our culture by means of those practices like marriage, language, law, family, class and gender. Without mutual adoption of those social laws, we can not make our society harmonious. If we want to be the responsible member of our society we should always pay attention to what the society expects from us. In the different spheres of society, we have our certain roles to play and only then we can have a sense of self. But there will be great problem when we try to escape that system of society. If someone dares to be different, he/she is taken under the care of social lens.

Far From the Madding Crowd begins by introducing the two main characters, Gabriel and Bathsheba, and it ends with them. The main plot is about them: Gabriel's love for her, her rejection of him, his serving of her as her employee, and their eventual marriage after the death of Troy and the imprisonment of Boldwood. Bathsheba's story is that of vanity and suffering and maturity. As stated earlier in chapter one, in Victorian age man is the head of the family. It is male who is responsible for all social contacts, and plays the role as a protector of the family. Women, on the other hand, are dependent, subdued and restrained in emotion. In the last chapters of the novel, Bathsheba previously portrayed as powerful and independent woman changes into a personality which makes her a more subdued and more conventional woman. In this regard Duffin writes:

In last chapters, where Gabriel and Bathsheba find beauty in loneliness by breaking it in two, have a sunset peace in which we see the loveliest side of Hardy's outlook on life: his faith in the camaraderie, the product of experience endured side by side, which alone can make love strong as death. It is also the logical and long-foreseen end of the story:

this is where fate, character and the fitness of things have been leading.

(14)

Towards the final chapters of the novel Bathsheba grows into maturity. She realizes her conventional role as a woman in her society. She admits her own flaws to others and seems to become less pretentious. Again this shows us further development and change in her character. Fanny's death is more important than her life in the sense that it provides the revelation of Troy's love to Fanny and Bathsheba herself. "Finally, a planning master piece, the two plots meet where the dead Fanny and the live Bathsheba come face to face in Bathsheba's house from which Fanny has fled at the beginning of her pregnancy" (Gibson, Introduction xxvii). On hearing the news of Gabriel's migration to California by next spring, Bathsheba feels sad. In the earlier scenes she refuses to face the truth about Troy. Now she comes to the time that she has to face the reality. As she says to Gabriel:

'And what shall I do without you? Oh, Gabriel, I don't think you ought to go away. You've been with me so long-through bright times and dark times such old friend as we are- that it seems unkind almost. I had fancied that if you leased the other farm as master, you might still give a helping look across at mine. And now going away!' (Hardy 309-310)

Even when Gabriel is almost invited by Bathsheba to speak again of love he makes no move, knowing the time is not yet. He wants to make her realize more and more. He writes a letter to her saying that he can not renew his relation instead he is leaving his service shortly. Grief-stricken by this letter, Bathsheba remains in complete desolation and cries bitterly. Since Troy's death she attends no fair, no market and no transaction. Gabriel accomplishes all these on her behalf. Desolate Bathsheba, in this evening in an absolute hunger for pity and sympathy, goes to

Gabriel's house just after sunset. She thinks a great deal of a single woman going to call upon a bachelor in the evening who lives alone:

A lively firelight shone from the window, but nobody was visible in the room. She tapped nervously, and then thought it doubtful if it were right for a single woman to call upon a bachelor who lived alone, although he was her manager, and she might be supposed to call on business without any real impropriety. Gabriel opened the door, and the moon shone upon his forehead. (Hardy 311)

Feeling awkward they sit side by side in the wooden chairs. They speak very little of their mutual feelings as they are long known friends. Bathsheba proposes him without delay. Being mutually agreed with the decision of getting married in the following day, they let themselves embrace the happy circumstances, the long-foreseen ending of the novel. Their ultimate mutual feeling proves that there is only one thing inalienable that is love which is as strong as death. On the very day of the wedding we are reminded of Gabriel's request to Bathsheba for arranging her hair to be bride years ago on Norcombe Hill. On their way to church for wedding they go with their umbrellas over them, walking arm-in-arm for the first time in their lives:

An observer must have been very close indeed to discover that the forms under the umbrellas were those of Oak and Bathsheba, arm-in-arm for the first time in their lives, Oak in a great coat extending to his knees, and Bathsheba in a cloak that reached her clogs. Yet, though so plainly dressed, there was a certain rejuvenated appearance about her: As though a rose should shut and be a bud again. (Hardy 317)

The wedding ceremony in the church takes place in a very short time and very quietly as she does not wish to be stared by a crowd in the church. On behalf of their

wedding, Weatherbury people prepare a grand celebration without informing Gabriel and Bathsheba. Both of them are greeted by a tremendous blowing of trumpets and the firing of the guns. People visit there to offer their greetings and best wishes to the newly wed couple.

Above all, the ending of the novel is all embracing because it fixes the equation of male and female role. It is more fitting that Bathsheba recognizes all social norms, values and orders she is encircled. It is not the point of satisfaction but more than this is their learning that the true and permanent love results from knowing the rougher sides of each other's character. The story of *Far From the Madding Crowd* plots the tragic cross-purposes of five people fighting for happiness through love. Throughout the novel, all the characters suffer. After their eventual marriage Bathsheba and Gabriel come under the control of reality. As Roy Morrell remarks: "Ahead of Gabriel and Bathsheba is no romance, but a reality that Hardy represents as more valuable, a reality of hard and good work on the two farms"(qtd. in Gibson, *Hardy and His Critics* 366). Therefore, Gabriel's unchanging love and Bathsheba's fitness to her role as woman have led the novel into the more fitting conclusion.

CHAPTER FOUR

Failure of Human Attempts to Transcend Social Conventions

By social convention we mean the social system under which we human beings undergo through our course of life. Anyone becomes a member of a certain society after his birth. If there are people, there is society; if there is society, naturally there are people. A society itself is a system in which people live together in organized communities. Men and women live in a society. People of a particular society have common aim and custom under which they exercise their daily practices. On the basis of gender, age, skill and ability, one is assumed to run his/her life. In fact social convention is the general rule of society and codes of conduct are not inborn but man-made. The structure of a particular society has a great influence in an individual's role in it. On the other hand, culture is made through religion and customs. As being the member of the society one should be responsible to give animation to the existing culture and tradition.

When a child is born, it knows nothing. In course of its development into a person, it is recognized on the basis of class and gender. A man by nature is a free being. But there is a society that chains everyone at a certain place. As being the member of a particular society one has to accept its existing norms and values. We may have many desires in our life but the problem is whether they are acceptable in the society. It is still a debatable question whether a man is to be free or chained in the system of the society. If we are driven with our willful nature we can no longer be the responsible member of the society. Since our birth we are trained with the system of the society. Until and unless we are fit for our society we are often regarded as a real devil.

As stated earlier, Victorian society is male-dominated; females have a modest role within and outside their family. Victorian society expects nothing splendid from females. It is against mores to be out of the family bondage for female. So, Victorian conventional standard supposes females to be patient, passive and polite but not to be potent, peculiar and provocative. However, one who is either male or female should run the course of life according to the underlying pattern of social convention. Otherwise life can not go ahead smoothly. In the novel *Bathsheba* undergoes so many ups and downs because of her attempts to violate the pattern.

In regard to *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Hardy appears to be an author making social convention his writing principle. Hardy, no doubt, is a realist but he is more different than other realists. By showing protagonists', especially Bathsheba's, rougher side and her ultimate acceptance of social standard Hardy trains his characters in 'learning through suffering' process. Throughout the novel Gabriel plays the role of moral touchstone. In the novel Hardy places everything clear under the sun. In the beginning, characters are thrown into their own individual world, suffer very much and ultimately, learning through suffering, they accept their conventional role. In *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Hardy brings life-like character; and reflects their natural habit without any disguise. The interplay between romance and reality is the basic pattern of the novel. Many of the characters such as Bathsheba, Troy and some what Fanny represent the world of romance, they seem to be afraid of reality, the reality of society, one way or the other they are punished: Troy and Fanny by death and Boldwood by insanity and imprisonment. But Hardy saves his heroine Bathsheba, though it is too late, to make her realize the importance of social convention. The basic pattern of a capricious and immature heroine wooed by three very different men

is cleverly used by Hardy to portray a complex of feelings and his attitude is wise and realistic.

On the other hand, Gabriel Oak an embodiment of his society accompanied so long with Bathsheba through bright times and dark times represents the world of reality. In the novel he not only works with reality but also warns Bathsheba's deafness to obvious danger of marrying Troy. The need of men and women for each other is also Hardy's major subject in the novel. It is fully recognized when Gabriel and Bathsheba work together in the storm, helping each other and protecting the necessary food for man and beast. His timely rescue of Bathsheba's property recalls Bathsheba's rescue of his life in the first phase of their life at Norcome Hill and becomes an almost symbolic reminder of the pattern of interdependence and mutual protectiveness between Gabriel and Bathsheba that lies at the imaginative center of the novel. Hardy has, no doubt, the idea that love can be great thing. At its best, love can be a creative force throughout the universe. But it is love that sometimes causes unexpected sufferings in one's life. As exemplified in Gabriel and Bathsheba's ultimate marriage, for Hardy, the true and permanent love results from sharing each other's happiness and difficulties. Merely knowing each other's pleasures is not a way of true love. On commenting this fact Peck writes:

What you might conclude from this passage is that Gabriel seems unlike several of the other characters. Whereas they seem to think only of themselves, Gabriel allows a sense of his social responsibility to dominate in his thinking and behavior. This is reflected in his actions throughout the novel: for example, it is Gabriel who almost single-handedly protects the hay-ricks from the approaching storm. He is the

embodiment of social virtues in a world where so many of the people and nature itself seem to run wild. (11)

So far concerned with Bathsheba's relation with Troy, we see Troy never helpful. Instead of saving and encouraging the farmhands to work in the great scene of storm, Troy lies unconscious in a drunken manner and makes other workers do the same.

Bathsheba is in fact a fascinating and completely life-like character. All are agreed about her exceptional beauty and grace. But throughout the novel we learn that only thing access has its potentialities for trouble. According to conventional Victorian standards the appropriate husband for Bathsheba can only be Gabriel for he tries his best to protect her from her woman's weaknesses by giving her security and the wisdom of his maturity. He wants Bathsheba to know the reality of society. Such values that Gabriel promotes when he defends Boldwood's marriage offer and brings Fanny's coffin at Bathsheba's farmhouse so that she can learn Troy's reality are directly associated with the sense of humanity. The qualities that Gabriel possesses make him more fitting as Bathsheba's husband than lady-killing Troy and obsessive Boldwood.

What should be obvious by now is that whatever we turn in the novel we will encounter some sense of a conflict between social convention and order and a whole range of disruptive instinct and passion. And finally the conflict ends in characters' overcoming their wild passion and accepting the general rule of society. As Mistichelli writes:

It is interesting to note that the marriage of Bathsheba and Oak comes about on the occasion where she initiates the idea, not he. In their union there is present the triumph of the wedding principle not only in

the sense that the partners who belong together are finally joined.

There is also suggested that in such a joining, roles and identities are intermingled and exchanged. What results is a love that bypasses the condition of predator and prey, parasite and host, or master and servant. Male and female come together to promote the fulfillment of their humanity-not merely to insure the survival of their species. (63)

Throughout the novel we find many examples of Gabriel's kindness, common sense, equanimity and love for others. It means he plays the role as an embodiment of social virtues. He loves Bathsheba and longs for her. However, he can not make her own until she learns to accept her conventional role because of her hubris and vanity. After being deserted by Troy and her causal suffering, she finds new light in Gabriel's devotion. And their ultimate marriage is welcomed as it is long and foreseen end of the novel. Both of them set their happiness and peace after getting married to each other. Thus, the conventional wisdom attained by Bathsheba at the end is the triumphant aspect that fosters peace and serenity in the minds of novel's protagonists.

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