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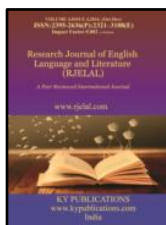
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THE DANGER AND DESTRUCTION INHERENT IN ROMANTIC LOVE AND MARRIAGE IN FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD OF THOMAS HARDY

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to enlighten the destruction inherent, in romantic love and marriage in Far From the Madding Crowd of Thomas Hardy. Bathsheba begins the novel as an independent woman, she rejected the love of Gabriel Oak, but by falling in love with Troy, she nearly destroys her life. Thomas Hardy has witnessed the joys and sorrows, love and marriage, failure and frustration, danger and destruction in this novel. Hardy's intention is to show his rejection to the society's attempts in fitting women into limited roles. Since he thought that women should be given a chance to break and free from the traditional gender categories and forge identities of their own. So marriage was, in fact, a social trap by means of which a woman becomes dependent on her husband.

INTRODUCTION

Far From the Madding Crowd was considered to be Thomas Hardy's first truly successful novel than the other 3 novels: Desperate Remedies, Under The Greenwood Tree and A Pair of Blue Eyes. Thomas Hardy had written novels at an extraordinary rate for more than 20 years. After the publication of Jude the Obscure caused a major scandal in 1895, Hardy stopped writing novels and devoted the rest of his life (more than 30 years) to poetry. His last great project was an epic poem titled "The Dynasts," a versed chronicle of the Napoleonic Wars. After some time he built himself a house in his native Dorsetshire in London and lived there for the rest of his life. He was widowed in 1912 and married Florence Dugdale in 1914.

Bathsheba Everdene is a beautiful young woman without a fortune. She meets Gabriel Oak, a young farmer, and saves his life one evening. He asks her to marry him, but Bathsheba refuses because she does not love Oak. Upon inheriting her

uncle's prosperous farm she moves away to the town of Weatherbury.

A disaster befalls Gabriel farm and he loses his sheep; he is forced to give up farming. He goes looking for work, and his travels find 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 neighbour.

Bathsheba sends Boldwood a valentine card with the words "Marry me." Boldwood becomes obsessed with her and becomes her second suitor. Rich and handsome, he has been sought after 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, Troy 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 Troy married 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, Troy runs away and is thought to have drowned. With Troy supposedly dead, Boldwood becomes more and more empathetic about Bathsheba marrying him.

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

Bathsheba begins the novel as an independent woman, he rejected the love of Gabriel Oak but by falling in love with Troy, she nearly destroys her life. Similarly, Hardy presents us with many couples in the novel. Much of the plot of *Far from the Madding Crowd* depends on unrequited love: love by one person for another that is not mutual in that the other person does not feel love in return.

Gabriel Oak loves Bathsheba. Once he has lost his farm, he is free to wander anywhere in search of work, but he heads to Weatherbury because it is the direction that Bathsheba has gone. This move leads to Oak's employment at Bathsheba's farm, where he patiently consoles her in her troubles and supports her in tending the farm, with no sign that he will ever have his love returned.

This novel focuses on the way that catastrophe can occur at any time, threatening to change lives. The most obvious example occurs when Oak's flock of sheep is destroyed by an unlikely confluence of circumstances, including an inexperienced sheep dog, a rotted rail, and a chalk pit that happens to have been dug adjacent to his land. In one night, Oak's prospect as an independent farmer is destroyed, and he ends up begging just to secure the diminished position as a shepherd.

Fanny Robin is deceived by the promises of Troy to marry her and she becomes pregnant before marriage and later given birth to a child. Because of her lower social status and poverty might damage Troy's reputation. So Troy rejects Fanny and marries Bathsheba just for her money and quite predictably their relationships end in a serious crisis. Both Fanny and Bathsheba are deceived by Troy.

Bathsheba sends a valentine's card to attract Boldwood attention to her. Bathsheba's selfishness and vanity cause the downfall of an individual. She rejected Boldwood. Troy flatters her and praises her beauty and finally succeeds in trapping her in a loveless marriage.

Love is central theme of Hardy's novels. Woman's passivity and frailty makes her depends on fate. The women's rights activists revealed their dissatisfaction of traditional marriage and instead advocated marriages based on love, companionship, equality, and women's autonomy.

Bathsheba with her love and vanity, Gabriel Oak with his unwavering loyalty and devotion; Troy with his irresistible manner of talking; Boldwood with his serious and gloomy nature and his volcanic passion – all these are Hardy's realistic and convincing characterisation. It is also closely observed that how the three men namely Gabriel Oak, Farmer Boldwood and Sergeant Troy tried to win the love of Bathsheba.

Legal rules, social practices, and economic structures all worked together to induce a woman to marry, and then insured that once married she would be dependent upon and obedient to her husband. So marriage was, in fact, a social trap by means of which a woman became dependent on her husband.

In the novel Hardy manifests these cultural tensions and attempts to depict the background of marriage and gender in the course of women's liberation. He thus challenges the conventional perception of marriage, gender and traditional ideas in social class. Like in his other novels his characters rebel against this society by making decisions that contradict the expectations of their society and lead them to an unconventional end.

The novel also contemplates the relationship between luck and chance and moral

responsibility characters like Sergeant Troy are always careless and destructive and because of such characters the life of Bathsheba was also spoiled by marriage. According to some people marriage are made in heaven. But by the novel *Far from the madding crowd*, Hardy proves the Love and marriage can be considered as destruction. Life of Bathsheba was happy before the marriage, but when she got married she led an unhappy life. Fanny robin was the other character who died because of her romantic love towards Sergeant troy. She became conscious when the Troy impregnated and cheated her. She met death as the fate, because of her romantic love on Troy. Thus by this paper attempts to enlighten the destruction inherent, in romantic love and marriage.

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