

2017

## Character-based Dynamicity in Thomas Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd: A Techno-Thematic Preview

استاذ مساعد  
جامعة الأزهر-غزة  
Marwan Hamdan, marwan\_hamdan1964@hotmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.aaru.edu.jo/alazhar>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

### Recommended Citation

Hamdan, Marwan (2017) (استاذ مساعد) "Character-based Dynamicity in Thomas Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd: A Techno-Thematic Preview," *Journal of Al-Azhar University – Gaza (Humanities)*: Vol. 19 : Iss. 1 , Article 12.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.aaru.edu.jo/alazhar/vol19/iss1/12>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Arab Journals Platform. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Al-Azhar University – Gaza (Humanities) by an authorized editor. The journal is hosted on [Digital Commons](#), an Elsevier platform. For more information, please contact [rakan@aarj.edu.jo](mailto:rakan@aarj.edu.jo), [marah@aarj.edu.jo](mailto:marah@aarj.edu.jo), [u.murad@aarj.edu.jo](mailto:u.murad@aarj.edu.jo).

---

## Character-based Dynamicity in Thomas Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd*: A Techno-Thematic Preview

### Cover Page Footnote

مجلة جامعة الأزهر- غزة، سلسلة العلوم الإنسانية 2017، المجلد 19، العدد 1

## Character-based Dynamicity in Thomas Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd: A Techno-Thematic Preview

Marwan A. Hamdan

Al-Azhar University – Gaza

تاريخ الاستلام 2016/12/21 تاريخ القبول 2017/4/19

### Abstract:

*This research examines Thomas Hardy's multi-thematic novel Far from the Madding Crowd based on its artistic techniques and characters' mobility. Hardy's novel revolves around serious human values and virtues such as love, marriage, socialization, and naturalization. Such thematic values are basic themes that this paper explores their aesthetic techniques. Meanwhile, the paper tries to interpret Hardy's novel in the light of concepts of thematization and characterization, which trace the mentalities and consciousness of his major characters in the intended narrative. Hardy's artistic vision towards male and female characters is the center of this paper, for both genders undergo various stages of transformation based on each character's dreams, expectations, desires, and hopes. The robust characterization of males and females is strikingly sketched in Far from the Madding Crowd. Hardy's characters' mobility largely depends on their rooted visions and fragmented expectations; they undergo various phases of vicissitudes in their life scheme. Hardy presents his characters who are controlled by inevitable factors and conflicts with both nature and society.*

**Keywords:** Thomas Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, Thematic techniques, Narrative Style, Characterization.

Marwan A. Hamdan

**الملخص:**

يتناول هذا البحث دراسة رواية توماس هاردي "بعيدا عن الزحام الصاخب" متعددة الموضوعات في ضوء تقنياته الفنية وحراك الشخصيات. تحوم رواية هاردي حول القيم الإنسانية والفضائل الحقيقية مثل الحب، والزواج، والتنشئة الاجتماعية، والتطبيع الاجتماعي. هذه القيم الموضوعية هي الموضوعات الأساسية التي يقوم هذا البحث بتحليل تقنياتها الجمالية. وفي الوقت نفسه، يحاول هذا البحث تفسير رواية هاردي في ضوء مفاهيم توليد الفكرة وتوصيف الشخصيات، والتي تتبع الحالة العقلية والوعي لدى الشخصيات الرئيسية له في الرواية قيد الدراسة. تعتبر الرؤية الفنية لدى هاردي تجاه الشخصيات الذكورية والأنثوية هي مركز هذا البحث، حيث يمر الجنسان في مراحل مختلفة من التحول في ضوء أحلام كل شخصية، وتوقعاته، ورغباته، وآماله. تتطوي رواية هاردي على توصيف قوي لافت للنظر للشخصيات الذكور والإناث. يعتمد حراك الشخصيات في رواية هاردي و إلى حد كبير على رؤاهم المتجذرة وتوقعاتهم المتشظية، أنهم يمرون بمراحل مختلفة من التقلبات في حياتهم. يقدم هاردي شخصياته الذين تسيطر عليهم عوامل وصراعات لا مفر منها مع الطبيعة والمجتمع.

**Introduction****The Plot under a Critical Lens**

The Victorian age is a period of artistic and thematic transformations that insightfully bring forward new questions about modern human self and its challenges and dynamics. In such an age, male and female characters construct their dynamic inter-relationships in the light of their dreams, hopes, desires, and independent schemes. Based on his portrayal of dynamic male and female characters of all social classes in the Victorian era, Hardy is still one of the most significant and controversial novelists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Evoking various technical tools, Hardy dramatizes his female characters' "strength, intelligence, and capability" to reflect upon their gender qualitative nature, which paradoxically embodies human desires as forces that subdue individual will and control "the making and unmaking of their socially ratified relationships" (Sandlin, 2011, p. 20). For example, Bathsheba is one of such female characters; she experiences her happiness in marriage with Oak, substituting her loss of Troy. Hardy presents her as "the stuff of which great men's mothers are made. She was indispensable to high generation, feared at

---

**Character-based Dynamicity in Thomas Hardy's *Far From the ...***

---

tea-parties, hated in shops, and loved at crisis" (1998, p. 328). Based on her own desires and expectations, Bathsheba undergoes serious transformations, through which she establishes her own modernized values, while other characters resist such modernized values. Both classes of Hardy's characters are examined and characterized in the 19th century English fiction. Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) embodies a web of thematically interwoven artistic characterization and technical structure. Hardy's visionary characterization traces irresolute characters who are viewed as "simulacras; amalgamations of nerves and sensations" that represent modern ordinary people (Prentice, 2016, p. 2).

Hardy's narrative is mainly concerned with class conflict and human social life. The theme is centrally emphasized through love-marriage stories and romances. The paper argumentatively and insightfully revisits such ideas in the light of formalistic assumptions of style, techniques, themes, and characterization. Moreover, women and feminist concerns are one of the focal themes in the novel, in which Hardy's narrator exposes the Victorian hypocrisy and moral bankruptcy. Also, the novel reflects Hardy's repudiation of the social or cultural obsession with female celibacy. In this light, Fanny is a striking representative of such a motif in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Out of her miscalculations, she loses her sense of life and becomes unable to manage it. Eventually, she and her child die out of dearth. The narrative is set in a fictitious English area involving pastoral characters and settings. Characters struggle against time and chances, and the settings play a tense role that intensifies this struggle or conflict, in which the virtue is rewarded. Accordingly, the novel has its own melodramatic tone that grants it universality. In this sense, the paper deconstructs, interprets, and evaluates the internalized technical and thematic features of the novel.

**Suggestive Contextual Characterization**

In the light of his significant narrative *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Hardy presents his own human vision that is sympathetic to his realistic characters as human beings. The American writer Mary L

**Marwan A. Hamdan**

Anderson (1972) describes Hardy's characters as passive with no free will to determine for themselves, viewing Hardy as “a determinist or fatalist” (1972, p. 2). For instance, Bathsheba and Troy are controlled by external forces that make them follow their sentiments and desires. Penny Boumelha (2005) argues that human desires guide Hardy's characters to chaos and indecisiveness, “Character after character experiences desire as force overmastering individual will.... Stunned, mesmerized, dizzied by desire, these characters act under the power of a kind of natural law that at once motivates and undermines the making and unmaking of their socially ratified relationships” (p. xvii-xviii). Thus, Hardy representative ordinary dynamic characters long for natural existences to formulate their own intimate ties and exercise the standardized values of their age. Such characters' role is to patriarchally teach their community as a whole to practice “rituals of rationality, gentility ... being considerate, showing dignity, avoiding humiliation, docility, continence, persistence, selflessness, truthfulness, courage, devotion to duty, sympathy for and protection of the weak, patience and good-heartedness” (Keshavarzi, 2012, p. 284). In this regard, Hardy chooses Oak to enact all these human qualities; Oak is frankly praised for such traits. Dynamically, Hardy's characters precede the realistic readers; Bathsheba playfully lives her moments of human love and inflated ego, Oak shows his determined devotion, Troy presents us with his own overwhelming dynamicity of expression, and, finally, Boldwood embodies his individual realistic and somber nature and vehement sentiment. The British critic Nick Prentice (2016) adds that Hardy's characters are modernized “strange, perversely self-destructive characters” in an aesthetic way (p. 6). In such a way, Hardy sustains his plot with persuasive realistic characterization. This plot presents three dynamic male characters Oak, Boldwood, and Troy who scheme to win Bathsheba's tender heart. In this regard, the Indian actor and critic Sudhakar Naidu (2013) argues that Oak suffers from “ironic uncertainties” in his relationship with Bathsheba, while Boldwood is obsessed with his unquestionable dignity and emotions (p. 231).

---

**Character-based Dynamicity in Thomas Hardy's *Far From the ...***


---

Hardy presents certain dynamics of his characters, Oak is a simple farmer from South Wessex; he meets a wild girl named Bathsheba, falls in love with her, and pursues her for marriage. But, she refuses him and leaves the province to Weatherbury. Thus, when Oak loses a herd of sheep, he is forced to start afresh and look for a job in another farm. In Weatherbury, he extinguishes a fire that broke out in one of the farms, there he again meets Bathsheba and discovers that the farm in which he quelled the fire is not but her farm that she inherited from her uncle. Eventually, Oak starts working there as a shepherd. The Iranian researcher Abdullah Keshavarzi (2012) views Oak as the sole practitioner of the “dominant ideologies” that cast submissiveness to other characters, mainly Bathsheba, adding that Bathsheba is an aware conventional female character who “spends some other time in unconventionality” (2012, P, 290). Afterward, Hardy presents us with the character of Fanny Robin, a maid at Bathsheba's farm. This character escapes from the farm to join Sergeant Troy, in the neighboring city of Casterbridge, where Troy promises to marry her. Drastically, Fanny insists on finding Troy to ask him to legalize their relationship through love and marriage which constitute two heroic thematic concepts. In this respect, Hardy presents an “inherently passive” female character whose behaviors expose her to bewilderment and alienation (Sandlin, 2011, p. 19).

The novel presents another central character to its episodes: Boldwood who is a bachelor neighbor to Bathsheba. Out of her sense of humor, the latter sends the former a Valentine card in which she says, “Marry Me.” (Hardy, 1998, p. 82). As a result, he takes this humor seriously and actually falls in love with her. Boldwood is viewed as an uncontrolled and unemotional character with a “perfect balance of enormous antagonistic forces” (Anderson, 1972, p. 18). Once this balance is disordered, Boldwood gets haunted by his passion. In the meantime, the fugitive character Fanny agrees to marry Sergeant Troy. But, she mistakenly goes to a church other than the church that has been agreed upon to go for the marriage contract. This episode makes Troy so angry that he ignores getting married to Fanny

**Marwan A. Hamdan**

by refusing to set another date for their marriage. In this light, Hardy creates a balance between his own creative character's dynamicity and human tragedies, in which his "aesthetic ... narrative techniques" impede direct analyses of the thematic actions and episodes (Prentice, p. 10).

In the meantime, Boldwood suits Bathsheba, but she refuses his offer. As for Oak, who desires to get married to Bathsheba, he closely and painfully watches her while meeting with Boldwood and leaves. Then, Bathsheba's sheep get an incurable infection; Oak knows its treatment and returns to Wessex to save the sheep and saves Bathsheba from bankruptcy and ruin. Hardy dramatically characterizes non-conformist characters, focusing on major themes such as marriage, materialism, femininity, and religion based on their dynamic relationships and schemes. For example, both Bathsheba and Troy construct and legitimize their interrelationship in the light of their individual views and concerns. In this sense, Hardy presents his modernized characters who struggle to hail their thoughts and positions; every character individually "performs the concrete form of ideology" (Keshavarzi, 2012, p, 284). Thematically, Hardy dramatizes his female and male characters to expose and condemn their unrealistic and bizarre ideas. In that period, Bathsheba meets Troy by chance, as he is a native resident of Weatherbury. They secretly get married, but Troy is a deceptive husband and an ignorant farmer. It is again Oak who saves the farm from bankruptcy. In this regard, Boumelha states that the voice of Hardy's male characters is louder than that of the females, who hold a feminine "charming reticence" (123).

Characteristically, Oak seems so intelligent that Bathsheba thoroughly trusts him. Meanwhile, Oak is the devoted character who helps her in her tragic dilemmas. For instance, in the indicative scene of the storm, Oak tries to save the farm's hay from being sabotaged by rain. He hears Bathsheba's voice in the darkness in which she comes to aid him. She seizes the time to tell him that she traveled to Bath to break off her engagement with Troy. For Michel Morel (2013), Oak is

---

(342) مجلة جامعة الأزهر - غزة، سلسلة العلوم الإنسانية 2017، المجلد 19، العدد 1

---

**Character-based Dynamicity in Thomas Hardy's *Far From the ...***

---

an example of masochistic "self-aggrandizement, self-dramatization and self-pity." Accordingly, his behaviors are shaped in the light of other characters' treatment towards him, mainly Bathsheba. In this respect, Hardy creates his female characters with physical and emotional weakness and fragility. For instance, Bathsheba and Fanny keep seeking their own societal faculty and independence in different manners. Keshavarzi (2012) argues that Hardy's females' role is leading "the unconventional women to follow the dominant ideologies of the age" (p. 288). This role is a submissive and subversive one in which women are exiled from the society.

Furthermore, Hardy's female characters keep their dynamic endeavors to stabilize their intended future with their male counterparts. Commenting on the weaknesses of Hardy's male characters, R.G. Cox (1970) asserts that they are sole victims of enticements of the femme fatale and "remorseless ministers of destiny, these determined operators, managing all of the machinery of life so as to be secure in their own way" (p. 260). Accordingly, male characters should face realities by endeavoring to change the female attitudes of love and marriage. For instance, Bathsheba transforms and decides to re-travel to Bath and gets a quick marriage with Troy, reshaping her future relationships with other male characters. She believes that she will lose much once she remains unmarried and that "when it was too late, that scandal might seize hold of me for meeting him alone in that way" (Hardy, 1998, p. 301). In this light, Bathsheba's character is reduced and transforms into an irritably "emotional, groveling, and pathetic" figure (Kowalski, 2016). For his part, Boldwood pursues Bathsheba considering getting married in seven-year period and she confesses, "I believe that if I don't give my word he'll go out of his mind" (Hardy, 1998, p. 301). Afterward, Fanny, pregnant with the illegal son of Troy, dies of exhaustion and negligence in Casterbridge. After her death, Troy finds her and brings her body to the house of his wife, Bathsheba. There, Troy's love for Bathsheba is renewed and he tells her that he had always preferred Fanny to her and used to reside next to her tomb and plants flowers

---

**Marwan A. Hamdan**

---

around it. Paradoxically, Bathsheba sets flowers for Fanny, Troy's ex-sweetheart. Meanwhile, on the latter's disappearance, Bathsheba agrees to get married to Boldwood out of her self-commitment and moral adherence. Moreover, Bathsheba's morally suggestive decisions are manifested in three major actions: saving Oak's life, identifying with Fanny Robin, and refusing to disregard Troy. Bathsheba seems willing to redeem her tragic faults; such willingness implies her human, adorable character in the narrative.

After the disappearance of Troy for a period, Boldwood asks Bathsheba to promise to agree to marry him once the legal period of her husband's disappearance expires, a seven-year period. After a long time, Troy returns disguised with a wandering circus. He intends to appear at Christmas after the seven-year period ends. In a silly show-off movement, Troy appears in the time of Bathsheba's marriage to Boldwood and reveals his identity in front of the invitees, a thing that makes Boldwood lose his temper and shoot Troy dead. The Bulgarian critic Spiridon Kaloshev (2009) views Boldwood as more passionately uncontrolled than other characters that he "embodies the idea of the blasted balance" out of his control; Boldwood radically transforms into an unbalanced figure (p. 89). Remarkably, Hardy's description of Boldwood suggests a "realistic, well-rounded view of life" which may have hardships (Anderson, 1972, p. 18). Then, Boldwood delivers himself to the authorities and is condemned to prison for many years. After such events, the road becomes paved in front of the old beau, Oak, to marry Bathsheba, where the novel ends.

#### **A Techno-Thematic Reading**

Artistically, Hardy uses the technique of the rustic nature in which a group of rural micro-characters indirectly holds an important commentary on the events of the novel in a humorous way fused sometimes with wit and malice. Hardy dramatizes nature to reflect upon characters' ambivalent emotional and dream-based relationships which get influenced by "the intense interaction between town and country" that undergoes an intricate and unsteady dynamicity among characters and the surroundings, too (Prentice, 2016, p. 31). Such

---

**Character-based Dynamicity in Thomas Hardy's *Far From the ...***

---

characters keep searching for stability and independence through energetic mobility across heaths, villages, towns, and distant places. Moreover, Hardy employs the stylistic technique of written notes that control the course of the events. Hardy's first written observation is the valentine card with the words "Marry me" sent by the Bathsheba to Boldwood to offer a marriage agreement as a joke. This makes both characters suddenly fall in love. Another card is sent by Bathsheba to Oak to ask for help in the treatment of her sheep after their entering the field of clover. Thus, Bathsheba's and Oak's relationship becomes "an ideal Victorian relationship" for they both are socially equal and mutually love one another, resulting in a stable and unquestionable generic relationship (Kowalski, 2016). Both characters transform; they defy strict and conventional gender roles concerning classical or arranged marriage. In such a case, Oak should become an upper social class member to rebuild his own dynamic relationships with others mainly female characters.

Technically, this narrative is charged with details and full of symbols, signs, and agricultural experiences gathered by Hardy from farmers who have agricultural expertise, a technical style that makes the novel symbolically and allegorically realistic and suggestive. Such thematically indicative symbols include Oak; a symbolic word whose meaning is an English tree that is very powerful and entrenched. It also thematically suggests persistence, stubbornness, and firmness. In this sense, Oak wins what he wants and gets married to Bathsheba after a long period of patience and persistence. Another word is "Robin" which is part of the name Fanny Robin. It refers to a small tender bird; a bird that is tinged with red which is the color of love, life, and blood. The name of Boldwood is a Middle-English word that is composed of two words: bold and wood, the latter means crazy in Middle English, not a forest. Next, Bathsheba suggests a metaphorical word that means the daughter of oath in Hebrew mentioned frequently in the Old Testament (Sandlin, 2011, p. 54). However, Bathsheba suffers from a tragic flaw manifested in her abhorrent vanity when she keeps refusing her suitors. She makes wrong irresponsible decisions.

**Marwan A. Hamdan**

For instance, she does not thank Oak when he pays for her toll at the entrance of Norcombe Hill; it is a manifestation of her momentary ingratitude. Hardy evokes thematically artistic techniques to beautify and hail his narrative with “a dramatic tragic intensity” of some characters, such as Oak who ponders the stars on Norcombe Hill, foreshadowing withering impacts of the dramatic actions (Prentice, 2016, p. 83). Accordingly, Hardy innovates his suggestive narrative structure of landscape to create a realist dramatic plot.

Thematically, the dynamic bonds among males and females are controlled by the class conflicts that distances Bathsheba and Oak. However, Oak replies that he dearly loves her forever; such a reply establishes “an important character trait that ... he will never deviate from” (Kowalski, 2016). The narrative discourse between such characters launches a true dynamic relationship that may transcend in the plot of the narrative. Such dynamic mobility entails a sort of character transformation on the level of intention and realities. On managing her own farm, Bathsheba never dares to listen to other farmers’ pieces of advice, claiming her super knowledge with obstinacy; she has no but little experience. The narrator describes her as “A headstrong maid, that's what she is -- and won't listen to no advice at all. Pride and vanity have ruined many a cobbler's dog” (Hardy, 1998, p. 88). As such, Sandlin (2011) describes Bathsheba as “Hardy’s first New Woman character in full light” (p. 55) whom Oak likes to see in darkness, where “Night had been the time at which he saw Bathsheba most vividly” (Hardy, 1998, p. 63). On her part, Bathsheba admits to Oak that she hates “to be thought men’s property in that way—though possibly I shall be to be had some day” (Ibid, p. 26). Then, it’s Bathsheba’s reluctance to accept Oak as a husband which allows her to be abused by a male with no chance for an alternative.

Furthermore, there are harmony and consistency among the narrative’s events, the characters’ dynamics, and the movement of the universe and nature. Out of her egotism and vanity, Bathsheba is wretchedly victimized by Troy’s adulation. For example, Bathsheba

---

**Character-based Dynamicity in Thomas Hardy's *Far From the ...***

---

saves Oak of suffocation in his hut in the middle of winter, a date of the birth of lambing. Imaging the storm and winds, Hardy makes nature an invincible and tenacious power that controls man's life and decides on his destiny. For instance, Oak faces such natural tragic moments and gets victimized, losing his sheep and getting bankrupt. Meanwhile, the interactive dynamicity of both nature and characters is "magnified through Hardy's dramatization of the tragic predicament" of each one (Prentice, 2016, p. 68). Metaphysically, nature becomes a heroic character that determines some characters' life such as Oak's, manifesting his emotional tragedy. In this regard, Oak meets Bathsheba when her sheep become victims of raging nature; she heavily relies on Oak to save her sheep. Such a thematic episode implies that nature can bring two lovers closer, heading for marriage. Characters are aesthetically and technically characterized by "powerful and largely ... unknown elements" that identify their distinct emotional and intellectual faculties (Beauregard, 2011). For instance, the technical and thematic image of wind is suggestive for it becomes an indicative part of the action of blowing Oak's hair into his eyes. Similarly, Bathsheba expresses her pity and sympathy with Oak when he reaches Weatherbury asking for a job, she recruits him for his great devotion. Accordingly, Oak is a character that Hardy created with qualities of loyalty, frigidity, and indifference amidst chaotic episodes around. He keeps watching Bathsheba's sheep with stoicism, even after her getting secretly married to Troy. He also has a strong bond with nature that sends him a warning of a dramatic storm to prepare to save Bathsheba's hay. Seemingly, Hardy's vivid dynamic characterization triggers the internal conflicts between each character's "flesh and spirit" (Prentice, 2016, p. 12). Such a view emphasizes that Hardy presents human characters in a modernist sense in which they suffer alienation, fragmentation, and indecisiveness.

Technically, the narrative's omniscient third-person narrator allows us to explore the characters' personalities, in which the reader can examine their egoist interactions and transactions. In addition, characters' dynamic mobility bestows seriousness, realism, and

---

**Marwan A. Hamdan**

---

intimacy on the narrative plot. For instance, Boldwood suits for his neighbor, Bathsheba, during sheep dipping. Meanwhile, Bathsheba argues with Oak during sharpening the scissors to shear the sheep's wool. Moreover, Bathsheba gets discontented and humiliated because she could not meet Boldwood early to talk. And, out of her limited female self-confidence, she tells him "I will try to love you ... And if I can believe in any way that I shall make you a good wife I shall indeed be willing to marry you" (Hardy, 1998, p. 189). Here, Bathsheba admits that her refusal to Boldwood is due to lack of real intimate mutual sense of love, reliability, and adequacy.

**Dynamic Inter-character Tensions**

Intensifying the inter-character conflicts, Oak sees Bathsheba with Boldwood and he gets at odds with her as a result. When clover gets ripe in the middle of summer, Bathsheba's sheep get astray in the clover field and eat it, a thing that threatens their life. This episode requires immediate interference of Oak, who has a long and extensive experience in this respect, to save Bathsheba's sheep. In summer too, Troy gets closer to Bathsheba, wearing the formal military attire while helping the farmers in haymaking. On the other hand, Troy's desires make him behave and speak impulsively and says, "Half the pleasure of a feeling lies in being able to express it on the spur of the moment, and I let out mine" (Hardy, 1998, p. 147). Afterward, he starts misappropriating the money of his wife, a thing that signifies the deep superficiality of Bathsheba. This episode raises a moral which says that it is evil whoever cannot distinguish between the true metal of people and the false one, and it is evil too whoever gets fooled by hollow and falsely-honeyed words and appearances that hide the true reality from within. This maneuver might be a sort of show-off to draw the attention of Bathsheba, and Troy gets married to her in summer. In fall, their marital relationship drastically crumbles, and Fanny dies.

Meanwhile, an autumn storm causes the erosion of the flowers that Troy planted on the tomb of Fanny. The thematic image of the storm suggests Troy's aggressiveness against the characters around

---

**Character-based Dynamicity in Thomas Hardy's *Far From the ...***

---

such as Bathsheba, Boldwood, and the laborers. In this sense, Hardy presents his characters as powerful and determinist people who survive various challenges and dilemmas. Meanwhile, Oak seems "cautious, [with] responsible qualities ...less beguiling than Troy's extravagantly romantic manner" (Beauregard, 2011). This is true and supported by his standing on the stack of hay to save it from the insane storm, similar to his saving of a rick from the fire; the latter implies a flashback technique to fuse the past with the current present. In this respect, Oak's and Bathsheba's second meeting is more passionate and intimate for both characters; this meeting takes place during the upset of the burning stack of hay due to the subversive violence of the fire. Luck gives Bathsheba an authoritative chance to "control her destiny" and choose a "remedy" to her dilemmas (Beauregard, 2011). Out of her conscience, she confesses her role in some internal and external conflicts she and others suffer from. She realizes that Troy is not her choice and that her rush whims with Boldwood results in Troy's death; she furiously shouts "O, it is my fault -- how can I live! O Heaven, how can I live!" (Hardy, 1998, p. 330). This confession is suggestive for her mature awareness and consciousness. Thematically, fusing both scenes, Hardy shows the process of transformation of some characters such as Oak.

Ostensibly, the theme of competition of several characters to win the heart of a woman is one of the common themes in the works of Hardy; it is the central theme in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. This narrative centers on three major dynamic male characters, Oak, Troy, and Boldwood, who jealously compete with each other to marry Bathsheba. In this sense, Sandlin (2011) views Hardy's male and female characters as "creatures ... of an infinite attraction" that Hardy presents their "marriages based on mutual respect and a level of equality that creates productive cooperation between husband and wife" (p. 75). Disappointingly, Bathsheba rejects Oak's marriage proposal stating, "I do not love you" (Hardy, p. 39). In this light, Bathsheba metamorphoses into a prospering farm lord with "business in every bank in Casterbridge" (Hardy, 1998, p. 355). Clearly,

**Marwan A. Hamdan**

dynamic relationships control the tumultuous attitudes among Boldwood, Bathsheba, and Oak, mainly when Bathsheba sends the former a valentine card proposing marriage. In this episode, Oak releases his fury for such a playful game, and Bathsheba replies with more outcries and dismisses Oak from her farm. Every male character has his own qualities that appeal to Bathsheba. For instance, Boldwood is wealthy and aristocratic, so Bathsheba warmly receives the offer of getting married to him in spite of her imperfect sense of love for him. Also, Troy is thoroughly passionate but lacks wealth and status. Thus, Bathsheba disregards the idea of marrying him. In this respect, both Troy and Boldwood are viewed as an exporter of feebleness for Bathsheba; she furiously confronts Troy about another lady's locks in his watch. This woman has previously refused to marry her neighbor, Boldwood. Ironically, she eventually gets married to Troy, who abandons her, a thing that makes her think about getting married to Boldwood. Dramatically, Boldwood kills Troy, and the door is opened for Oak to marry Bathsheba. Contextually, Boldwood and Troy are dynamic characters who are "conceived and executed with great power," while both characters of Oak and Bathsheba stay "half-conceived and half-drawn" (Naidu, 2013, p. 232).

However, in contrast to both characters, Oak shows heroic qualities of constancy, congruence with nature, and maturity. Hardy presents him as a character with a distinct ability to manage reality and to decide for himself. Meanwhile, Bathsheba is introduced as being overpowered by her internal conflicts and impulsiveness. Anderson (1972) describes her as a unique character whose personality is "impulsive, idyllic" (1972, p. 16). Both Oak's and Troy's looks towards Bathsheba are individually completely different. Troy is a bright character from outside and succeeds, with his misleading appearance, to allure Bathsheba and get married to her after having abandoned the miserable Fanny.

Thematically, Oak's dynamic relationship with Bathsheba rises from his distinct "fidelity;" for he saves her corn-ricks from fire in a loyal and unquestionable manner (Naidu, 2013, p. 233). Oak

---

**Character-based Dynamicity in Thomas Hardy's *Far From the ...***

---

seems a real devotee, who proves his true love for Bathsheba with loyal actions, not with cheap disguising words. For instance, he extinguishes the fire that breaks out on the farm of Bathsheba, "Oak suddenly remembered that eight months before this time he had been fighting against fire in the same spot as desperately as he was fighting against water now—and for the futile love of the same woman. As for her—But Oak was generous and true, and dismissed his reflections." (Hardy 1986, p. 197). In its dramatic irony sense, Oak's devotion to a lady who does not mind his love is a poignant matter that makes readers identify with him as he seems a "hopeless hero" who paradoxically accepts this generic "version of the relations between men and women" (Morel, 2013). He also saves her sheep from mortality after he enters the clover field. He does his best to take care of Bathsheba's farm with devotion and wholeheartedness. However, Oak remains Bathsheba's last option; he is actually the least person of whom she thinks to marry after being alone in the arena of marriage competition. Bathsheba tells him, "I hate to be thought men's property in that way—though possibly I shall be to be had some day" (26). These words bear the decisiveness of Bathsheba's negative vision towards men. However, Anderson argues that Bathsheba's and Oak's project of union is "one of good communication and mutual admiration" that fulfills true human marriage (1972, p. 58). In this respect, Hardy is ardent for the issue of unilateral love and portrays the sufferings and passions of this sort of lovers such as Oak. For *Beauregard*, Oak is "an archetypal hero" eventually rewarded with much love of his maid, while characters such as Troy, Fanny, and Boldwood are penalized for deriding nature and according to the hegemonic "ideas of morality" (2011). Based on their futuristic plans, the three male characters-suitors ironically love the same female character in the narrative; each one fights in his own way. In this respect, Kaloshev (2009) views two kinds of human purposeful love; he describes the first one as "steady, more covert type of loving, which proves to be more rewarding. Here, both Oak and Bathsheba are representatives. The other kind is "the more passionate, more overt

**Marwan A. Hamdan**

type of loving that is getting exhausted very quickly” (p. 88). The example of such love involves both Troy and Bathsheba. It is a realistically thematic characterization of human relationships and love dynamics and mobility.

There is also, however, a further point to be considered; Oak has maintained his psychological and emotional balance as opposed to Boldwood, who completely collapses after falling in love with Bathsheba. He also becomes immensely jealous and a murderer when he kills Troy. In this narrative, Oak keeps closely watching Bathsheba, permanently chasing and stealthily spying upon her. Prospectively, Kaloshev (2009) describes Oak as a “stylized pastoral figure” who experiences the life of intimate nature, while the female character of Bathsheba is viewed as “the country minx” who paradoxically suggests the new human version of woman. Immorally, Oak furtively watches Bathsheba from behind the fence while she is contemplating herself in the mirror, as there is “A cynical inference [that] was irresistible by Oak as he regarded the scene, generous” (Hardy, 1998, p. 4). In a later scene, he spies on her and her aunt through the cracks in the wooden barn when they care about a sick cow in the middle of the night. In her turn, Bathsheba sees him watching Troy through a window while he is in the bedroom.

Noticeably, all physical barriers through which Oak watches Bathsheba represent the metaphorical barriers between both lovers. These barriers always distance whoever unilaterally falls in love and whoever falls in mutual true love. In addition, such barriers are not always physical barriers; rather they are also human barriers. For example, both Troy and Boldwood have deliberately distanced between Bathsheba and Oak, due to the latter’s “humility, and a superfluous moiety of honesty” (Hardy, 1998, p. 27). Here, Troy expels Oak from the house of Bathsheba using force and violence. Obviously, Hardy presents his major characters as fully evolved; they show complex identities that manage different harsh circumstances. Yet, they are flat, “changeless,” and “delineated:” they do not realistically transform. The exception is Bathsheba because she

---

**Character-based Dynamicity in Thomas Hardy's *Far From the ...***

---

transforms from inconsiderate and absurd to tenderhearted, serious, and courageous (Beauregard, 2011). Meanwhile, Bathsheba's impulsive nature suffers from imprudence out of her vanity and false or negative authority.

Furthermore, Hardy's narrative shows stances of various moments of silence as a narrative thematic technique. Technically, silence and ellipsis are narrative thematic devices that Hardy uses to draw the web of his characters' relationships and present their behaviors. Morel (2013) views this sort of pauses or gaps in the communication process as a type of "ephemeral silence" or "an aposiopesis" that is thematic and structural. In Bathsheba's words "Unfeeling thing that you are. . . . But I'll see if you [...] dare do such a thing," she distances herself willfully from having any responsibility for what is happening around, mainly for Troy (Hardy 1986, p. 154). In such a case, Bathsheba builds her own relationships in the light of her own visions of power, ego, and independence. In addition, Troy's death is a remarkable moment of silence that manifests his own relationship with Bathsheba and other male characters, "He uttered a long guttural sigh—there was a contraction—an extension—then his muscles relaxed, and he lay still" (Hardy, 1998, p. 290). Such a silence is a thematic embodiment of themes of both misconception and illumination. To anatomize such view, Bathsheba seems naïve once she eventually consents Oak for there is nobody proposes for her similar to what happens to both Boldwood and Troy. Thematically, the dynamic male characters of Oak, Boldwood, and Troy embody "a sharp contrast to one another as men and lovers;" Oak has robust and confident qualities, and Troy is a masterful coaxing figure (Naidu, 2013, p. 234). The former stays loyal and faithful to Bathsheba, while the latter is a seducer and betrayer of Fanny; yet, he gets married to Bathsheba then deserts her. Further, Hardy's characters' dynamic mobility impedes achieving emotional balance and attitudinal resilience; such a failure of dynamicity is a manifestation of the failure of their inner bifurcated modernized psyches.

---

Marwan A. Hamdan

---

### Conclusion

Modernized thematization and characterization in Thomas Hardy's novels appeal to the elite critics and scholars, who examine human issues of love, marriage, fragmentation, class, and gender as vital thematic motifs in his narratives. Hardy's transforming representative characters seek to achieve their dreams and desires by employing eloquent language, high ranks, emotional devotion, and social solidarity. Their dynamic relationships decisively guide them toward their individual hopes and aspirations. Hardy showed a growing sense of aversion for marriage that dominated female characters in different times as a defense mechanism to survive reality. Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* optimistically examines these matters manifested in its characters' dynamic mobility and relationships. Hardy's stylistic techniques and optimistic tone enable him to delve into such realistic themes, ordinary, and everyday life, which is charged with human desolation and hardship.

Hardy's characters either transform for better or stay static. For instance, Oak is a transforming male character who succeeds in his business and comically wins Bathsheba. Oak's dynamicity of his relationships qualifies him to achieve his dreams; he also proves a heroic character. On the other hand, Troy loses his duel of keeping Bathsheba; he fails to be a successful hero and opponent. Culturally, Hardy's novel legalizes Oak's heroic role as a human being and a farmer who contributes to society's welfare and productivity. Thematically, *Far from the Madding Crowd* presents characters' heroism, whether male or female, in its well-structured narrative discourse that entails further investigation and appreciation. Meanwhile, there are a lot of ideas and interpretive communities that need more investigation in Hardy's fiction, on the level of techniques, characterization, and style that researchers have not thoroughly and deeply approached and explored. In addition, Hardy offers narratives that have diverse significant modernist world-visions and themes that include class conflict, gender conflict, religious clash, cultural

---

Character-based Dynamicity in Thomas Hardy's *Far From the ...*

---

disputes, philosophical innovations, human moral decay, among others that entail further interpretations and insightful criticism.

### References

- 1- Anderson, Mary L. (1972). "A Transactional Analysis of Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *Jude the Obscure*: An Essay in Psychological Criticism." MA Thesis. Texas Tech University.
- 2- Boumelha, Penny (2005). *Introduction: The Woodlanders by Thomas Hardy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 3- University Press.
- 4- Beauregard, Costa de (2011). "The Four Elements in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Novel and Film: Romanticism versus Naturalism." Retrieved on 1/11/2016 from [celis.univ-bpclermont.fr/.../article\\_Costa\\_de\\_Beauregard\\_pour\\_publication](http://celis.univ-bpclermont.fr/.../article_Costa_de_Beauregard_pour_publication).
- 5- Cox, R.G. *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1970.
- 6- Hardy, Thomas. (1998). *Far from the Madding Crowd*. New York: Doubleday.
- 7- Kaloshev, Spiridon (2009). "Far from Convincing - Character Misconstruction in Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*." *Journal of University of Rousse*. 48(6.3), 87-91.
- 8- Keshavarzi, Abdullah (2012). "ISAs and Their Function in Thomas Hardy's Novels." *International J. Soc. Sci. and Education*. 2(3), 284-293.
- 9- Kowalski, Kathryn (2016). "Refining for Romance: How Bathsheba and Gabriel Change to Make Their Relationship Last." Retrieved on 15/11/2016 from [blogs.lt.vt.edu/.../Bathsheba-Gabriel\\_Far-from-the-Madding-Crowd.p](http://blogs.lt.vt.edu/.../Bathsheba-Gabriel_Far-from-the-Madding-Crowd.p).
- 10- Morel, Michel (2013). "Narrative Silences in *Far from the Madding Crowd*." *FATHOM: A French e-Journal of Thomas*

**Marwan A. Hamdan**

- 
- Hardy Studies (2), 2013. Retrieved on 16/10/2016 from <https://fathom.revues.org/373>
- 11- Naidu, Sudhakar (2013). "Pastoral Perceptions in Far from the Madding Crowd." Research Journal of English Language and Literature. 1(4), 230-236.
- 12- Prentice, Nick (2016). "Thomas Hardy's Tragic Vision: Writing towards Proto-Modernist Modes of Fiction." PhD. Dissertation. University of the West of England, Bristol, January 2016.
- 13- Sandlin, Anita (2011). "Fear and Fascination: A Study of Thomas Hardy and the New Woman." MA Thesis. Georgia Southern University.