

CHAPTER II

CHARACTERS

I NATURE



Hardy proves himself a skilful architect and poet in his description of nature. He looks upon nature as something beautiful, powerful, benevolent and at the same time cruel. Since he deals only with country life he shows us in his novels that man is part of nature and that nature's laws are more important than man's laws. Nature plays a larger part in his books than in those of any other English novelists because it controls the conduct of life in an agricultural community. He says:

...the countryman's {life} lies in his absolute dependence on the moods of air, earth and sky. Sun, rain, snow, wind, dawn, darkness, mist, are to him, now as ever, personal assistants and instructors, masters and acquaintances with whom he comes directly into contact, whose varying tempers must be well considered before he can act with effect. 67

Hardy always takes every opportunity to make use of the manifestation of nature's power. Virginia Woolf says in her criticism on Hardy's novels that:

He already proves himself a minute and skilled observer of nature; the rain, he knows, falls differently as it falls upon roots or arable; he knows that the wind sounds differently as it passes through the branches of different trees. But he is aware in a larger sense of Nature as a force; he feels in it a spirit that can sympathize or mock or remain the indifferent spectator of human fortunes. 68

Abercrombie also says that:

...We never feel the characters to be isolated in a purely human world; the conditions of their being, and their being itself, are always engaged (as Hardy's architectural language might put it) with an immense background of measureless fatal processes, a moving, supporting darkness more or less apparent; it may be only hinted at, but it is always to be felt. 69

In Far from the Madding Crowd, we see the immense power of nature in the shepherd's life; how the little prospect of man's existence is ringed by a landscape or nature. Virginia Woolf writes a good comment on Hardy's description of the upland where Gabriel Oak lives:

...The dark downland, marked by the barrows of the dead and the huts of shepherds, rises against the sky, smooth as a wave of the sea, but solid and eternal; rolling away to the infinite distance, but sheltering in its folds quiet villages whose smoke rises in frail columns by day, whose lamps burn in the immense darkness by night. Gabriel Oak tending his sheep up there on the back of the world is the eternal shepherd; the stars are ancient beacons; and for ages he has watched beside his sheep. 70

Down in the valley at Bathsheba's farm at the beginning "...the earth is full of warmth and life; the farms are busy, the barns stored, the fields loud with the lowing of cattle and the bleating of sheep. Nature is prolific, splendid, and lustful."⁷¹ The cruelty of nature is first seen in the great storm which kills all Gabriel's ewes and ends his pastoral career. All the savings of a frugal life have been dispersed at a blow. Gabriel's energies, patience and industry have been so severely taxed during the years of his life between eighteen and twenty eight, to reach his

present stage of progress, that no more seems to be left in him. His hopes of being an independent farmer are destroyed — possibly for ever. Later in the story the same storm almost ruins Bathsheba's farm. We get the picture of Bathsheba and Gabriel being alone together amid the lightning, thunder, storm and rain in the dark night, trying to protect the crops.

Heaven opened then, indeed. The flash was almost too novel for its inexpressibly dangerous nature to be at once realized, and they could only comprehend the magnificence of its beauty. It sprang from east, west, north, south, and was a perfect dance of death. The form of skeletons appeared in the air, shaped with blue fire for bones—dancing, leaping, striding, racing around, and mingling altogether in unparalleled confusion. With these were intertwined undulating snakes of green, and behind these was a broad mass of lesser light. Simultaneously came from every part of the tumbling sky what may be called a shout; since, though no shout ever came near it, it was more of the nature of a shout than of anything else earthly. In the meantime one of the grisly forms had alighted upon the point of Gabriel's rod, to run invisibly down it, down the chain, and into the earth. Gabriel was almost blinded, and he could feel Bathsheba's warm arm tremble in his hand—a sensation novel and thrilling enough; but love, life, everything human, seemed small and trifling in such close juxtaposition with an infuriated universe.⁷²

Hardy describes this blast as something harsh and pitiless. Later in the book when Fanny Robin dies Troy suffers a great repentance. With a fertile gesture of remorse and penitence he goes to buy a beautiful tomb with an inscription for the dead and also stays up half the night planting flowers on her grave by the light of a lantern. But when he has gone to sleep on the porch, a storm breaks, and the rain, increasing little by little in power comes gushing in

a torrent through the mouth of a gargoyle grinning sardonically from the church tower, and washes all the plants away. This shows the futility of human repentance in the face of pitiless nature.

In The Return of the Native Hardy implies nature's power in the description of Egdon Heath. The place is personified as something great in itself that conditions the life of people there.

...Twilight combined with the scenery of Egdon Heath to evolve a thing majestic without severity, impressive without showiness, emphatic in its admonitions, grand in its simplicity....

...The great inviolate place had an ancient permanence which the sea cannot claim. Who can say of a particular sea that it is old? Distilled by the sun, kneaded by the moon, it is renewed in a year, in a day, or in an hour. The sea changed, the fields changed, the rivers, the villages, and the people changed, yet Egdon remained.⁷³

Civilization and development of any kind are its enemy. It resents every one who tries to change it. That is why Clym Yeobright is punished because of his idealistic plan to develop the place and its inhabitants. Man's laws have no force when opposed to nature.

Hardy also shows that some characters are aware of the power of nature. In The Mayor, Henchard and all the people are under this power. It is the weather that keeps on changing that ruins Henchard's crops and makes him become poor. Nature punishes and rewards the deserving persons. In Two on a Tower Viviette and Swithin are conscious of and oppressed by the sinister surroundings. They regard nature

and the universe as some immense power threatening human beings:

At night, when human discords and harmonies are hushed, in a general sense, for the greater part of twelve hours, there is nothing to moderate the blow with which the infinitely great, the stellar universe, strikes down upon the infinitely little, the mind of the beholder; and this was the case now. Having got closer to immensity than their fellow-creatures, they saw at once its beauty and its frightfulness. They more and more felt the contrast between their own tiny magnitudes and those among which they had recklessly plunged, till they were oppressed with the presence of a vastness they could not cope with even as an idea, and which hung about them like a nightmare.⁷⁴

The Woodlanders is another good novel that shows the relationship between the life of the country people and the power of nature. Nature conditions the life of all the woodlanders. The leading characters, Giles and Marty, are shown as persons who are a part of nature. Hardy makes us feel that there are deep sympathy, profound understanding and affection between these two souls and nature. Here is the scene when both are planting trees:

...He had a marvellous power of making trees grow. Although he would seem to shovel in the earth quite carelessly there was a sort of sympathy between himself and the fir, oak, or beech that he was operating on; so that the roots took hold of the soil in a few days...

The holes were already dug, and they set to work. Winterborne's fingers were endowed with a gentle conjuror's touch in spreading the roots of each little tree, resulting in a sort of caress under which the delicate fibres all laid themselves out in their proper directions for growth. He put most of these roots towards the south-west; for, he said, in forty years' time, when some great gale is blowing from that quarter, the trees will require the strongest holdfast on that side to stand against it and not fall.

'How they sigh directly we put 'em upright, though while they are lying down they don't sigh at all,' said Marty. 'Do they?' said Giles. 'I've never noticed it.'

She erected one of the young pines into its hole, and held up her finger; the soft musical breathing instantly set in, which was not to cease night or day till the grown tree should be felled—probably long after the two planters had been felled themselves.

'It seems to me,' the girl continued, 'as if they sigh because they are very sorry to begin life in earnest—just as we be.'⁷⁵

Tess is the best example of a person who is responsive to everything around her; she is really a part of nature and is always aware of all things especially bad and evil things that will be brought about by nature. (see Theme of fate). After her affair with Alec she tries to begin the life again and she is happy in her decision. "A particularly fine spring came round, and the stir of germination was almost audible in the buds; it moved her as it moved the wild animals, and made her passionate to go."⁷⁶ Angel Clare is another person who is conscious of the cruelty of nature. In his disappointment and sorrow in learning Tess's past life he cannot trust anything around him. External power seems to increase suffering to man.

He reclined on his couch in the sitting-room, and extinguished the light. The night came in, and took up its place there, unconcerned and indifferent; the night which had already swallowed up his happiness, and was now digesting it listlessly; and was ready to swallow up the happiness of a thousand other people with as little disturbance or change of mien.⁷⁷

Descriptions of nature always fit characters and plots and very vividly express the impact of nature on them.

Nature is not just the background in Hardy's drama, but a leading character. Sometimes it exercises an active influence on the course of events as already mentioned; but more often it is a spiritual power, coloring the mood and shaping the disposition of human beings. In Far from the Madding Crowd the story opens in the atmosphere of pastoral life; the vivid description of a starry night seen from a lonely hill-top is an admirable prelude to the tragedy:

Norcombe Hill—not far from lonely Toller-Down—was one of the spots which suggest to a passer-by that he is in the presence of a shape approaching the indestructible as nearly as any to be found on earth. It was a featureless convexity of chalk and soil—an ordinary specimen of those smoothly-outlined protuberances of the globe which may remain undisturbed on some great day of confusion, when far grander heights and dizzy granite precipices topple down.

The hill was covered on its northern side by an ancient and decaying plantation of beeches, whose upper verge formed a line over the crest, fringing its arched curve against the sky, like a mane. To-night these trees sheltered the southern slope from the keenest blasts, which smote the wood and floundered through it with a sound as of grumbling, or gushed over its crowning boughs in a weakened moan. The dry leaves in the ditch simmered and boiled in the same breezes, a tongue of air occasionally ferreting out a few, and sending them spinning across the grass. A group or two of the latest in date amongst the dead multitude had remained till this very mid-winter time on the twigs which bore them, and in falling rattled against the trunks with smart taps....

The sky was clear—remarkably clear—and the twinkling of all the stars seemed to be but throbs of one body, timed by a common pulse. The North Star was directly in the wind's eye, and since evening the Bear had swung round it outwardly to the east, till he was now at a right angle with the meridian. A difference of colour in the stars—oftener read of than seen in England—was really perceptible here. The sovereign brilliancy of Sirius pierced the eye with a steely glitter, the star called Capella was yellow, Aldebaran and Betelgueux shone with a fiery red.

To persons standing alone on a hill during a clear midnight such as this, the roll of the world eastward is almost a palpable movement. The sensation may be caused by the panoramic glide of the stars past earthly objects, which is perceptible in a few minutes of stillness, or by the better outlook upon space that a hill affords, or by the wind, or by the solitude; but whatever be its origin the impression of riding along is vivid and abiding. The poetry of motion is a phrase much in use, and to enjoy the epic form of that gratification it is necessary to stand on a hill at a small hour of the night, and, having first expanded with a sense of difference from the mass of civilized mankind, who are dreamwrt and disregardful of all such proceedings at this time, long and quietly watch your stately progress through the stars. After such a nocturnal reconnoitre it is hard to get back to earth, and to believe that the consciousness of such majestic speeding is derived from a tiny human frame.⁷⁸

This is one of the most memorable descriptions of nature he used to begin a tragic story. In the same way, Hardy prepares his reader for great and tragic scene by first presenting small disasters. For instance, the destruction of Gabriel's flock in the storm is a prelude to the whole sad material of the drama. In the same story he produces a sinister and gloomy mood by his description of the approaching thunderstorm on the night at Bathsheba's farm:

The night had a sinister aspect. A heated breeze from the south slowly fanned the summits of lofty objects, and in the sky dashes of buoyant cloud were sailing in a course at right angles to that of another stratum, neither of them in the direction of the breeze below. The moon, as seen through these films, had a lurid metallic look. The fields were sallow with the impure light, and all were tinged in monochrome, as if beheld through stained glass. The same evening the sheep had trailed homeward head to tail, the behaviour of the rooks had been confused, and the horses had moved with timidity and caution.⁷⁹

In Two on a Tower, the love scene of the newly wed Swithin and Viviette when they have just come back to Welland and secretly stay at Swithin's hut near the tower, is very well described. The stars, and all the surroundings are gay. This makes the happy couple even happier. (see Plots).

In The Return of the Native, Egdon Heath—a vast and careless oppression—with all its sights and sounds so vividly imagined, dominates the story. Its huge bleak darkness dominates also the lives of the characters.

It could best be felt when it could not clearly be seen, its complete effect and explanation lying in this and the succeeding hours before the next dawn; then, and only then, did it tell its true tale. The spot was, indeed, a near relation of night, and when night showed itself an apparent tendency to gravitate together could be perceived in its shades and the scene. The sombre stretch of rounds and hollows seemed to rise and meet the evening gloom in pure sympathy, the heath exhaling darkness as rapidly as the heavens precipitated it. And so the obscurity in the air and the obscurity in the land closed together in a black fraternization towards which each advanced halfway.

The place became full of a watchful intentness now; for when other things sank brooding to sleep the heath appeared slowly to awake and listen. Every night its Titanic form seemed to await something; but it had waited thus, unmoved, during so many centuries, through the crises of so many things, that it could only be imagined to await one last crisis—the final overthrow. ...

Only in summer days of highest feather did its mood touch the level of gaiety. Intensity was more usually reached by way of the solemn than by way of the brilliant, and such a sort of intensity was often arrived at during winter darkness, tempests, and mists. Then Egdon was aroused to reciprocity; for the storm was its lover, and the wind its friend. Then it became the home of strange phantoms; and it was found to be the hitherto unrecognized original of those wild regions of obscurity which are vaguely felt to be compassing us about in midnight dreams of flight and disaster, and are never thought of after the dream till revived by scenes like this. 80

The scene is symbolic; Hardy uses the atmosphere and the scene to create the tragic mood. The story begins with this description; thus we get even from the beginning the feeling of something sinister in the air. It is a gloomy, sad, barren and dry place. The words are carefully and appropriately chosen: sombre, gloomy, dark, obscure, obsolete and wild. This suggests loneliness. The background of the characters is alive; the sky and the heath are treated almost as characters. The sombre atmosphere is the prelude to the tragedy of the chief characters who are coming on to the scene. Amid the darkness of the night Hardy mentions the lighting of a bonfire. The making of fire indicates man's resistance to nature. After the description of the bonfire the characters appear. All the characters live in the same part of the heath. We often get the idea of how small and unimportant the people are in comparison with the vast and gloomy heath. The best illustration of this idea is this characteristic passage which describes Eustacia's lonely vigil on the heath on the night of November 5, at the bonfire:

Her extraordinary fixity, her conspicuous loneliness, her heedlessness of night, betokened among other things an utter absence of fear. A tract of country unaltered from that sinister condition which made Caesar anxious every year to get clear of its glooms before the autumnal equinox, a kind of landscape and weather which leads travellers from the South to describe our island as Homer's Cimmerian land, was not, on the face of it, friendly to women.

It might reasonably have been supposed that she was listening to the wind, which rose somewhat as the night advanced, and laid hold of the attention. The wind, indeed, seemed made for the scene, as the scene seemed made for the hour. Part of its tone was quite special; what was heard there could be heard nowhere else. Gusts in innumerable series followed each other from the north-west, and when each one of them raced past the sound of its progress resolved into three. Treble, tenor, and bass notes were to be found therein. The general ricochet of the whole over pits and prominences had the gravest pitch of the chime. Next there could be heard the baritone buzz of a holly tree. Below these in force, above them in pitch, a dwindled voice strove hard at a husky tune, which was the peculiar local sound alluded to. Thinner and less immediately traceable than the other two, it was far more impressive than either. In it lay what may be called the linguistic peculiarity of the heath; and being audible nowhere on earth off a heath, it afforded a shadow of reason for the woman's tenseness, which continued as unbroken as ever.

Throughout the blowing of these plaintive November winds that note bore a great resemblance to the ruins of human song which remain to the throat of fourscore and ten. It was a worn whisper, dry and papery, and it brushed so distinctly across the ear that, by the accustomed, the material minutiae in which it originated could be realized as by touch. It was the united products of infinitesimal vegetable causes, and these were neither stems, leaves, fruit, blades, prickles, lichen, nor moss.

They were the mummied heathbells of the past summer, originally tender and purple, now washed colourless by Michaelmas rains, and dried to dead skins by October suns. So low was an individual sound from these that a combination of hundreds only just emerged from silence, and the myriads of the whole declivity reached the woman's ear but as a shrivelled and intermittent recitative. Yet scarcely a single accent among the many afloat tonight could have such power to impress a listener with thoughts of its origin. One inwardly saw the infinity of those combined multitudes; and perceived that each of the tiny trumpets was seized on, entered, scoured and emerged from by the wind as thoroughly as if it were as vast as a crater.⁸¹

From this scene it is evident that Eustacia has been living in a suppressed state, ready to explode. This scene shows clearly that Hardy, who has been familiar with country life

from childhood, can distinguish the different sounds of the wind when it blows through hollow or heath or over bare stones. Even when Clym and Eustacia are in love the readers are aware of something sinister. When they first fall in love there is one occasion when Clym makes love to Eustacia out on the heath during the eclipse of the moon. This is the strange prelude to the tragic failure of their married life.

In Tess the scenery of the story also expresses the emotion of the plot. With the exception of The Return of the Native, no other novel of Hardy's has its action placed so grandly and with such perfect appropriateness. The scene changes as the tenseness in the story increases, becoming sadder and harsher as the tragic emphasis deepens. The background of Tess's life changes from the splendid beauty of the Vales of Blackmoor to the fertile happy summer life at Talbothays Dairy and finally turns down to the gloomy and grim winter life at the upland Flintcomb-Ash. This fits the real life of Tess. In the Vales of Blackmoor she passes her joyful and happy youth. Then she comes to live at Mr. Crick's dairy farm; her life here is at its best. Being responsive and yearning for a new life, she is affected by the happy landscape. Cows and milk are the symbols of life. Hardy shows us vividly the dairy life: the milking and Tess's happy condition.

They were the less restful cows that were stalled. Those that would stand still of their own will were milked in the middle of the yard, where many of such better behaved ones stood waiting now—all prime milchers, such as were seldom seen out of this valley, and not always within it; nourished by the succulent feed which the water-meads supplied at this prime season of the year. Those of them that were spotted with white reflected the sunshine in dazzling brilliancy, and the polished brass knobs on their horns glittered with something of military display. Their large-veined udders hung ponderous as sandbags, the teats sticking out like the legs of a gipsy's crock; and as each animal lingered for her turn to arrive the milk oozed forth and fell in drops to the ground. ...

When Tess had changed her bonnet for a hood, and was really on her stool under the cow, and the milk was squirting from her fists into the pail, she appeared to feel that she really had laid a new foundation for her future. The conviction bred serenity, her pulse slowed, and she was able to look about her. ...

Songs were often resorted to in dairies hereabout as an enticement to the cows when they showed signs of withholding their usual yield; and the band of milkers at this request burst into melody—in purely business-like tones, it is true, and with no great spontaneity; the result, according to their own belief, being a decided improvement during the song's continuance. When they had gone through fourteen or fifteen verses of a cheerful ballad about a murderer who was afraid to go to bed in the dark because he saw certain brimstone flames around him, ...⁸²

At Flintcomb-Ash Tess is at her worst state physically and mentally. She is very lonely, and life there is very harsh. Hardy describes vividly the cold winter on the uplands.

Here the air was dry and cold, and the long cart-roads were blown white and dusty within a few hours after rain. There were few trees, or none, those that would have grown in the hedges being mercilessly plashed down with the quickset by the tenant-farmers, the natural enemies of tree, bush, and brake. In the middle distance ahead of her she could see the summits of Bulbarrow and of Nettlecombe Tout, and they seemed friendly. They had a low and unassuming aspect from this upland, though as approached on the other side from Blackmoor in her

childhood they were as lofty bastions against the sky. Southerly, at many miles' distance, and over the hills and ridges coastward, she could discern a surface like polished steel: it was the English Channel at a point far out towards France.

Before her, in a slight depression, were the remains of a village. She had, in fact, reached Flintcomb-Ash, the place of Marian's sojourn. There seemed to be no help for it; hither she was doomed to come. The stubborn soil around her showed plainly enough that the kind of labour in demand here was of the roughest kind; ...⁸³

Tess's work here is very hard and monotonous; she has to chop vegetables all day long. Sometimes she has to sit hacking the swede-field which is a stretch of a hundred acres. So the weather and surroundings here symbolize the character's disposition. Tess is never happy even for a short time during her stay at this vegetable factory. Descriptions of nature fit her mood.' Also at the dairy farm we get the fresh and serene atmosphere which is the proper background for the relationship of Tess and Angel. Especially at the beginning of their love Hardy tries to describe nature in its highest state; everything is full, ready to burst. This signifies the feelings of Tess: she is ready to fall in love and is yearning for love:

It was a typical summer evening in June, the atmosphere being in such delicate equilibrium and so transmissive that inanimate objects seemed endowed with two or three senses, if not five. There was no distinction between the near and the far, and an auditor felt close to every thing within the horizon. The soundlessness impressed her as positive entity rather than as the mere negation of noise. It was broken by the strumming of strings.⁸⁴

We get the picture of the silent and peaceful summer evening being broken by the music from Angel's harp. Tess

is compared to a bird who cannot leave the place. She is fascinated by the mysterious surroundings and by the romantic tune of the music:

Tess was conscious of neither time nor space. The exaltation which she had described as being producible at will by gazing at a star, came now without any determination of hers; she undulated upon the thin notes of the second-hand harp, and their harmonies passed like breezes through her, bringing tears into her eyes. The floating pollen seemed to be his notes made visible, and the dampness of the garden the weeping of the garden's sensibility. Though near nightfall, the rank-smelling weed-flowers glowed as if they would not close for intentness, and the waves of colour mixed with the waves of sound. 85

Later when both fall deeply in love, the scene becomes completely beautiful, fresh, and serene. Tess and Angel are usually the first persons to get up at the dairy house. So it seems as if they are two first persons up in all the world. Here is the picture of the beautiful morning seen through the eyes of the two lovers:

...The spectral, half-compounded, aqueous light which pervaded the open mead, impressed them with a feeling of isolation, as if they were Adam and Eve....

They could then see the faint summer fogs in layers, woolly, level, and apparently no thicker than counterpanes, spread about the meadows in detached remnants of small extent. On the gray moisture of the grass were marks where the cows had lain through the night—dark-green islands of dry herbage the size of their carcasses, in the general sea of dew. From each island proceeded a serpentine trail, by which the cow had rambled away to feed after getting up, at the end of which trail they found her; the snoring puff from her nostrils, when she recognized them, making an intenser little fog of her own amid the prevailing one. Then they drove the animals back to the barton, or sat down to milk them on the spot, as the case might require.

Or perhaps the summer fog was more general, and the meadows lay like a white sea, out of which the scattered trees rose like dangerous rocks. Birds would soar through it into the upper radiance, and hang on the wing sunning themselves, or alight on the wet rails subdividing the mead, which now shone like glass rods. Minute diamonds of moisture from the mist hung, too, upon Tess's eyelashes, and drops upon her hair, like seed pearls. When the day grew quite strong and commonplace these dried off her; moreover, Tess then lost her strange and ethereal beauty; her teeth, lips, and eyes scintillated in the sunbeams, and she was again the dazzlingly fair dairymaid only, who had to hold her own against the other women of the world. 86

II INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERS



Hardy's scope of characters is not very wide. As a true country man he deals only with the life of the natives of Wessex countryside, the only type of people he knows well, and never tries to write about other types of people. As far as his novels are concerned he shows his deep and sympathetic understanding of the life and character of the Wessex people, the farm hands and servants, shepherds, dairymaids and labourers as well as farmers, the gentry and country tradesmen, parsons and doctors. In Hardy's novels for the first time in English literature a great English author deliberately chooses English peasants for his heroes and heroines in a series of literary masterpieces.

Hardy is more concerned with the quality his characters share than the nature of each individual. His important characters have something in common. Most of them group themselves into several categories. First they can be arranged into male and female groups. Among the male characters we have the tender-hearted and steadfast lovers: Gabriel Oak, Diggory Venn, John Loveday and Giles Winterborne. They are identical physically, mentally and spiritually. Next are the faithless Don Juans: Troy, Wildeve, Fitzpiers and D'Urberville. The last group of male characters include all his exceptional characters who are ruled by strong passions or ideals: Henchard, Clym, Jude, Angel Clare,

Henry Knight and Jocelyn Pierston. Farfrae and Phillotson are opposite to these men. All these are separate distinct individuals. On the female side we have the passionate, emotional women who are composed of the same elements and passions though these elements and passions may be mixed in different proportions: Batheheba, Eustacia, Lady Constantine, Lucetta, Grace, Tess and Sue. They are more or less capricious, self-conscious, vain yet lovable. Tess and Sue are different. Unlike these women, Tess is patient and devoted while Sue is exceptionally intellectual. In opposition to this group we have humble, simple and good-hearted girls: Fanny Robin, Thomasin, Elizabeth-Jane and Marty South. Arabella is the only woman who is totally wicked.

Besides the main characters we also have a chorus character consisting of a group of rustics.

Before dealing with each individual it is important to know that all Hardy's leading characters share one characteristic: stoicism. They have significant endurance of spirit. Hardy stirs his readers by the actions of his characters. They are always energetic. Hardy is at his best when he draws good people. His villains are stereotyped. Simple, passionate and grand are the characters in which his creative power is at its best.

The first group to be discussed is that of the faithful lovers. They are Gabriel, Diggory, John and Giles. Not only are these three men free from selfishness, but

they are self-sacrificing and generous.

Gabriel Oak begins his life as a shepherd and bailiff who owns a flock of sheep. Unfortunately he loses them all in a storm, so he has to be Bathsheba's hired man. Gabriel is a servant to Bathsheba in the true sense of the word, not because he works for her for money, but because he respects her, admires her and thinks first of her good before his own. His sincere love and devotion to Bathsheba are significant as already discussed. But his kindness and frankness are as great as his affection. He criticizes Bathsheba to her face when he thinks she is wrong in flirting with Boldwood whom she never loves but with whom she flirts for fun. He never worries about her being angry with him:

'Well, what is your opinion of my conduct,' she said quietly.

'That it is unworthy of any thoughtful, and meek, and comely woman.' ...

'My opinion is (since you ask it) that you are greatly to blame for playing pranks upon a man like Mr. Boldwood, merely as a pastime. Leading on a man you don't care for is not a praiseworthy action. And even, Miss Everdene, if you seriously inclined towards him, you might have let him find it out in some way of true loving-kindness, and not by sending him a valentine's letter.' 87

Gabriel tries his best to protect Bathsheba from Troy and advises her to marry Boldwood. He fails and very much regrets her marriage to Troy. However, he lets the couple alone. He knows that Fanny is Troy's mistress, but never tells anyone not even Bathsheba. He does not want to cause them trouble. He simply wishes them happiness and is always

near his mistress when she wants his help.

Diggory Venn is the reddleman of Hardy's childhood, whose love for Thomasin is so great and so true. He begins to love her from the time he is a lad and keeps his affection all through his life. Knowing that Thomasin loves Wildeve he tries his best to make them get married so that she might be happy in her chosen way. He tries to bribe Eustacia to give up Wildeve by tempting her with the life in Budmoth which Eustacia yearns for. Later when Wildeve and Thomasin get married he still comes to visit her from time to time. Here is a good example of his interest in Thomasin's welfare: Mrs. Yeobright decides to give both Clym and Thomasin a sum of money—to Clym as a present for his marriage. She sends Christian Cantle with the money to deliver it to Clym and Thomasin. Wildeve knows all this and being angry with Mrs. Yeobright for her distrust of him, he waylays Christian and persuades him to play games of dice with him. He wins all the money from Christian. Suddenly Diggory Venn comes along and manages to win back all the money. He gives it to Thomasin. Like Gabriel Oak, Diggory Venn is rewarded at the end by marrying Thomasin.

In John Loveday, the trumpet-major, we see that his kindness and sacrifice are great. Physically he inspires confidence and honesty. Everyone feels at home with him, for he never has ill feelings toward any one, even his enemies or rivals. His love for Anne is unrequited, but,

like Oak and Venn he is a stoic. He keeps disappointment to himself. Moreover, he always shows his endless self-sacrifice as a true and loving brother. Feeling that Matilda is not good enough for his brother, Bob, he manages to get rid of her. His good intentions are not always rewarded, for Bob seldom realizes his brother's love and good will. It is John who brings Bob back to Anne. He realizes that Anne loves Bob more than himself and accepts his fate. Concealing his broken heart under a smile, he goes off to war and dies on the battlefield in Spain. Compared with Oak and Venn, John is stronger in spirit and more intelligent.

Another admirable faithful man is Giles Winterborne who is a typical humble Wessex country man. Honesty, tenderness and manliness are his outstanding characteristics. We get a vivid picture of Giles in this description:

He looked and smelt like Autumn's very brother, his face being sunburnt to wheat-colour, his eyes blue as corn-flowers, his sleeves and leggings dyed with fruit-stains, his hands clammy with the sweet juice of apples, his hat sprinkled with pips, and everywhere about him that atmosphere of cider which at its first return each season has such an indescribable fascination for those who have been born and bred among the orchards. 88

This passage gives the idea of Giles, a hard working man with extraordinary energy and patience, who is extremely well suited to the life to which he belongs.

The next group is the opposite of the first: Troy, Wildeve, Fitzpiers and D'Urberville. They are the villains

of the stories. But these people are more or less conventional; they do not seem to be so real to us as the good characters. Hardy excels at drawing good people. He cannot get inside the villains and see how life looks to them. Except for Troy, these characters are not so well drawn. Faithlessness and shallowness are their obvious characteristics.

Troy is the first Don Juan who appears in Hardy's book. He is clever at speaking, flattering and courting. He deliberately tells Bathsheba after a short talk ~~that he loves~~ her. In fact, he does not. We notice how, upon his first appearance in the story, Hardy tries to describe him poetically. (see Plots.) Hardy does not normally write in this way. It is very well composed. We know that Hardy does not then and never later approves of Troy. But he describes Troy in this striking way to show his effect on Bathsheba. Bathsheba is completely captivated by Troy's appearance. Throughout the story Troy shows almost only his defects. He shows his cruelty in forsaking Fanny, and consequently, he is the cause of her death. It is true that he repents when she dies, but that is not enough to make up for his wrong. His other defects are his selfishness and his lack of responsibility. After his marriage to Bathsheba he never helps his wife with her farm-work. On the contrary, he wastes her money on games. Hardy shows the complete contrast between Troy and Oak in this passage:

And Troy's deformities lay deep from a woman's vision, whilst his embellishments were upon the very surface; thus contrasting with homely Oak, whose defects were patent to the blindest, and whose virtues were as metals in a mine. 89

The next Don Juan is Wildeve who is at first an engineer, but later becomes the owner of a public house. Right at the beginning he proves himself completely fickle. He loves Eustacia, and also likes Thomasin. He decides to marry Thomasin because Eustacia turns to Clym, and also because he wants to punish Eustacia by making her jealous of Thomasin. He fails, for Eustacia really loses interest in him. Like Troy, Wildeve never pays much attention to his wife. He refuses to give her enough money for the household. He never forgets Eustacia. Later when he inherits a fortune from his uncle, and finds out that Eustacia is unhappy with Clym, he offers to take her away from Egdon Heath. The plan fails because both Wildeve and Eustacia are drowned.

Bob Loveday in The Trumpet-Major, though a warm-hearted, sympathetic character, has a touch of Troy and Wildeve's fickle shallowness. He is too easily impressed by a beautiful woman. As a young man he loves Anne. Then he goes away from home to join the navy, and falls in love with Matilda. But when Matilda leaves him he returns immediately to Anne. Later he goes to the Battle of Trafalgar. After the battle he comes back. As soon as he sets foot in England he falls in love with another girl and nearly marries

her. His disposition is the opposite of his brother John's. He changes his mind all the time. One day he regrets that he has hurt his brother's feeling by taking Anne from him, and therefore he decides to give her up. But the next day he changes his mind and comes back to claim her.

Fitzpiers in The Woodlanders is another typical Hardy's heartbreaker. Unlike all the country people in the woodland he belongs to a high-class family. He is snobbish and conceited. He looks down on the countryfolks there, including Giles, and even his father-in-law. We see this fact on one occasion after his wedding with Grace. Some villagers there come to express their congratulations and best wishes to the couple. But Fitzpiers is disgusted by these people and cannot bear mixing with them. He once says to Grace as they both look at Giles and other countrymen who are cider making:

'...I dare say I am inhuman, and supercilious, and contemptibly proud of my poor old ramshackle family; but I do honestly confess to you that I feel as if I belonged to a different species from the people who are working in that yard.'90

As the story progresses he proves to be more and more wicked. He marries Grace just because she is the best girl he can find in that village. But when he sees Mrs. Charmond he turns his interest to this widow, who is to him a better woman, for she is more fascinating, wealthier and therefore more desirable. He becomes extremely bored with his wife and even wishes she would die so that he would be rid of

her, and then could marry Mrs. Charmond. We see this when he, half-conscious, talks to Mr. Melbury, his father-in-law:

'...Ah, God, I am an unlucky man! She would have been mine, she would have taken my name; but unfortunately it cannot be so! I stooped to mate beneath me; and now I rue it.'

...But I have lost her,—in a legitimate sense, that is. If I were a free man now, things have come to such a pass between us that she could not refuse me; while with her fortune (which I don't covet for itself) I should have a chance of satisfying an honourable ambition—a chance I have not had yet! ...and now never, never shall have probably!'

...She is amiable enough; but if anything should happen to her—and I hear she is ill at this moment—well, if it should, I should be free—and my fame, my happiness, would be insured!' 91

The above speech shows us clearly what a wicked villain Fitzpiers is. However, he does come back to Grace at the end of the story. But this is because Mrs. Charmond dies, and he comes back to his wife because he has no one else to care for him and also because he does not know where to go.

The last villain of Hardy's novels is Alec D'Urberville in Tess. He is not very clearly portrayed. We do not know him well. We do not know what he thinks of other people around him, especially of Tess. We learn that he is a very unpleasant man who keeps on teasing and annoying Tess from the beginning to the end of the story. We are not sure whether he does love Tess seriously. Perhaps he does, for he never has any affairs with other women. However, he is the villain who seduces Tess when she is tired

and half asleep and consequently unresistant. He takes advantage of her trust, her ignorance and her sleepiness. But he lets her go when she wants. Hardy is so much interested only in portraying the character of Tess that he seems to forget D'Urberville. Alec disappears from the scene for quite a long time. Alec seems to be only his instrument who just comes out to provide the crisis of the story. His portrayal of Alec is not very logical. In the first scene Alec appears as a rich, idle, carefree, good for nothing person. But after his long absence he suddenly comes back as a convert preacher. This is already unconvincing. It is unlikely or almost impossible for a man like Alec to change abruptly from evil to good. His is not a nature capable of profound development. We see that Hardy just wants Alec to come back. The author goes further by making Alec give up his new profession so as to return to Tess and go on pursuing her. Alec uses all possible tricks to make her marry him. The temptation is so great that Tess finally gives in. Alec enjoys his victory only for a short time, for he is murdered by Tess after they have just been married. For his evil Alec has to pay with his life.

Turning now to the exceptional leading characters, we see that they are primarily ruled by overwhelming passions or ideals. In the male group we have Clym Yeobright, Jude, Henchard, Henry Knight and Angel Clare. In the female group

there are Bathsheba, Eustacia, Lady Constantine, Lucetta, Grace, Tess and Sue. These people feel strongly and reflect profoundly.

Clym Yeobright in The Return of the Native is very intellectual. From the description of Clym we see that Hardy means him to be different from ordinary country people:

The face was well shaped, even excellently. But the mind within was beginning to use it as a mere waste tablet whereon to trace its idiosyncrasies as they developed themselves. The beauty here visible would in no long time be ruthlessly overrun by its parasite, thought, which might just as well have fed upon a plainer exterior where there was nothing it could harm. Had Heaven preserved Yeobright from a wearing habit of meditation, people would have said, "A handsome man". Had his brain unfolded under sharper contours they would have said, "A thoughtful man". But an inner strenuousness was preying upon an outer symmetry, and they rated his look as singular. 92

After a long stay in the great and civilized city of Paris, he comes to think that his native Egdon Heath is backward and uncultivated, his people uneducated. He becomes bored with the sophisticated world and comes back home with a great ideal. It is to improve the condition of the people. He is horrified by the horrid superstitions of the natives who still believe in witchcraft. Having a great tender affection for Egdon Heath he decides to sacrifice himself to fulfill his plan. His deep love for the district is shown in his speech:

To my mind it is most exhilarating, and strengthening, and soothing. I would rather live on these hills than anywhere else in the world. 93

Clym has a plan to open a school for the poor and ignorant

farmers' children. His character and ideals, though not practical, are very admirable. The reader and Hardy know that his dream will never come true and that he will be disillusioned. Finally Clym finds out that he will never succeed in his plan. There are many reasons for his failure. One is his marriage to Eustacia, the most unsuitable woman for him. Instead of helping him in his work she tries her best to discourage him and even ruins his dream. The next reason is Clym's mistake. He thinks the people there want culture and beauty, but he is wrong. Even the place does not want to be reformed. It rejects changes. The natives never feel that they lack anything. They do not want beauty, culture and do not even understand them. They are content with their narrow provincial life. So however admirable the plan is, it will never work. It requires time to develop such a place. We have to let it change naturally with some human help. This shows Clym's lack of imagination though he is very intelligent. Even in his relationship to Eustacia, Clym is partly responsible for the unhappiness of their marriage. Clym does not really know his wife's nature and never tries to find it out either. He is like a stranger to her. He cannot imagine what she wants. He comes to realize that Eustacia resents living there. But then it is too late. Consequently they have to separate. Clym has to live by himself after the death of his mother. However he tries to continue living as a preacher and, to a

certain degree, can find happiness in his career. But we feel that his ideals are still there deep in his heart, for Clym is not the kind of man who easily gives up his dream.

Like Clym, Jude is exceptionally intellectual. As a boy Jude is a romantic who always dreams about his future as a student in a university. When Mr. Phillotson, his teacher leaves for Christminster Jude begins to dream of this town. He imagines what it is like and calls it "heavenly Jerusalem" and also "a city of light". All his life Jude is a very ambitious and hard-working man. His great ambition is to be a scholar. Therefore he works hard and tries to educate himself while helping his aunt in her career. He becomes very learned. Despite his excellent qualifications, he fails to enter the university, only because of the lack of money. (see also Theme of Fate) But Jude never yields. He takes up theology and wants to be ordained. Later he has to give it up when he becomes involved with Sue. However, this shows how much Jude tries to develop himself. Moreover, all his life Jude shows many admirable characteristics. In spite of his strength of mind, Jude is very kind and gentle. There are many incidents that show his generosity. As a child he is severely punished by his employer, a farmer, because he lets the birds eat the corn. His involvement with Arabella shows his inexperience and weakness where women are concerned, but it also shows his honorable spirit. The news

of Arabella's pregnancy instantly makes him throw away his plan of study and marry her. Another incident that shows the same character occurs when Arabella wants to marry a new man and sends him their son, Father Time. Jude is willing to welcome the boy and does not even care whether the child is his son or not. We see his utmost tenderness in his behaviour to Sue, the only woman who wins his undying love and care. Jude is extremely emotional and passionate in his relationship with Sue. We see that he falls in love with her at first sight and goes on loving her all his life. His love for her eclipses all other feelings even his yearning for education. Jude is an example of a great Hardy hero, the type of man Hardy most admires. Jude is born only to fight stoically against eternal power. He fights for education and he fails. He fights for love; he gets it and finally loses it. His whole life is a tragedy. It is the painful portrayal of the life of a great man who refuses to yield. We see that besides his dream that is dangerous to him, women are also his enemy. Both good and bad women can do him harm. These are the instruments that destroy him. Hardy shows us in Jude that life's tragedy is the most worthy thing in man's life even though man fails to fulfill his dream. The significant thing is that man does fight and the outcome is not important. Jude strives to increase the power of his personality and he succeeds.

Henchard is another great hero of Hardy, a man who

is obsessed by strong passions. He is perhaps the greatest example of masculine characterization in Hardy's fiction. Henchard is the most complicated, neurotic and dynamic of Hardy's characters. He has only strength and energy but no brain. He is, in fact, a man of action and the action comes mostly from impulses and emotions. His passions are easily swayed. Henchard never stops and thinks. He sins and then repents. His selling of Susan shows his lack of self-control. For this sin he is punished all his life no matter how much he tries to make amends. We see he makes a vow not to drink for the next twenty-one years and keeps it. This shows his strong will power. He himself has an admiration for greatness and strength and a contempt for weakness. While seriously keeping his vow he works his way up from nothing until he becomes the mayor of Casterbridge. Henchard is not at all intelligent and can do only hard and crude work. His strong passions are shown in both good and evil ways. He is a hot-tempered man and very often he behaves unfeelingly towards his workers. His unsteady emotions can be seen in his feelings towards the persons around him, for instance Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane. First he loves Farfrae. He begins to dislike him when Farfrae objects to his unreasonable orders. His dislike increases when he sees that Farfrae wins all the people's love and respect from him. He forces Farfrae into rivalry and desperately determines to prove himself a

better man. Having made a rival of Farfrae, he furiously hates him for the treachery to their early friendship which is entirely his own doing. But after his bankruptcy he becomes less angry with Farfrae for a while because Farfrae tries to show his generosity to him. However, his jealousy is aroused again when he hears that Farfrae who has already got all his property is going to be the mayor. By this time his oath not to drink comes to an end and he begins drinking again. He misunderstands Farfrae about the scheme of the Council for setting him up again in a shop. The climax of their enmity and anger comes when Farfrae does not allow him to welcome the King. He challenges Farfrae to fight with him. Finally when his anger cools he regrets his action and tries to forgive Farfrae.

We see the same kind of feeling in his relationship with Elizabeth-Jane. First he tries to love her, for he thinks she is his daughter. Later the bitter disappointment in finding that she is Newson's daughter makes him hate her. Finally he finds out her good heart and begins to love her again. This time his affection for her lasts until his death. Besides his defects we can see also his good and noble quality. He shows his repentance every time when he does something wrong and he always realizes his sin without being told by any one. First he tries to make amends for selling Susan by accepting her as his legal wife. In doing this he has to give up Lucetta. In the case of

Lucetta, Henchard proves to be able to show pity and compassion. Lucetta and Farfrae are going to get married. We see that Henchard can take revenge through Lucetta who used to be his mistress. To ruin her would be also to ruin the detested Farfrae. But since Henchard's pity is greater than his anger, he lets her go and also scornfully returns her letters. The second time when he shows his pity towards this couple is after his fight with Farfrae, which he later regrets. As he hears that Lucetta is dying because of the skimmity-ride exposing their past relationship and that Farfrae is not at home he walks all the way to tell Farfrae of the sickness. To his regret Farfrae does not believe him. Another good thing about Henchard is his sense of justice. This can be noticed when Farfrae becomes his rival in trading. Henchard still insists on fair competition. Later, after his bankruptcy he proves to be a fair debtor. We can also notice that there is a sort of fierce honour in Henchard. It is certain that his hatred of Farfrae will never end, but when he deliberately attempts to kill him, it must be in a fair fight. In their fight in the barn, being the stronger man, Henchard ties one of his arms in order to take no advantage of Farfrae.

Another great thing about Henchard is his stoicism. From the beginning to the end he suffers a great deal. In his disappointment at finding that Elizabeth-Jane is not his daughter he talks bitterly to himself as there is no

one to turn to, "I am to suffer, I perceive. This much scourging, then, is it for me?"⁹⁴ Misery after misery teaches him nothing more than defiant endurance of it. While he is still the mayor the story of his selling his wife is known all over the town by the declaration of the furmity woman. He becomes the centre of gossip and scandal, but he keeps quiet. Later we see that he accepts his downfall bravely. He goes to live at Jopp's cottage, (Jopp used to be Henchard's workman) and stoically works with Farfrae as a journeyman hay-trusser. His last great sorrow comes in his relationship with Elizabeth-Jane. Being afraid that she will go back to Newson, he lies to Newson saying that she is dead. But he becomes more unhappy, for he feels guilty and is always tortured by the fact that the day will come when everyone will leave him. Susan, Farfrae, Lucetta who once were his beloved persons, are all gone. Now Elizabeth-Jane is leaving. His feeling that he is an outcast almost makes him commit suicide. Even if he escapes death he becomes more and more unhappy. He tries to keep Elizabeth-Jane in ignorance and at the same time works for her. He finds out sadly that she falls in love with Farfrae. This time his love, devotion to her, and the sense of guilt are so strong that he cannot speak or do anything that will annoy her. He suffers alone. His bitterness grows greater and greater, for Elizabeth-Jane is always quiet and never tells him anything about herself. Finally the news that

Newson has come back drives him away immediately from Casterbridge. He leaves this town in the same manner as he had come. By this time his stoicism is at its height:

And being an old hand at bearing anguish in silence, and haughty withal, he resolved to make as light as he could of his intention, while immediately taking his measures. 95

The scene of his departure from Casterbridge and from Elizabeth-Jane, the girl he loves with all his heart is very touching. He walks alone along the road with his thoughts fixed on her:

...He rested his basket on the top of the stone, placed his elbows on it and gave way to a convulsive twitch, which was worse than a sob, because it was so hard and so dry.

'If I had only got her with me--if I only had!' he said. 'Hard work would be nothing to me then! But that was not to be. I--Cain--go alone as I deserve--an outcast and a vagabond. But my punishment is not greater than I can bear!' 96

The last scene of his visiting Elizabeth-Jane on her wedding day also shows his stoicism. She blames him for his behaviour. He never explains anything to correct her idea and never gives any excuse. He simply leaves her:

I have done wrong in coming to 'ee--I see my error. But it is only for once, so forgive it. I'll never trouble 'ee again Elizabeth-Jane--no, not to my dying day! Goodnight. Good-bye!' 97

This is the life of a great man, a man of strong passion and yet a simple superstitious country man. However, Henchard is lovable and seems real to us. In spite of his strength of spirit he can be softened by music. His character never changes with the ups and downs of life.

He is still Michael Henchard, the slave of passion, who never yields to life till his dying day. His will, written on his death-bed, shows the emotional grandeur and strength of personality which are the only things eternal to him:

Michael Henchard's Will

'That Elizabeth-Jane Farfrae be not told of my death, or made to grieve on account of me.

'& that I be not bury'd in consecrated ground.

'& that no sexton be asked to toll the bell.

'& that nobody is wished to see my dead body.

'& that no murners walk behind me at my funeral.

'& that no flours be planted on my grave.

'& that no man remember me.

'& thia I put my name.

'Michael Henchard.' 98

The characters who are directly opposite to the above male characters are Farfrae and Phillotson. They can be discussed together, for they are not very important in comparison with Henchard or Jude.

Farfrae is the direct opposite of Henchard. Physically he is a young man of pleasant aspect. He is not at all emotional, but a simple practical man who is very skilful at his trade. When he comes to Casterbridge, Henchard is having trouble with his product. Farfrae has theories about the growing of wheat, and explains to Henchard his renovating process for curing bad corn. When he leaves Henchard's employment he starts his own business as a corn and hay merchant. He is lucky in his work. Unlike Henchard, he knows when he should buy and sell corn at only a small profit. He makes much money in this way. When Henchard makes a big mistake in speculation which brings

him to bankruptcy, Farfrae makes a wise speculation and gains a lot of money. Finally he gets everything from Henchard. Unlike Henchard, Farfrae is affectionate, appreciates simple and artistic pleasure like singing. He is also generous and magnanimous to all people and engages the affection of those who know him. He is kind even to Henchard in asking Henchard to come to live with him after Henchard's misfortune and always tries to help Henchard in every way he can. However, we see that Farfrae is not portrayed as a deep character. Hardy cannot make us see what is in his mind. Farfrae never shows strong emotion in anything or towards any one. We are not quite sure about his feelings towards Henchard. It seems that he does not like Henchard, and yet he does not hate him.

...Although Farfrae had never so passionately liked Henchard as Henchard had liked him, he had, on the other hand, never so passionately hated in the same direction as his former friend had done:...99

Farfrae is less easily swayed than Henchard and less believable as a human being. He does not have overwhelming impulses. At the beginning of the story he wants to go to America, but easily changes his mind and stays at Casterbridge. He says, "but a man must live where his money is made."¹⁰⁰ Just for this reason he stays there. He sticks to the code of custom and morality and thus he appears as a perfect man in society. As a merchant he insists on fair trading. He is a respectable mayor and has steady emotions. He is also a faithful and good husband. But we see that

his love for both his wives is not very deep, not so desperate as the love of Henchard for Elizabeth-Jane. When he becomes rich he thinks of getting married. At first Elizabeth-Jane seems to be the most suitable girl. If he marries her he can be reconciled with Henchard. But then he meets Lucetts who appears more refined, more beautiful and more sophisticated. He marries Lucetta not so much because he loves her as because he thinks it is suitable for him to get married and Lucetta will make him a good wife. And when Lucetta dies he does not seem so sorry as he should considering they have only just been married. He marries Elizabeth-Jane shortly after his first wife's death. The other defect of Farfrae is his lack of imagination. This can be seen in the reception of the King. He is unkind in refusing to let Henchard help the council, and even drags Henchard back when Henchard steps out from the row to cheer the King. Another incident showing his lack of imagination is: when Henchard comes to see Elizabeth-Jane for the last time with a small present, Elizabeth-Jane passively turns him away, and regrets later when she realizes his tender love for her. She decides to look for him and bring him back. Farfrae helps her only for a while and refuses to spend the night away from home. He says that staying out for the night "will make a hole in a sovereign."¹⁰¹ This shows that though generous, he puts emotions after other things--money, for instance. He is too careful. In

the case of his wife, he loves her but cannot imagine her feelings.

Phillotson is also the contrast of Jude. He gives up his dream of education without much pain. He is wise in choosing to live in a practical way and yet finds happiness in doing so. But, he is blind, almost eccentric when it is a question of love. Then he has neither prudence nor wisdom. He is passionately in love with Sue and he is wholly to blame for his own misery. He should have known that he was not at all suitable for a young girl like Sue. He ignores reason. After the scandal of Sue and Jude at the Training School he should have let Sue go, knowing very well that both of them love each other. He marries Sue, taking advantage of her gratitude and also of her trouble. However, he shows his kindness in letting Sue go when she asks. But his act of generosity comes too late since he and Sue are married. Though he goes as far in his pity as to divorce her, the fact of their being married in church still remains. As the story progresses, he proves to be more blind in remaining in love with Sue and wanting her to come back to him. He is willing to remarry her on any condition. He knows that he repels Sue and this only saddens him, but does not prevent him from yearning for her. Finally Sue does come back to him and really becomes his wife. However, we see there will be no happiness in their married life.



Angel Clare and Henry Knight can be put in the same group. Both have many characteristics in common.

Angel Clare is the character who is criticized most by Hardy. He is the only one among the three sons of the vicar of Emminster who has not taken a university degree. The other two follow in their father's footsteps and become clergymen. Angel is a sceptic and wants to be a farmer. At the dairy farm where he stays as an apprentice he meets and loves Tess. He wants to marry her without paying attention to his parents' opposition. Up to this point we cannot yet see his bad side. They get married. Then he finds out the truth of Tess's life and becomes very disillusioned. Here, we see Angel's true nature without the beautiful mask. He is an immature idealist who wants life to be as he thinks, not as it is. He studies farming, not so much because he loves the work as because he imagines it to be noble. When he sees Tess, he idealizes her almost as a symbol of chastity and loves her because of this. In his disappointment he speaks harshly to her and breaks her heart:

'The woman I have been loving is not you'...

'But it strikes me that there is a want of harmony between your present mood of self-sacrifice and your past mood of self-preservation.'102

Heaven, why did you give me a handle for despising you more by informing me of your descent! Here was I thinking you a new-sprung child of nature; there were you, the belated seedling of an effete aristocracy! '103

Ironically he forgets completely how he used to feel in their early friendship and love. Then he felt that:

...It was for herself that he loved Tess; her soul, her heart, her substance--not for her skill in the dairy, her aptness as his scholar, and certainly not for her simple formal faith-professions. 104

So we see Angel is very cruel in leaving Tess and in ignoring her letters which she writes in her great misery. By this time we see clearly that Angel, far from being an admirable hero, is, in fact, a doctrinaire and a prig. He is conscious of his own purity and unconscious of his deep insincerity and selfishness. He mixes with the farm labourers as an equal but always feels his superiority. He is very satisfied with his own virtue and ready to condemn other people who are not so good as he. He is unable to realize that human beings are not what his theories have taught him they should be. He says he loves Tess for herself, but does not realize that she is different from other girls and more attractive to him because sorrow and trouble have deepened her character. He might not have loved her if she had not been seduced. Her philosophy attracts him, but this is the result of her experience. Angel is very selfish in condemning Tess and forgets that he himself has had the same experience as hers. He comes to realize all this when it is too late. He cannot change anything and is the only person to blame for the murder of Alec and for Tess's death.

Henry Knight in A Pair of Blue Eyes is very much like Angel Clare. He is an intelligent man of letters whose head is fully occupied with theories. Like Angel, he seems to be a perfect wise man so long as he has no deep relation with any one. He does not fit in with the actual world. Because of his total ignorance of woman and his spotless life he longs for a completely innocent girl. He loves Elfride because she seems to be his ideal girl and because he thinks he is her first admirer. But when he finds out the truth of her past affair he, like Angel, suddenly leaves her. By this time we see his real nature. Behind his wisdom and wide knowledge are his selfishness and narrow-mindedness. He comes to realize the truth and Elfride's love for him when it is too late. He comes back only to find that Elfride has just died. Men like Angel Clare and Henry Knight are dangerous because they are the real villains and can easily deceive good women.

The last important male character I will discuss is Jocelyn Pierston in The Well-Beloved. It is necessary to separate him from the whole group of Hardy's characters, both men and women, for he is completely different from them all. Jocelyn does not appear as a real person. Hardy uses him as a means to prove his conception. Jocelyn is a representative of most young men who from childhood have a conception of an ideal sweetheart. They try to identify their ideal in every girl who comes along. Jocelyn begins

to look for his Well-Beloved even when he is nine years old. He is never sure what she really is. It seems that she has many embodiments. Each individual is known as Lucy, Jane, Flora, Laura and Elsie. She has blue eyes, black eyes or brown eyes; she is a blonde, a brunette, tall, fragile, slender or plump. Each comes to him only for a short time and then flits away. But his imaginary girl always exists near him. With the death of Avice Caro, his childhood friend, he immediately realizes that it is she who is his Well-Beloved. That is why he still cannot marry any one, and comes to love Avice's daughter and also her grand-daughter. However much he loves the three women, he fails to marry any of them. At sixty he marries Marcia Bencomb, who is a widow but who was once his sweetheart. The reader then feels that he has finally lost his ideal Well-Beloved.

Turning now to the female characters. We notice that Hardy is better at drawing women than men. He is able to make female characters live. Unlike most Victorian heroines who are insipid, passive, characterless, they have personality and are always vividly portrayed. (see also Hardy's Style in Plots). With the exception of Arabella, all his women are lovable and the complex ones are as admirable as the simple.

Bathsheba, Hardy's first important heroine, has the fundamental female characteristic: vanity. In the first scene Gabriel Oak sees Bathsheba look at herself in the

looking glass. She is pleased with her beauty and enjoys flattery. Bathsheba is very emotional and impulsive. Her sending of a valentine to Mr. Boldwood shows her recklessness. But she later regrets her action. All through the story Bathsheba proves herself to be a strong woman, physically and mentally. Her passionate love for Troy is more like an infatuation. She is primarily attracted by Troy's appearance and also by his flattery. She refuses to see Troy's bad points and ignores, even resents Oak's warning. She prefers to remain blind to his real character. She only wants others to think that Troy is good. Hardy gives this explanation for Bathsheba's love for Troy:

Bathsheba loved Troy in the way that only self-reliant women love when they abandon their self-reliance. When a strong woman recklessly throws away her strength she is worse than a weak woman who has never had any strength to throw away. 105

Her riding at night to Bath in order to see Troy shows her adventurousness. She marries Troy chiefly through youthful folly and jealousy. She realizes her mistake later and regrets it. The good characteristics of Bathsheba are her stoicism and her repentance. After her marriage her suffering increases. She finds out sadly that Troy does not love her at all and never behaves as a good husband. Bathsheba bears her misery all alone. She cannot talk or ask for help from any one, for it is all her own doing. The greatest sorrow comes when she finds out the relationships between Troy and Fanny. Later she hears that Fanny has died in

childbirth. The scene at Bathsheba's house with the coffin of Fanny is very effective. It shows Bathsheba in the most troubled and miserable state. She is alone in the house and yearns for a friend to talk to. Wanting to know for sure about Fanny's death, she walks to Oak's house, but finds that he is praying. So she cannot disturb him.

Alas for her resolve! She felt she could not do it. Not for worlds now could she give a hint about her misery to him, much less ask him plainly for information on the cause of Fanny's death. She must suspect, and guess, and chafe, and bear it all alone.¹⁰⁶

Her breaking open of Fanny's coffin to find out the truth shows her wild tortured spirit.

Besides stoicism, her repentance is also significant. She always repents for her wrong to Boldwood and feels that she is responsible for Boldwood's future. This drives her to promise to marry him. She has no chance to carry out her promise, for Troy comes back and claims her. That is why Troy is shot by Boldwood. But we see that it is Bathsheba who is responsible for the death of Troy and for the imprisonment of Boldwood.

The next heroine to be discussed here is Eustacia. Her nature is opposite to that of her husband Clym. She is beautiful and like Bathsheba she is conscious of her beauty; but more than Bathsheba she is proud of her family which is considered higher than the native ones. Eustacia is more reckless and restless than Bathsheba. We see in her a kind of passionate splendour. She is like a lonely queen without

any friend and hungry for passionate love. She is ready to love any man, and having no choice, she accepts Wildeve as her sweetheart. Being haughty, Eustacia thinks it is a condescension on her part to be in love with Wildeve or later to be Clym's wife. She is rather an unpleasant girl who is never serious about love:

The man who had begun being merely her amusement, and would never have been more than her hobby but for his skill in deserting her at the right moments, was now again her desire. 107

She is rather cruel in refusing Diggory Venn who comes to ask her to let Wildeve go and marry Thomasin, though she never loves Wildeve. Having Thomasin as her rival, she enjoys the game of love more than before. But all her excitement and passion die suddenly when she hears that Wildeve is no longer wanted by Thomasin. Eustacia is very ambitious and very romantic, for she always dreams of a luxurious life in a beautiful city. And instantly when she hears that Clym, a clever gentleman, is coming back from Paris, she begins dreaming of him and wanting to have him as her sweetheart. By this time she completely loses her interest in Wildeve and Thomasin. Being romantic, she falls in love with just the vision of Clym. Her disguise as a mummer in order to see and know Clym shows her bold nature. But even in her disguise she wants everyone, especially Clym, to see her beauty as a woman. We see the contrast of character of Clym and Eustacia. Eustacia is frustrated and out of place

on Egdon Heath. While Clym loves the district, she hates everything there. Hardy explains this in the book.

...Take all the varying hates felt by Eustacia Vye towards the heath and translate into loves, and you have the heart of Clym...108

Eustacia belongs to her dream world. Her marriage to Clym leads to disillusionment, for she, without loving him, hopes he will take her to Paris. But Clym is blind to her desire and this makes Eustacia bitter. Clym's plan of reform irritates her and seems ridiculous to her. Eustacia is not very intelligent. Only romance, adventure, activity and luxury are the things she wants. Nearly at the end of the story she shows again her cruelty in turning Mrs. Yeobright away when she comes to visit Clym. So she is responsible for Mrs. Yeobright's death. At the end, being extremely frustrated and having no way out, she commits suicide by drowning herself.

The next woman in this group is Lucetta in The Mayor. She does not have a very deep character. The most important thing about her is that she is not constant in her love. First she seems to love Henchard very much and is heart broken because of Henchard's marriage to Susan. After the death of Susan she comes to Casterbridge only to marry Henchard. But she changes her mind and turns to Farfrae because Farfrae is younger, more handsome, more refined and more interesting. To make an excuse for her marriage she tells Henchard that he himself never loved her but pitied

her, and on her part it was just infatuation and not love. In fact she forgets that it is she who started the affair. She comes to Casterbridge entirely on Henchard's account. Her death is the punishment she receives.

Grace Melbury in The Woodlanders comes next to Lucetta. Like Lucetta, she does not have deep character, and is not very constant in her emotions. From her childhood to her early youth she likes Giles. But ambition and vanity cause her to turn from Giles to Fitzpiers and finally she regrets her marriage to Farfrae. However, Grace is generous and magnanimous. First when she finds out that her husband is having an affair with Mrs. Charmond she despises the widow. This is because she thinks Mrs. Charmond is only flirting with Fitzpiers for fun. But when she realizes that Felice Charmond sincerely loves her husband she forgives her and even pities her. She shows her strength and endurance in not complaining to any one about her husband's conduct.

The other important female characters are Tess and Sue. Tess appears right from the beginning to the end as a pure innocent girl. We can see this clearly when she is put in contrast with Alec. Tess has intense emotions and she is entirely ruled by them. At the beginning Tess, being a dutiful daughter, goes to live with Alec whom she instinctively distrusts. Her utter ignorance, however, makes her unable to save herself from Alec's tricks. She comes to like and trust him. That is why she is seduced by him.

But she is not defeated yet. Her innate purity still remains and is the thing she is most concerned about. So she comes back to her parents. Tess is very responsive and impulsive. She has a deep sympathy with and understanding of nature. The other great thing about Tess is her strong will to live. She tries to save her position in the world and bravely faces her neighbours. She tries to think it is not her fault and learns to live with her past. She feels it is something beyond her that has caused her disgrace. Being always an optimist, Tess hopes for the best.

...She heard a pleasant voice in every breeze, and in every bird's note seemed to lurk a joy....

The irresistible, universal, automatic tendency to find sweet pleasure somewhere, which pervades all life, from the meanest to the highest, had at length mastered Tess. 109

We see her responsive nature all through the story. When she stays at the dairy farm, for instance, she hears the music produced by Angel Clare and is so much attracted by the notes that Hardy describes her as being like a fascinated bird.

Tess's strong passion makes her unable to resist the temptation offered by Alec. First it is because of her youthful ignorance. But later when she meets Alec again she cannot resist his courting. She is too trusting and too forgiving. She should know that Alec cannot be trusted. But partly because he appeals to her family affection, partly because at that time she is unhappy and lonely, and

partly because she must have someone to lean on, she goes with him again. She must know that it is stupid, but she feels the need for it and this is more important to her. Her return to Alec marks her downfall and also her loss of spiritual chastity and innocence. Alec takes her to a town. We see how different she appears at the end, not only because of her marriage to Alec but because she is out of her environment. She seems sloppy, whereas on the farm she is delightfully casual and natural.

Like other important characters, stoicism is Tess's most salient characteristic. Though her passionate nature always brings her sorrow she has great power inherent in herself that enables her to bear suffering in silence. This can be seen after her being seduced when Tess tries to make the best of her situation. But the best occasion when Tess shows her stoicism is when Angel learns the truth of her past and wants to leave her. We know that any women can weaken Angel's heart by weeping, begging and using all feminine tricks. But Tess does not do so. She bears her sorrow proudly and calmly, and accepts all the conditions her husband lays down. He even asks her not to write to him. Though she feels that she does not deserve this punishment she does not argue. This is almost like masochism, for she enjoys the punishment. Her life after that time is very miserable. She has to bear the insults and cruelty of her master and of other persons around her. The sorrow and

troubles are so great that she writes to Angel begging him to forgive her. Yet, she receives no answer from him. All these factors contribute to her decision of her going back to Alec. Then having no way out she finally kills him. We see this is really the tragic life of a simple girl who yearns only for a normal amount of happiness in life, and yet is rejected by circumstances.

Sue is the last female character who belongs to this group. She is meant to be a modern 'new' woman, for she is very unconventional and adventurous. We learn that she used to live in innocence with a man till he died. She stays with him not for any immoral reason but partly out of compassion and liking for him and partly because she wants to demonstrate to the whole world that women should be as free to live their own lives as men. Unlike Hardy's other heroines Sue is very intellectual. She works as an artist in an ecclesiastical warehouse. But she does not believe in religion. She is sceptical of the value of scholarship and of theology. She is more practical than Jude. She realizes that Jude's plan of education is rather romantic. Sue's spirit is rather rebellious and unexpected for the people of Hardy's time. We see that when she comes to study at the Training School she rebels against the strict rules of that school. She is severely punished because she goes out all night with Jude. To rebel against this punishment she jumps out of the back window of the room and walks in the

stream, and goes to spend that night at Jude's lodging. Like Eustacia, Sue is extremely emotional and sensitive. But Sue is more complex than any of the other Hardy heroines. This can be seen in her relationship with Phillotson and Jude. How she wavers between Jude and Phillotson has already been discussed in Plots. But in the end, her coming back to Phillotson shows that she has high principles.

The most significant thing about Sue and Jude is their similarity of disposition. Even Phillotson realizes this. He speaks of this in his discussion with Gillingham when he decides to let Sue go.

...I have been struck with these two facts; the extraordinary sympathy, or similarity, between the pair. He is her cousin, which perhaps accounts for some of it. They seem to be one person split in two! 110

More than affection, they have deep and complete mutual sympathy and understanding. Like Heathcliff and Catherine in Wuthering Heights, Jude and Sue seem to be born for one another and cannot live apart. This is one of the memorable examples of a "sympathetic" relationship as opposed to love. Love is an emotion which develops at any time of life and for many reasons. Sympathy is a basic condition of two characters. Jude and Sue are complementary. Neither alone is a balanced person. Both hate the idea of marriage in church or legal marriage.

...though he thought they ought to be able to do it, [go through marriage ceremony], he felt checked by the dread of incompetency just as she did -- from their peculiarities, perhaps, because they were unlike other

people. 'We are horribly sensitive; that's really what's the matter with us, Sue!' he declared. 111

But, if the two characters are bound together as one person they will make a complete balanced character. That is why they cannot separate from each other. "Their supreme desire is to be together — to share each other's emotions, and fancies, and dreams."¹¹² In the end when Sue goes back to Phillotson, Jude is so miserable that he begins to drink heavily and later becomes seriously ill and dies. Although the death of Sue does not occur in the book it is clear that she is gradually dying of a broken heart and also of the physical horror she suffers whenever her husband comes near her.

Opposite to these passionate women are the faithful country girls: Thomasin, Elizabeth-Jane and Marty South. Thomasin and Elizabeth-Jane are not very important. Only Marty South is significant. Marty is one of the most lovable female Hardy characters. She seldom appears on the scene, yet the reader never forgets her. Her humility and generosity are most striking and even touching. Hard work and misery are her lot. Still, she shows her sweetness and silent endurant spirit. All these enhance her personality and also provide the tragic mood of the plot.

Besides the individual characters there are chorus characters or a group of rustics. We have the Mellstock choir in Under the Greenwood Tree, Bathsheba's labourers

in Far from the Madding Crowd, the turf-cutters in The Return of the Native, Lady Constantine's tenants in Two on a Tower and the gossips in The Mayor. Only Tess and Jude do not have a rustic choir. These people appear in a group to make some comments about the chief characters. They are the symbol of something eternal. whatever happens to the leading characters the rustics go on.