I. LIFE AND WORK OF THOMAS HARDY

Thomas Hardy belongs to the later Victorian period and this period may be called 'modern age'. The writers of this period are said to be the children of the new age of democracy, of individualism, of rapid industrial development and material expansion, the age of doubt and pessimism, following the new conception of man which was formulated by science under the name of evolution. All of them were men and woman of marked originality in outlook and character or style. All of them were the critics of their own age and instead of being in sympathy with its spirit, were its very severe critics. All of them were in search of some sort of balance, stability, a rational understanding in the midst of the rapidly changing times. Most of them favoured return to precision in form, to beauty within the limits of reason and to value which had received the stamp of universal approval.

Thomas Hardy was a figure of antique simplicity in an age of debate and change. Regarded during the later decades of his long life as 'the grand old man of English letters', he bridged the gap between the Victorian moralists and the modern symbolists.

"The fact is that Hardy was at his best both traditional and modern, rudely archaic yet minutely observant, capable of both scriptural simplicity of normative and complex psychological insight. Donald Davidson firmly establishes Hardy as a traditional and timeless teller of tales and remarks that the most literary of the novels are the weakest." (1)

In an era of uncritical optimism, Hardy looked upon mankind with dark, brooding wisdom. He dared to speak of sexual conflict, of man's self-destructiveness, of grotesque mischance. Today his skepticism, his narrative inventiveness and hostility of realism and his psychological insight make him a congenial, even contemporary voice. He was at heart a poet, and expressed himself also in verse. But Hardy's attitude to life is rather pessimistic, and he
has written tragedies.

"Hardy thinks that there is some malignant power which controls this universe and which is out to thwart and defeat man all his plans".

(2)

It is especially hostile to those who try to assert themselves and have their own way. Thus his novels and poems are throughout, the work of a man painfully dissatisfied with the age in which he lived.

On June 2nd 1840 Hardy was born at Higher Bockhampton, in the parish of Stinsford near Dorchester—the capital of Dorset. The fortune of Hardys, who had owned extensive property in Dorset, had declined yet among the collateral descendants of the Hardy's who had first settled in England from Jersey, centuries earlier, there was one who was famous. This was admiral Hardy, who had been Captain of Nelson's flagship at the battle of Trafalgar. In the Dorset country wide at the south-west corner of the island (Wessex in the novels) one might almost have supposed that human existence was changeless, unaffected by history or technology, following through the centuries like a stately procession of verities and recurrences, when Hardy was a boy of seven Dorchester saw its first rail road and all through the second half of the century new methods new men would be reaching into the countryside. The slow incursion of such novelties and threats forms a major theme in Hardy's fiction.

The old photographs of Hardy's parents published by Florence Hardy in the Early life of her husband tell us something to the purpose. The father appears a tolerant, humorous, probably indolent man of an absolute integrity and general friendliness. He obviously deserved his son's comparison of Leon to Hamlet's Horatio. The mother's locks show one determined, critical, far-seeing, capable of sharp comment but ever essentially kind to human realities. Hardy's mother was well read and loved to recite ballads. It is clear that his interest in stories began very Early. He learned to read almost before he could walk and to tune a violin when of quite tender years. He was of ecstatic temperament, extra-ordinary sensitive to music, and among the endless fips, hornpipes, reels, waltzes, and country-dances that his father played of an evening in his early married years, and to which the boy danced in the middle of the room, there were three or four that always moved the child to tears, though he strenuously tried to hide them. This peculiarity in himself troubled the mind of 'Tommy' as he was called, and set him wondering at a phenomenon to which he ventured not to confess. He
used to say in later life that, like Calantha in Ford's Broken Heart, he danced on at these times to conceal his weeping. He was not over four years of age at this date.

One or two more characteristics of his personality at this childhood time can be reinvented. In those days the staircase at Bockhampton had its walls coloured Venetian red by his father, and was so situated that the evening sun shone into it, adding to its colour a great intensity for a quarter of an hour or more. Tommy used to wait for his chromatic effect and sitting alone there, would recite to himself 'And now another day is gone' from Dr. Watts's Hymns, with great fervency, though perhaps not for any religious reason, but from a sense that the scene suited the lines. It may be added here that this sensitiveness to melody, though he was no skilled musician, remained with him through life.

In 1848 Hardy became a pupil at the New School which Mrs. Martin has established at Lower Bockhampton. About this time his mother gave him Dryden's Virgil, Johnson's Rasselas and Paul and Virginia. He also found in a closet A History of Wars - a periodical dealing with the war with Napoleon, and this was the time Hardy made his first train journey when he accompanied his mother on a visit to an aunt in Hertfordshire. Hardy was transferred to a school (1849) in Dorchester principally because the headmaster was an excellent teacher of Latin. He began learning Latin at school, played the fiddle at local weddings and dances, taught in the secondary school. He left school (1856) and was articled to John Hicks a Dorchester architect and church-restorer, for whom his father had worked as a builder within a very short time, in his new employment. Hardy prepared a 'notebook exquisitely written and with neat diagrams of architectural structure which is now kept among the Hardy treasures at Dorchester Museum - there including also a book ... in his musical studies and annotations. Hardy was soon finding his way into Greek as well as Latin and discussed his construings with Hicks. On 9th August he stood close to the gallows outside Dorchester country Goal to witness the execution of Martha Broon for the murder of her husband at Birdsmoor gate, near Broadwindsor. Two or three years later he remembered when he was about to sit down to breakfast, that another execution was due and rushed out with a telescope to an eminent part of the heath from which he could see the goal two or three miles off. He had just lifted the telescope to his eyes when the white figure of the murder dropped, the sensation was such that he seemed to be done on the heath with the hanged man. These two executions were the only ones he witnessed, they were unforgettable and contributed to the story.
and final scene of "Tess of the D'erbervielles".

In 1857, Hardy began to write verse and essays but, advised by Moule, decided not to give up architecture. After spending some time sketching and measuring many old Dorset enurcnes with a view to their restoration, he went in 1862 to look for work in London. He became assistant to Arthur Blomfield, and worked hard at his profession, although uncertain whether literature or architecture should be his life's work.

Having somewhat settled down with Blomfield, but feeling that architectural drawing in which the actual designing had no great part was monotonous and mechanical having besides little inclination for pishing his way into influentiasl sets which would help him to start a practice of his own. Hardy's tastes reverted to the literary pursuits that he had been compelled to abandon in 1861, and had not resumed except to write the Prize Architectural Essay before mentioned. By as early as the end of 1963 he had recommenced to read a great deal with a growing tendency towards poetry. But he was forced to consider way and means, and it was suggested to him that he might combine literature with architecture by becoming an art critic for the press. His preparations for such a course were, quickly abandoned, and by 1865 he had began to write verses, but he was more interested in poetry.

As another outcome of the same drift of mind he used to deliver short addresses or talks on poets and poetry to Blomfield's pupils and assistants on afternoons when there was not much to be done.

The only thing he got published at the time was a trifle in Chambers's Journal in 1865 entitled 'How I built myself a house' written to amuse the pupils of Blomfield. It may have been the acceptance of this jeud­seprit that turned his mind in the direction of prose; yet he made such notes as the following:

"April 1865. Tho form on the canvas which immortalizes the painter is but the last of a series of tentative and abandoned sketches each of which contained some particular feature nearer perfection than any part of the finished product" 'Public opinion is of the nature of a woman' 'May. How often we see a vital truth flung about carelessly wrapt in a common place subject, without the slightest conception on the speaker's part that his words contain an unsmelted treasure".

"In architecture, men who are clever in details are bunglers in
generalities, so it is in everything whatsoever."

"More conductive to success in life than the desire for much knowledge is the being satisfied with ignorance on irrelevant subjects".

"The world does not despise us, it only neglects us."3

In July 1867 he wrote his first novel The poor man and the lady, after his return to Dorset from London. The novel contained "original verses" probably some of the unpublished poems he had written in London. It was never published. One view of the novel is that it had important consequences. In view of its episodic construction George, Meredith, reader for Chapman and Hall, advised Hardy to write a novel with a more complicated plot. The result was Desperate Remedies.

In 1870 he returned to Higher Bockhampton and within a week was asked by Crickmay to visit Julito in Cornwall to make plans of the Church where he was received by Miss Emma Lavinia Gifford who impressed him with her 'aliveness' Interested in Books, active in parish affairs, brisk with physical vitality, She won and returned Hardy's love. They married, after a long engagement, in 1874. For a time it was a happy union with Hardy Working steadily and his wife a sympathetic helper though the absence of children was keenly felt by both. Later after Hardy had become famous and his wife ambitions there were serious troubles.

Between 1868 and 1896 Hardy proved to be an enormously productive writer, turning out fourteen novels, many of them appearing in bowdlerized form as magazine serials, as well as three volumes of short stories. Hardy was inclined to look down upon prose fiction as an inferior - Perhaps because popular art. By no means sharing the reverent attitude towards the novel held by writers like James and Conard, he was all too ready to follow the advice of editors that he trim his serials to late Victorian taste. Once, however the novels appeared in book form, he was careful that his text should be quite as he wished. During the years of his fame Hardy returned briefly to live in London but again found it depressing most of his life was to be spent in home country though with regular trips to London. In 1883 he began to build a house near Dorchester and there he spent the remainder of his years.

After their usual London visits Hardy went to Switzerland. At home he went over his old poems and wrote others in preparation for his first volume of poetry Wessex poem. As a professional writer he wanted to be popular but...
his genius rebelled against self immolation. In 1899 his next volumes of poem, _Poems of the Past and the Present_ is remarkable for several poems on Universe, Nature and the First cause, they were stepping stones towards *The Dynasts*.

During the second half of the year 1902 he began the composition of the five hundred and twenty pages of mingled prose dramstic, lyric, and philosophic verse *The Dynasts* which was the most massive unique and characteristic achievement of life. He was gradually to be acknowledged not without dispute, as the greatest English writer of his time. The order of Merit was conferred upon him in 1910 and honorary doctorates were awarded by the universities. In 1912 his wife died. Hardy's grief was great. He was conscious of his neglect and of her loyalty. Numerous poem bear witness to his 'expiation' they express feeling which had been put up and prove that, though Hardy continued to write poem on miscellaneous subjects, he rarely had one to call forth his highest powers after the completion of *The Dynasts*. In Feb. 1914 he married Miss Florence Dugdale who had been at Max Gate since 1912- organizing the household and protecting the aged author from the intrusions of numerous visitors in 1927-28. He laid the foundation stone of the new Dorchester Grammer School buildings. On the fifteenth anniversary of his wife's death he worked almost all the day, revising poems. His strength was failing rapidly at this time. A cold wind blew and soon afterwards he fell ill.

From then his strength waned daily. He was anxious that a poem he had written 'Christmas in the Elgion Room' should be copied and set to the times. This was done. He said he was glad that he had cleared Everything up. By desire of the local practitioners additional advice was called in and Hardy's friend made invaluable suggestions and kept a watchful eye upon the case. But the weakness increased daily.

On 10 Jan. 1928 he made a strong rally, and although he was improved not to do so he insisted upon writing a cheque for his subscription to the pension Fund of the society of Authors. For the first time in his life he made a slightly feeble signature, unlike his usual beautiful handwriting and then he laid down his pen. In the evening he asked that Robert Browning's poem "Rabbi Ben Ezra" should be read aloud to him. He listened to this long poem of thirty two stanzas with wishful intentness.

He had a better night and in the morning of Jan 11 seemed so much stronger that one at least of those who watched beside him had confident
hopes of his recovery and an atmosphere of joy prevailed in the sick-room. Every thing he had that day in the way of food or drink he seemed to appreciate keenly, though naturally he took but little. He asked his wife to repeat to him a verse from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. In the evening he had a sharp heart attack of a kind he had never had before. The doctor was summoned and came quickly, joining Mrs. Hardy at the beside. Hardy remained conscious until a few minutes before the End.

"An hour later, going to his beside yet again saw on the death-face an Expression such as she had never seen before on any being, or indeed on any presentment of the human counterance. It was a look of radiant triumph such as imagination could never have conceived. Later the first radiance passed away, but dignity and peace remained as long as eyes could see the mortal features of Thomas Hardy*4.

Hardy's death was felt as a loss, not only of a figure unique in literature because of his great age and of his eminence, but also as a snipping of the last link with the nineteenth century, and he was mourned as "the last of the great victorians".

Thomas Hardy's career divides itself into three periods. It is not often that an artist's life can be divided so definitely into separate stages, each stage being characterised by the use of a different mood expression and this three-fold division is perhaps the most remarkable feature of Hardy's career as a whole. The first of these contains his work as a novelist. Throughout the series of the novels there gradually become more and more insistent a characteristic metaphysic in which the strivings and passions of individuals are in futile conflict with the relentless process of the world. Second period consists of the Dynasts, the greatest single achievement of his career. This great poem was written to give full letterance, in artistic form to his peculiar metaphysics. In the intrinsic grandeur and in its perfect command over immense wealth of matter, but not in its diction, this work can only be compared with such monuments, of man's destiny as Goethe's Faust and Milton's Paradise Lost. The Third period may be said to begin with time's laughing stocks in 1909 and is devoted to lyric poetry.
### A. Novels:

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<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desperate Remedise</td>
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<td>A Pair of Blue Eyes</td>
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<td>The Hand of Etheberta</td>
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<td>A Laodicean</td>
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<td>The Mayor of Casterbridge</td>
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<td>The Woodlander</td>
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<td>Tess of the D'urbervilles</td>
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<td>The Well-Beloved</td>
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<td>Jude the Obscure</td>
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### B. Volume of Short Stories

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<td>Wessex Tales</td>
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<td>A Group of Noble Daines</td>
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### C. Poetry:

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<td>Stories of Circumstance</td>
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<td>Moments of Vision</td>
<td>1917</td>
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<td>Human Shows, Far Phantasies</td>
<td>1925</td>
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D. Dynasts (1903-1908):

An Epic poem representing in dramatic form the course of the Napoleonic wars from 1805 to 1815.

II. Hardy & His Critics

"Hardy the novelist remains a challenge to critics: perhaps as great a challenge as Conrad, Faulker and other novelists so much more complex and more ambitious. For he was a great, humane, simple, even primitive novelist, and one who left little to be explicated in the way of elusive symbolic content or technical subtlety. He had the courage and the tact to be both obvious and direct where the human material was of sufficient importance."

Unlike most novelists who want a change of scene for their stories, Hardy confines himself to one district of England, the district in which he has been and which he knew most intimately. He resurrected the old name of the locality, Wessex, or land of the west exons. It is rarely a man of genius who ties himself to his native place as closely as Hardy has done.

Hardy was a serious and sober thinker untainted with cynicism or diabolism. But he was of all the great Victorians the one least given to didactic moralising. His philosophy is pervasive, but always in terms of feeling and imagination, always subject to the dominance of the aesthetic faculty. His style is simple and candid, notable for its almost, discreetly rhythmical in cadence.

To Hardy the Earth and its eternal expression—in nature are the permanent background against which man lives his brief life of pleasure and pain, and passes away making room for his successors.

"Nature in Hardy's fiction is neither an abstraction nor a scenic setting, but a vast impassive organism, living her own immense life, multitudinous but obscurely unanimous and the strict formality of the art could have no use for this enormous being unless it was able to bear some part in the fable, whose extent becomes therefore an affair only partially human."

In Hardy's novel nature is always present, not only as a background but an actor in the play, the incarnation of a living force with a will and a purpose of its own, now and again taking an actual hand in the story, but more often standing aloof, the silent and ironic spectator of the human creatures...
who struggle on its surface.

Hardy's Nature description seldom has the impersonalness of the camera. In a majority of cases the natural scenery shown to us at any point in a story will be found to have an emotional connection with the events happening at that moment. Hardy's landscape is much more ready to show sympathy with people in distress than with the happy ones. Even the cheerful morning picture quoted is quickly followed by one of an astonishingly dismal swamp which suitably lowers the tone-almost to tragedy, but the innocent Liddy trips across unharmed. The underlying principal of this emotional sympathy, and of the particular form it generally takes in Hardy is suggested by the comment made on certain river noises - "Sounds which a sad man would called moans and a happyman laughter".

"Whatever may be Hardy's opinions of life in general and human society in particular, there is no question about his feelings towards nature. He knows that, however, the tyranny of existence may irk, there is always a sure retreat to a priceless treasure that worm nor rust may corrupt, and to which no thief can break through and steal - a Paradise so vast that even the grimy and plastered fingers of man can but soil it here and there".

Hardy was at his best both traditional and modern, rudely archaic yet minutely observant, capable of both scriptural simplicity of narrative and complex psychological insight. Donald Davidson firmly establishes Hardy as a traditional and almost timeles teller of tales. Morton Dauwen Zabel is fully persuasive in describing Hardy's modern tensions and ambiguities and his role in freeing the novel from an unenergized realism. He now appears to us as a realist developing toward alleggry - as an imaginative artist, who brought the nineteenth century novel out of its slavery to fact and its dangerous reaction against popularity, and so prepared the way for some of the most original talents of a new time. He stands in succession of novelists that includes Melisstle, Emily Bronte and Howthome.

The "modern" novelist is pray to tensions and ambivalences, and to radical divergences of feeling and belief sympathy and judgement. The most important tension for Hardy the very heart of his aesthetic intact was the simple desire to juxtapose plausible human beings and strange uncommon event, the real and the fantastic. He found his immediate master not in another novelist but in the verse tales of George Crabbe, who similarly blended "rural realism"
with ironic or tragic mischance. It would have seemed to Hardy impertinent to offer to the reader nothing that escaped the banal and everyday, even macarbe coincidence may entertain; a good fiction must be strange. Hardy was a concious antirealist, opposed to the documentary and the drab, inpite of his minute fidelity to the physical world. He knew that all great art is a disproportioning, and remarked that the "seer hould watch pattern among general things which his idiosyn crazy, moves him to observe and describe that alone".

There is surely no other example in modern English fiction of an author who while reaching the highest levels of sophisticated artistic performance, comes bringing his tradition with him, not only the mechanics of the tradition with him, not only the mechanic of the tradition but the inner conception that is often lacking. The admonition we hear so often nowadays about the relations of the artist and his tradition seem dry and academic when we look closely at Hardy's actual performance. He seems to illustrate what we might think the ideal way of realizing and activating a tradition without admonition. The achievement is the more extraordinary when we consider that he worked against the dominant pattern of his day. He did what the modern critic is always implying to be impossible. Hardy accepted the assumptions of a society which in England was already being condemned to death and he wrote in term of those assumptions. His purpose seems to have been to tell about human life in the terms that would present it as most recognizably, validly and completely human.

"That Hardy's was a native and persistent order of genius." that he expressed it in a style and drama which he made unmistakably his own; that his work carries the stamp of a theme and vision which have impressed a large area of art and experience in the last Eighty years, that he exists as a force in modern literature inspite of some of the severest critical reservation any notable writer has been subjected to - then we may take as facts which have survived excesses both of distaste and of ecology and become part of the record of modern English literature.8.

He was too much a child of his time to remain unmarked by the traits of nineteenth century art. He inherited the aesthetic disorder of the age, its unresolved antipathies, its spawling appetite for life, and the instability that reflected the surrounding distraction. Hardy wrote and matured during a period
in which aesthetic reformers in fiction and poetry were grappling with the problem of reducing the elements of the arts to a new unity and integrity, of bringing them into a harmony that might enhance their value, force, and diligence. He was the contemporary of Baudelaire, Clément and Turgenev of James, Moore, Yeats, Proust, Pound, Valéry, and Eliot, but a colleague of none of them. He was conscious throughout his life of the struggle in himself of a distressing opposition of faculties of immediate personal sympathies and large intellectual ambitions—and in the face of critical hostility that surrounded him through two-thirds of his literary career he struggled to formulate a defense of his talent and method. Thus he shaped a personal aesthetic for himself and, though it shows something of the amateur's pedantry that is evident in his early fiction and in his metaphysical excursions, it demands attention from anyone concerned with the artistic progress of the modern novel and with the interrelations of modern fiction and poetry. The craft of fiction had not come to him easily. Poetry was his first ambition, and until he was sixty he was in doubt whether his real vocation had been obstructed or merely painfully slow in maturing. One of the first things he discovered about himself was a natural lack of artistic sophistication. He knew he was unequipped for competition with the rising school of Paris and London. He felt the pull of older traditions of romance and a brotherhood with the rough and ready masters of Victorian fiction the dramatic and sensation novelists of the sixties from whom he learned his trade.

"Hardy was praised or blamed by some of his contemporaries for austerity and subtlety and for a seeming evasion of popular modes. But the Lonards and joyces and Prouts and Kalkas have intervened to change our view of both the novel and the world. Today Hardy would appear to survive rather as a popular and even primitive novelists, reaching us through pure narrative gifts and antique simplicities of understanding and art. His struggle schematizing intellect may repel us. But his dark wisdom and brooding temperament prevail."9.

There is profound disparity in Hardy's taste and genius, a permanent division between his native feeling for words and character and his incurable tendency towards stiff erudition, towards ponderous generalizations on life and experience, towards grandiose symbolism and immensities of scale that wildly exceed the proportions necessary for maintaining his picture of man's atomic part in existence. There is an essential incongruity in hardy's world. And he
stretched the terms of the incongruity to such a degree that his tales often
collapse under the test. It soon become apparent that the incongruity existed
in his own temperament to a greater degree than most artists could ever hope
to tolerate or justify.

When his novels falter in that demonstration, his poetry takes it up. The shorter poems are in fact the spiritual centre of his production. He was
ligh in calling them "the more individual part of my literary fruitige." They reveal
his rich and sympathetic humanity, alive with recognition of spirit, alert in
sensitive invention, and always correcting the arguments of man ignoring
and defeat by their respect for man's capacity for passion, endurance and
sacrifice. They show at their best an originality that springs from deeply felt
and tested experience in the way of human ordeal. Their device of stanga
and rhythm of verbal oddity and surprise, begin to lose the inhibiting effect
of a personal convention and to take on the qualities of a genuine contribution
to English diction and meter.

Hardy's style is essentially of the philosophic type, an emanation of
his mind. Hardy may or may not be a pessimist, but it is undeniable that his
outlook on the visible world is grey. And his style is grey-grey as november
skies or odysseus sullen seas. Beside meredith or Carlyce it might seem that
Hardy has no style. Certainly his variations from the style of "the age" is not
outwardly obvious in the same sense with such writers as these. The Hardy
atmosphere is chiefly due to his style; it breathes in Every paragraph and is
as recognisable and characteristic as the scent of the salt ocean. It carries
with it an impression of stern, sad eyes, gazing steadily and unflinchingly out
over the wilderness of the world's wrong. His great masculine strength appears
not at least in his style. it is iron-cold with the stillness of dead passion.

Hardy makes considerable use of quotations. This is perhaps not
an integral part of style, but an apt and unforce quotation may give great
pleasure, partly intellectual and largely emotional. And if the quotation is worked
into the fabric of the narrative, becoming an organic part of it, the practice
has distance claims to be regarded as an element of style. It is only Hardy
who makes such constant and admirable use of the treasures of precedent
literature where with to enrich his won pages -taking either gems to stud the
openings of his chapters, or warm dyestuffs and silken strands to weave into
the tissue of his work.

Hardy's style is generally pure prose ans his similes are necessarily
in the same kind. They seldom have the powerful imaginative penetration of
the figure in its poetic form. But they arrest the attention and excite admiration
by something as near this as prose can go - a very felicitous and original
illuminating power, combined with a completer precision and oppositeness in
all parts of the comparison.

"Hardy was not a born master of style like Thackery nor a make
one like stevenson. Like some good orators, he requires a stimulant
before eloquence is forthcoming But when his theme makes
demands, as it does more than half the time he is writing, he is
inspired by it to heights and splendours not easily excelled"10.

A novel must have a plot. There must be a certain unity and purpose
in the action. It must be possible to discern a line, or lines, of progress towards
a consummation of some sort. In all great drama and in most great novels,
the actions is the logical outcome of the central characters. But even when
character is most tyrannical in its control the plot is also the expression of
an idea. And although the domination of character is incomplete in Hardy, owing
to the important part played by circumstances, he belongs to the old and
genuine school of novel in that the plot is there, the creation of the idea, ready
to be seized and assimilated.

Hardy is among those who have given us works of art wherein having
grasped the central idea of not only a thing of beauty but a grand moral lesson
also. Hardy's method is to grasp into his mind a certain complete 'Piece of
life". fathoming its inner meaning to be of profound moral signifcance. Thus
his procedure is entirely artistic, only it happen that his nature is such that
it causes his artist eye to light and linger upon only such pieces of life whose
artistic grace covers a soul of righteous ethic. Hardy's plots are self-supporting
organic wholes. And however great the play of an external fate, the life or
motive which is at the centre of each is essentially psychological. Every novel
is an answer to the question. Given certain characters in certain situations and
allowing for the irony of fate, what will happen. What will become of them?

"Most of the great characters of Hardy's novels are neither types
nor mere individuals but 'universals. Each comprehens within itself
the whole of human nature, which is one and indivisible. They have
their varied casings of the coloured glass of individuality, but the
light at the centre of each is white. To call Hardy a "fearless realist"
is to misunderstand him or to abuse the term. In the matter of incident
he is certainly neither remancer nor prude, but in character his eye
and hand are those of the Idealist - the Idealist who rises above the
accidents and distinctions of external show, and looks deep down
into that restless unpredictable, fascinating, incurably good and
desperately wicked thing, the heart of man".11

Mastery of character is considered the first essential of the novelist's
art. Hardy's greatness in this direction is seldom questioned his characters
are of the extraordinary range, variety and significance. He takes his characters
from real life. He takes them from that part of life of which he possesses through
knowledge. Hardy's chief aim in painting the realities of life is to find out its
stem, grim and naked truth. He wants to reproduce human life as it is. His
wessex is a universal scene where "the drama of mankind is played out". Hardy's characterisation is thought to be 'fine' and 'successful'. His power to
draw characters is indeed uncomparable. His men and women are gifted with
mighty emotions and passion. The characters he selects are ordinary men and
women. But all of them are shown engaged in a heroic struggle against an
over mastering fate.

Although contemporary magazine publishers objected to some
Hardy's characters as being improperly plebeian, it would be foolish to claim
that he initiated an interest that has since absorbed one-half of fiction. Before
hardy the practice of almost all character-creators, had been in accordance
with Aristotle's Theory that the hero must be a man of high rank. But we find
of Hardy's Stage - Tess, milk-maid and hard-driven general farmhand, daughter
of a haggler and his vulgar thriftless wife; Jude Fawelys tone-mason, sometime
bakery's assistant; Oak shepherd heavy booted and smocked; sue elementary
school teacher; Henchard, tramping hay-trusser. These five the very greatest
of the heroes and heroines are all drawn from the most common place walks
of life, from occupations as devoid of romance for other writers as a bagpipe
is of music for the ordinary listener this is hardy's supreme achievement to
have gone down among the unnoticed forgotten my rads of dull, prosaic
average humanity and discovered here and there among them lives as
mysteriously interesting and as spiritually adventurous as were ever those of
queens and emperor. Here and there in the world encircling ranks of apparently
commonplace humanity are men and women with soul like Gothic Cathedrals
places of endless wonder, mystery, beauty that we explore for ever, finding
ever new crypt and hidden chapels, silences and backonings to prayer, it is
this type of dim unapprehended personality that Hardy, for the first time in
literature, has definitely taken up and made his own. In a sense it is Hardy's special contribution to the spirit of the age which gives Hardy quite extraordinary positions among the great creators of character.

Generally Hardy is regarded as a pessimist who has painted in his novels a very dark and grim picture of human life. His is a world abounding in thwarted desires unsatisfied longings undeserved sufferings. Clash of duties, broken commandments, disappointments and disillusionments high and noble aspiration ending in miserable failure. He in a supreme power which is indifferent to human affairs, in The Dynasts Hardy calls it the Immanent will. Sometimes he seems to imply that this power is not merely indifferent, but that it actually takes delight in human misery, that 'as flies to wanton boys are we to the goods; they kill us for theirs port'. This is the attitude expressed in the closing sentence of "Tess of the D'urbervilles. "Justice was done, and the president of the Immortals had ended his sports with Tess" But with the passage of Time Hardy came to speak of the Immanent will as something something which is neither good nor evil, but something which is altogether indifferent, blind and purposeless. In 'The Dynast' where his ideas reached final expression, he held that there is no active intelligence, no just and loving God behind human destiny but that creation is swayed by an unconscious mechanical force, sightless, dumb, mindless, and equally indifferent to the suffering and joys of mankind.

Hardy is sombre and grey because he was sensitive and tender-hearted. Moreover his own life was a big factor in moulding his attitude towards life. Hardy finds no solution in any of the accepted way. He was a thinker, honest and sincere, remaining always a student of the inexhaustible book of life. with years his philosophy of life became grey but it was never dogmatic and despairing. He had faith in the divinity of life and no honest reader can lose faith in life by reading him.

Sometimes in Hardy tragedy is carried beyond the limits of the limit of human toleration. It is not that what he urges is not true, but there is another side to his picture, a happy and bright side which is equally true and upon which Hardy is silent. In his earlier writings there are some rays of hope, or what he himself calls 'occasional interludes' and sweetness and bitterness of life are admirably contrasted, but in the later novels - in 'Tess' and 'Jude' especially rich in power and insight as these books are - the gloom is needlessly intensified. They are expansion in prose, of Mathew Arnold's deeply melancholy
lines -

"We are here on a darkling plain
Swept by confused alarms of
struggle and flight
where ignorant armies clash by night."

This philosophy gives us pathos of human existence which is too deep for tears. It originates from the most sublime and chastened reflections. It is a reaction against the idolent and wicked way of optimistic thinking which unhears the 'sad still music of humanity': Hardy sees the future of mankind in which zest and jubilation of life will be replaced by a growing resignation and sense of indifference towards the aches and ecstasies of life. People will develop a thick crust of intellectual indifference able to withstand shocks and suffering to which the flesh in heir. Hardy wants a well-proportioned mind that state of mental equilibrium which accepts the pains and pleasures alike. This is what Hindu philosophy describes as virakti of vaibagya.

We may conclude by saying that though Hardy is never a complete philosopher in the accepted sense of the term, yet he is a thinker, painstaking and realistic, often pragmatic but never explaining exhaustively the obstinate questionings of the soul. He is contented with his reflections on human life and likes to live and wishes others also to live well.
REFERENCES

2. Ibid, P. 152.
3. The Life of Thomas Hardy, Florence Emily Hardy, P. 47 - 48.
4. Ibid, P. 446.
7. Hardy, H. C. Duffin, P. 143.
11. Ibid, P. 96.