Standing at the meeting point of the two ages, Victorian and Modern, Thomas Hardy was destined to witness the rapid passing away of one and the slow but steady rising of the other. It was the Victorian age, indeed an age of transition, when the old ideas of the Victorian era, the settled beliefs of the veteran Victorians and the 'never to be shaken' faiths of the people at large had been gradually ceasing to be a vital force and slowly giving way to what we may call modernism. It was an age when human mind was being shaped by positive data or genuine respect for science and a deep curiosity at the changing pattern of life. It was the age of Matthew Arnold who thought that he was born between two worlds - one dead and the other powerless to be born. It was the age of "sick hurry and divided aims", where "ignorant armies clash by night." It was a scene too confused and too chaotic, and Thomas Hardy, as it was characteristic of him, sought for a world of his own, where man is always alone and fighting alone an unending fight with destiny. Tragedy is the medium of that world, just as comedy is the medium of its opposite world. The entire basis of Hardian visionary imagination, whether right or wrong, was inevitably disposed towards tragic themes and sorry occasions.

To place Hardy as a modern novelist and to look upon him as one of the pioneers of Modern Movement it is necessary to know what is Modern Movement and when it actually began. By 'modern' is meant a pattern of thought and an attitude of mind in the changing flux of time, which apart from being
contemporaneous, record the most eventful and exceptional changes connecting the past with the present century. Its recurring themes are those of the new nineteenth century concept of history as modified or developed through evolution. Both the concepts are contemporary to us, and their continuity from nineteenth to twentieth is dynamic. A modern man always wants to place both himself and the work historically, judges the implications of the work for his politics, his economics, his religion and his life style, and decides for himself whether he should be a proper citizen or a bohemian, how he should raise his children and whether he should live in a city or in a country. A modern reader also reads a work from his cultural situation and examines if it has anything to say to him now. In other words, he discovers its modern relevance. Robert Langbaum observes: "By modern, I mean the post-Enlightenment tradition that connects the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This will be evident enough if I name just a few of the themes that recur here - the new nineteenth century concept of culture, for example, or the nineteenth-century concept of history as involving development or evolutionary process. Both the concepts continue into our own time. But the continuity traced here is dynamic. And we see, as we move from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, changing ideas about nature, a continuing but changing interest in questions of self and identity, and a developing interest, that becomes evident in the twentieth century, in the cyclical view
of history, and in myth and the tragicomic attitude that accompanies the mythical view of life."

Dwelling upon the modern movement Cyril Connolly holds the view that the French fathered the modern movement, which slowly moving beyond the English Channel, then crossing the Irish Sea, finally reached America, adding to it her demonic energy, extremism and a taste for the colossal. The modern movement is thus a kind of revolt that was originally born in France and gradually spread over England and America. It is the revolt against the bourgeois in France, the Victorians in England, the puritanism and the materialism of America. The spirit of the movement is "a combination of certain intellectual qualities inherited from Enlightenment: lucidity, irony, scepticism, intellectual curiosity, combined with the passionate intensity and enhanced sensibility of the Romantics, their rebellion and sense of technical experiment, their awareness of living in a tragic age."

In his critical survey of The World in the Twentieth Century Louis L. Snyder, discussed the general characteristics and the different trends of thought of the twentieth century. According to him, the world entered the twentieth century at a very crucial stage. The most critical unsolved problem of the time is the constant threat of war. Added to the threat of war are such unsolved issues as the problems of class conflict,


poverty and social justice. "The twentieth century has been variously called the Age of Technology, the Age of Nationalism, the Age of Democracy versus Dictatorship, the Age of World Wars, the Age of Common Man, and the Age of Freud. Each of these terms describes one strand in a historical pattern." 1. Economically, our present century has witnessed the intensification of the Industrial Revolution and extraordinary developments in communication, transportation, trade, commerce and industry. Politically, this century is distinguished by the intensification of nationalism and an awareness of the bitter struggle between democracy and dictatorship. Militarily, our century has witnessed the two global wars. Socially, as against the predominance of the bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century, the twentieth century marks an advance in the rise of the proletariat. Psychologically, this century marks the growth of scientific investigation of the human psyche, human behaviour and the psycho-pathology of everyday life under the impulse of Sigmund Freud. Furthermore, the twentieth century has also come into certain monistic interpretations of history, which fit into the century by their very nature. Marxists, for example, interpret the century as fulfilling Karl Marx's prediction of the inevitability of socialism. Arnold J. Toynbee looks upon the century as a phase of challenge and response. Others, notably Pareto, Bergson and Croce, take the century in terms of rise, maturity and decay of cultures that have no redeeming faith. 2. These are the developments of the present

2. Ibid : P.11.
century, and its history is indeed a combination of all these developments.

About the starting point of Modern Movement in literature in general and English literature in particular the literary critics and historians are not unanimous. Cyril Connolly, for instance, takes 1880 as the starting point of Modern Movement in English literature. "1880 seems to me the point at which the Modern Movement can be diagnosed as an event which is still modern to us, more modern than many of us, not something put away in the moth-balls of history." J.I.M. Stewart has also taken 1880 as the beginning of the modern English literature, because it is the beginning of a changed balance." 

Ellen Moers looks upon 1870 as the starting point of modern literature and 1920 as the 'glorious high point of Modernism.' "Fifty years later, the 1920's still seem to most of us to be the glorious high point of Modernism, when the new seemed newer, the avant-grade more advanced, and the young younger than ever before." Philip Toynbee takes 1910 as the beginning of Modern Movement in English literature. "In the last two hundred years there have been two, and only two, genuine revolutions of literary taste. The first was the Romantic Movement, and the second was that Modern Movement which extended in England, from about 1910 to about 1935."
According to Maurice Legris, the modern American literature began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century with the publication of *Huck Finn* and with the early Henry James. But the first French-Canadian novel which could be called modern, as Maurice Legris further observed, is Louis Hemon's *Marie-Chapdelaine*. It was published in 1914. Even here, too, the date of publication is supposed to be the only modern element. For, both in the subject matter and approach it is very much a novel of the past century. Maurice Legris also stated that in classifying the French-Canadian novel of the twentieth century, Father Paul Gay listed only *Marie-Chapdelaine* published in 1914. He also listed, in the context, only two books published before 1930, while the majority of other books belonged to the post-1930 period. In spite of an old subject matter and old technique of construction *Marie-Chapdelaine* is still looked upon as a modern novel at least historically, if not artistically. It is also of "crucial importance in understanding the French-Canadian character." 1 Mrs. Virginia Woolf in her *The Leaning Tower* looks upon 1930 as the beginning of modern literature. Thus, the critics are not of one opinion about the starting point of Modern Movement. It has begun at different times in different countries. Again, neither subject matter nor technique of construction is of vital importance in judging a work of art modern or otherwise. It is the theme rather than

1. Twentieth Century Literature
Vol. 16 : July 1960 : No. 3
(Managing Editor : William E. Grant) P. 109.
artistic treatment, which is given due weight in considering a novel modern. So Maria Chapdelaine has come to be regarded as a modern novel.

Having examined 'Modernism' and 'Modern Movement', we should now examine the general trend and the characteristics of modern literature and those of modern novels in particular, and should also examine how Hardy fits into it. Modern literature is often marked by a lively interest in the past for its own sake. It is a sense of reverence for the days gone by. G.S. Fraser says that the sense of history is one of the most vital elements in modern literature, and if it is properly cultivated it becomes a source of moral strength in troubled times. Modern literature often tends to show a growing awareness of living in a tragic world. An individual today is not only exposed to petty humiliations and frustrations but also to moral dangers from wars, from revolutions and from slumps. In this Age of Anxiety, literature naturally focuses the generalised anxiety of our time. "It is, at least, very interestingly symptomatic of the troubled times we are living through". - 1. In troubled times it must have an appeal to our troubled hearts. Symbolism is another characteristic of modern literature. Symbolism consists in expressing something with the help of some other thing. A symbol is defined by Iain Fletcher as the expression of some otherwise ineffable truth as quoted by Mr. Fraser. 2.

2. Ibid: P. 25
Modern literature is also dominated by sceptical and critical outlook. This is due to the all-pervasive influence of scientific thought in the modern world. In the bewildering world we have been living in today when nothing is certain, man cannot keep his faith at any length of time and hence he is sceptical. Again, modern age is often called an Age of Interrogation. Question, test and examine are the three watch-words of Bernard Shaw. Indeed, modern literature is nothing, if not critical. Modern literature is also marked by a kind of secular humanism. By 'secular humanism' we mean love for mankind at large irrespective of the accident of birth, class or convention. Modern literature is also marked by a sense of isolation. This has resulted mainly perhaps from a mood of anxiety and a sense of futility in human endeavours. Modern literature is also characterised by an attitude of revolt against the conventional values, particularly social and ethical values. The literature of our own time, particularly novels, is marked by an awareness of contemporary social realities. In other words, it is in the direction of realism that the modern novel has developed.

Realism as the pursuit of reality is hard to define by its outward characteristics. All that can be said is that "the good contemporary writer, the novelist particularly, will have a firm respect for reality; but that everyone has to discover reality for himself; and from his own perspective and communicating to the account of his discovery the flavour
of his own personality”. Another marked feature of modern literature is its autobiographical element. This particularly applies to the literature produced by those who are described by Mrs. Virginia Woolf as the 'Leaning Tower' group of writers. She observed: “When all faces are changing and obscured, the only face one can see clearly is one's own. So they wrote about themselves - in their plays, in their poems, in their novels. No other ten years can have produced so much autobiography as the ten years between 1930 and 1940. No one, whatever his class or his obscurity, seems to have reached the age of thirty without writing his autobiography. But the leaning-tower writers wrote about themselves honestly, therefore creatively. They told us the unpleasant truths, not only the flattering truths. That is why their autobiography is so much better than their fiction or their poetry”. - 2.

As to the spirit of modern literature, it may be said that it has three marked characteristics. The great masters of modern English literature like the great scientists of the age have made truth the supreme object of human endeavour. The poets, the novelists, the dramatists and the essayists of the age have been constantly endeavouring to discover the truth of life. In the hands of modern masters literature has become a mirror of truth. Every novelist, every poet or every essayist wants to be true to life or to facts which he represents.

Literature also must have a definite moral purpose. It is not enough to make an artistic work merely for its own sake; the

work should offer a definite moral lesson to mankind. The
poets are not only singers, but they are also leaders. They
must lead people by holding up an ideal before them. The
novelists, while presenting the pictures of human life, give
a call to people for social reform. Similarly, the essayists,
like all prophets and teachers, use literature as a vehicle
of progress and education. It may not be true of all modern
writers; but it applies to a vast majority of them. Thus,
the spirit of modern literature is that it is a pursuit of
truth, a mirror of truth and a vehicle of definite moral
purpose. It will be examined in due course how far Hardy
conforms to this spirit of modern literature. Having examined
the general characteristics and the spirit of modern litera­
ture, let us now turn to modern English novels.

Novel has been defined by Henry W. Nevinson as "the modern
form of art in words, just as the drama was the Elizabethan
form." 1 Since novel is the most important form of modern
literature, the characters attributed to modern literature
can be safely attributed to modern novels. In addition, modern
novels may be said to contain a few more characteristics which
are supposed to be peculiar to them only. The predominance
of the middle class or lower middle class. The focal centre
of this type of novel is the essential worth and dignity of
common man. Another marked feature of modern novel is the
sociological studies. The recognition of the very fact that

1. Henry W. Nevinson : Thomas Hardy
(George Allen Unwin Ltd : London : 1943) p. 22.
novel is admirably suited as a vehicle of social studies has attracted most of the great artists of the modern age. And hence has come into being the Novel of Ideas and of social purpose, depicting such contemporary problems as religion, shifting social values, family life etc. The growth of regionalism is another important feature of modern novels. Hardy's Wessex Novels and Bennett's Five Towns are perhaps the best examples of this regionalism. Besides realism, the survival of romance is another marked feature of modern novels. In novels, as in dramas, the spirit of romance survives even in this age of realism. To an educated modern taste prose romance is more palatable than poetry, which calls for a more sophisticated taste. Modern novels are also characterised by foreign influence to a marked degree. The influence is mainly from the French and the Russians. From Flaubert, de Goncourt, Edmond, Zola, Maupassant and from the master of them all, Balzac, the English writers have learnt the naturalistic art of minutely accurate portrayal of everyday life. From these French masters English writers have also learnt the new conception of the novel as an art form, in which structure, pattern style and finish are of fundamental importance. From the Russian novelists, such as, Dostoevski, Turgeneff and Tolstoy, the contemporary English writers have got a new interest in the investigation of the darker and hidden sides of human nature, and also a different conception of form and structure about fiction. Modern novels are also characterised by a search for a workable faith in the bewildering world in which we have been living today.
David Daiches is of opinion that three important factors contributed to the making of modern fiction. The first is the breakdown of the publicly shared principle of selection and significance. The impression of the novelist of the modern age does no longer hold for his public. In the past there was complete agreement between the readers and the writers as to what was thought to be the significant human event. But at the present age no such agreement exists. This is because of the importation of new ideas in ethics, psychology and many other matters including social and economic factors. The second is the new concept of time as a continuous flow rather than as a series of separate points. This is the concept first fathered in France, in Henry Bergson's concept of 'La durée'. The third is the new view of consciousness deriving in a general way from the work of Freud and Jung but concentrating on the multiplicity of consciousness. In the present, the past always exists. It colours and determines the nature of the present responses. And to tell the truth about a character's reaction to any situation we must tell the whole truth about everything that has ever happened to that character. Everyman is after all the product of his past. It is his unique past that gives him his present consciousness and his train of association. "Thus the three major factors that have influenced and in a sense produced the modern novel - the breakdown of public agreement about what is significant in experience and therefore about what the novelist ought to select, the new view of time, and the new view of nature
consciousness - co-operate to encourage the novelist to concentrate on aspects of the human situation which were not the major concern of earlier novelists...." - 1.

Alan Friedman defines novel as an art form depicting not only the exterior world of action, but also the interior world of character, and still more, the relation between them. It is the narrative inter-action between the subjective and the objective worlds that creates what we call the novel. Friedman has drawn a distinction between earlier and modern novels by using what may be called "closed form" and "open form". Modern novel, according to him is characterised by a gradual historical shift from a "closed form" to an "open form". Earlier fiction attests to closed ethical experience, while modern fiction attests to the reverse: an open experience. "Closed form" is one where the ethical experiences are closed. Since finality is reached, it is not open to further expansion. But open form is an unclosed experience, which while coming to an end, still remains unchecked, still remains expanding. This new myth of openness in the flux of experience has given newness to modern novel. According to Hardy, novel enlarges but never narrows the view. - 2. Lawrence observes that novel is only a vast space without end, without finish. If a novel is finished, it is then a failure. If some one tries to nail anything down in the novel, the novel is killed. - 3.

"Like the modern cosmos, the modern novel is ever expanding, and it is racing away fastest at its outermost reaches."

All the modern novelists almost share the view that life in its entirety should come within the scope of novel, so the novelists of our own time has an important responsibility. They should be aware of the changing character of the world they are living in. At this time of rapid and disturbing changes when the individuals are being exposed not only to frustrations and humiliations, but also to moral dangers from wars, from revolutions and from slumps, none can say with any degree of certainty when some new pattern of relative stability will emerge, nor what sort of pattern it is likely to be. Nevertheless, the human heart always hankers after permanence. So a novelist of the modern times must have to project into his work some image of permanence by giving his novels either a moral coherence or aesthetic coherence which is likely to hold against the shocks of time. Even in the midst of dangerously shifting character of the world, the modern novelist should take into account life in its entirety and make an eternal affirmation of the eternal spirit of man.

Thomas Hardy, though he belongs to the Victorian age, is more modern than Victorian in the sense that he was never in agreement with the Victorian Conventions of complacency, compromise and the comedy of life and always rebelled against the dry, hard-hearted morality of the Victorian age. Being

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someday ahead of his age, Hardy shared more than any other of his Victorian contemporaries most of the great body of thoughts developed in the twentieth century. To have a correct appraisal of Hardy as a man, rather as a modern man, of his ideas and opinions about men and things, and above all as a modern novelist, we should refer, in addition to his works—novels, poems, plays, essays and stories, to innumerable letters which Hardy wrote and despatched to different people and the Note Books in which were recorded Hardy's views and events during his lifetime.

Carl J. Waber published Hardy's letters to his first wife in a volume called Dearest Emma. This volume contains seventy four letters, all written by Thomas Hardy to Emma Lavinia Grifford, his first wife, the first letter being dated March 13, 1836 and the last June 10, 1911. For Mrs. Emma Hardy died on Nov. 17, 1911. These letters throw a good deal of light on the character and personality of Hardy as a man. These letters, inter alia, show Hardy's patience, his forbearance and his humility, and above all his infinite capacity of adjustment with his wife in spite of their temperamental differences which culminated in his childless union with Emma. True, Hardy could be parsimonious and could talk about saving six pence; true, he did not say "please" or "Thank you" very often. But the general traits of his character were undoubtedly attractive. And those persons, who for their picture of Hardy turned to Somerset Maugham's Cakes and Ale, have been woefully deceived. Cakes and Ale was published exactly two
years after Hardy's death. In this novel Herbert Driffield has been obviously patterned after Thomas Hardy, but no attempt has been made to show where fact ends and fiction begins. Hardy once remarked that this way "of getting lies believed about people ... is a horror to contemplate". -1.

Some time in 1870, exact date being not available, Hardy recorded in his note books: "we are continually associating our ideas of a modern humanity with bustling movement, struggle and progress. But a more imposing feature of the human mass is its passivity. Poets write of 'a motion toiling through the gloom': you examine it is not there". -2.

This note was made by Hardy when he was thirty years old. This note shows that Hardy, the realist, who even sharing the modern idea of human progress, attributed passivity to mankind as its basic characteristic. Man is passive because gloomy circumstances make him passive, and in turn he is unable to be in motion, to be active. In fact, Hardy had his interest in telepathy, the sporadic movement and the appearance of ideas and the working of the unconscious mind. According to him, events and tendencies are not the rivers of voluntary activity; but they are acted upon by an unconscious propensity.

In his personal note dated Oct 15, 1870, hardy recorded:

"In a worldly sense it is a matter for regret that a child who has to earn his living should be born of a noble nature."
social greatness requires bitterness to inflate and float it, and a high soul may bring a man to the work house".-1. Here Hardy was at quarrel with the society and its values. Perhaps Hardy felt bitter at the thought of his own early efforts to get a living. This sentiment was most powerfully expressed in his last great novel: *Jude the Obscure* but its tone is that of his earliest novel *Desperate Remedies*.

A highly suggestive note also appears in his note book dated Oct 30, 1870. "Mother's notion (and also mine) - that a figure stands in our van with arm uplifted, to knock us back from any pleasant prospect we indulge in as probable." - 2.

Thus Hardy's predilection to fate and chance was to a large extent inherited from his mother. Indeed, Jermina Hardy was the driving force behind her brilliant son when he was maturing and she instilled into him her country woman's fatalistic philosophy, together with her love of learning. No doubt much of Hardy's so called pessimism finds its origin in this tersely expressed belief, one which may be found in many pleasant communities, and which flavours the Greek tragedies. Similar notes concerning old customs and primitive practices appeared in June 1871, the exact date not mentioned.

1) "Old Midsummer Customs, Midsummer Eve, at going to bed:

I put my shoes in the form of a T

And trust my true love to see.

11) On old midsummer noon dig a hole in the grass-plot and place your ear thereto precisely at twelve. The occupation of your future husband will be revealed by the noises heard.

2. Ibid - P. 32
iii) Another old custom: All Hallows’ Eve. Kill a pigeon and stick its heart full of pins. Roast the heart in the candle flame. A faithless lover will twist and toss with nightmare in his sleep.” - 1.

From these entries we can understand that every ancient superstition and custom used in his work was not the figment of imagination but was rooted in truth - that he did not invent such details to amuse his reading public. Both The Woodlanders and The Return of the Native incorporate practices and superstitions still lingering in his own day.

Another highly interesting note concerning modern art appears in Hardy’s note book dated June 16, 1876. Hardy recorded: “Reading the life of Goethe. Schelling says that the deepest want and deficiency of all modern art lies in the fact that the artists have no mythology.” - 2. This note throws an interesting light on his mind which was mythopetic as well as analytic, and although Hardy continually strove to impose the dictates of reason, his interest in the occult, in the unconscious, and in myth and legend, continued to obtrude him almost to an unusual degree. By about the same time Hardy recorded the statement of F. Morley: “Poetry moves with the general march of the human mind. Art is only the transformation into the ideal and imaginative shapes of a predominant system and philosophy of life.” - 3. Thus, at the instance of F. Morley Hardy was inclined to believe that novel writing as an art form should transform a philosophy of life into an

2. Ibid - P. 61
3. Ibid - P. 54
ideal. Hence it is not surprising that Hardy is preoccupied with his philosophy in almost all his novels. Another interesting note about novel writing appears by about the same time. "Novel writing as an art cannot go backwards. Having reached the analytic stage it must transcend it by going still further in the same direction: why not by rendering as visible essences, spectres, etc., the abstract thoughts of the analytic school." - 1. Here Hardy seems to have prophesied in a manner the emergence of the modern abstract novel. In August 1922, the exact date not available, Hardy recorded: "I am convinced that it is better for a writer to know a little bit of the world remarkably well than to know a great part of the world remarkably little." - 2. It is for this reason perhaps that Hardy has seldom set his foot beyond the Wessex soil, and as the chronicler of Wessex has established the permanent reputation of a regional novelist in English literature.

Another interesting document in the context is "One Hate Fair Woman" containing Hardy's letters to Florence Henniker. These letters, in all one hundred fifty three, the first one dated June 3, 1893 and the last dated May 29, 1922 reveal many things about Hardy the man and the writer. His was a complex, deceptively simple character, who deplored war as an unsatisfactory way of settling international disputes.

2. Ibid: P. 95
and who could not bear to think animals being killed for human consumption. In his letter dated Oct 11, 1899, Hardy wrote: "I constantly deplore the fact that 'civilised' nations have not learnt some more excellent and apostolic way of settling the disputes than the old and the barbarous one, after all these centuries...." - 1. Again his letter dated September 13, 1903 runs as: "For my part, the world is so greatly out of joint that the question of vivisection looms rather small beside the general cruelty of man to other animals. I hear them complaining in the railway tracks sometimes, and think what an unfortunate result it was that our race acquired the upper hand, and not a more kindly one, in the development of species." - 2. In another letter dated June 11, 1914 Hardy wrote: "Altogether the world is such a bungled institution from human point of view that a grief more or less hardly counts. Wishing one had never come into it or shared in its degrading organisations is but a selfish thought, as others would have been here just the same. But this sounds gloomy to you I know; and I am after all not without hope of much amelioration." - 3. From these letters we can clearly understand how deeply concerned Hardy was at the thought of war which he could foresee beforehand, and at the thought of cruelty to lower animals. Often he felt that the world was out of joint and that the world was a mere bungled human institution, but he did not altogether lose his faith in the essential goodness of human kind; he was even much hopeful about amelioration of human ills.

2. Ibid: P.112
3. Ibid: P.152
Hardy expressed this faith at the end of The Dynasts. But unfortunately his faith was rudely shaken after the outbreak of the First World War. For the war gave the 'coup de grace' to any belief he had held an 'ultimate wisdom at the back of things'. -1. As for example, Hardy wrote in his letter dated September 2, 1915: "My 'faith in the good there is in human kind'—except in isolated individuals, of whom happily there are many—has been rudely shaken of late". - 2. It may be noted that the war destroyed all Hardy's belief in the gradual ennoblement of man, a belief which he had held for many years, as is shown by poems like The Sick Battle-God and others. Hardy said that he would not have probably ended The Dynasts in the way he did if he could have visualised what was going to happen within a few years. -2. Again cruelty to animal, for Hardy, was almost the same as and quite inseparable from war and militarism. Believing in the law of Evolution Hardy held in his letter to a lady of New York, as mentioned by his second wife Mrs. F.E. Hardy, that all organic creatures were of one family. Therefore, the centre of altruism should be shifted from humanity to the whole conscious world collectively. This is necessary at least for the sake of human progress.

2. Ibid : P. 170
Hardy's regard for Christianity was not for its own sake but for certain virtues which people were supposed to be taught to practise. But since Christianity had miserably failed in teaching people its preliminary virtues, Hardy could not but rebel against it. In his letter dated February 25, 1900, he wrote: "we (the civilised world) have given Christianity a fair trial for nearly 2000 years, and it has not yet taught countries the rudimentary virtue of keeping peace; so why not throw it over, and try, say, Buddhism?" - 1. At one time Hardy, in spite of his tragic view of life, fondly hoped for real improvement in the world. But at his old age he was utterly disillusioned and was quite afraid that things were getting worse day by day. His letter dated June 5, 1919 was most significant. Hardy wrote: "All development is of a material and scientific kind—and scarcely any addition to our knowledge is applied to objects philanthropic or ameliorative. I almost think that people were less pitiless towards their fellow creatures—human and animal—under the Roman Empire than they are now; so why does not Christianity throw up the sponge and say I am beaten, and let another religion take its place." - 2. It may be added here that Hardy's view of Christianity does not mean that he is an atheist; while expressing his just contempt for Christianity, he seems to be sharing the most radically modern view that Christianity has lost its unifying force which could hold men together at one time.

2. Ibid : P.185
Hardy's views about marriage and divorce are quite revolutionary. They seem quite modern. In his letter dated Oct 3, 1911 Hardy wrote: "Marriage should not thwart nature, and that when it does thwart nature it is no real marriage, and the legal contract should therefore be as speedily cancelled as possible". - 1. Before this Hardy had maintained in his letter dated May 26, 1911 that by far the most interesting type of femininity in man's eyes at the present moment was the modern intelligent, mentally emancipated young woman of cities." - 2. For such a woman married life would ultimately prove no great charm. Hardy's Sue Bridehead is certainly of this type. In his letter dated October 27, 1918 Hardy wrote: "If I were a woman I should twice think before entering into matrimony in these days of emancipation when everything is open to the sex." - 3. These views were indeed too radical to get a general assent when Hardy expressed them more than half a century ago.

From Hardy's letters to Mrs. Hennilker we can also deduce that he had great liking for Browning in spite of his optimistic philosophy (letter dated July 26, 1901) - 4, for Turgeneff whom he called a true artist (letter dated August 12, 1898) - 5 and for Henry James whom he called a real man of letters (letter dated March 17, 1903) - 6. Again, Hardy

2. Ibid : P. 147
3. Ibid : P. 182
4. Ibid : P. 105
5. Ibid : P. 68
6. Ibid : P. 110
was also much influenced by Ibsen's plays which he described as pages of real life and to witness which he also requested Mrs. Henniker (letter dated Nov 29, 1896).- 1. But he had his great dislike for Zola. According to Hardy, Zola was too materialistic and hence no artist.

"I feel that the animal side of human nature should never be dwelt on except as a contrast or foil to its spiritual side". (letter dated March 31, 1897).- 2. Hardy also expressed his contempt for his contemporary reviewers. In his letter dated October 22, 1900 Hardy wrote: "English reviewers go behind the book and review the man. I am of opinion that the present condition of the English novel is due to the paralysing effect of English criticism upon those who would have developed it—possibly in a wrong direction in many cases, but ultimately towards excellence." - 3. Hardy himself was a miserable but undue victim in the hands of his reviewers. Hardy's novels were badly criticised, though paradoxically enough, his novels were in great demand. His letter dated May 29, 1922 shows that he was requested to write at least one more novel before his death. It proves Hardy's popularity as a novelist, even though he abandoned novel—writing some twenty-seven years ago.

F.B. Pinion held that Hardy regarded himself as an Intrinsicalist. An Intrinsicalist is one who is got to be

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2. Ibid : P. 63
3. Ibid : P. 97
judged by his intrinsic worth, and not by his birth or
class or convention. At the root of much of Hardy's writings,
particularly his novels, and most remarkably in Tess of the
D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure or a short story like
The Son's Veto, this attitude is most consistently expressed.
This is perhaps one of the main reasons for the popularity of
Thomas Hardy. The Dynasts illustrates the exploitation of the
masses for political power. Never biased by party politics,
Hardy stood for the equality of opportunity for all. He
believed in a political principle which was neither conserva-
tive nor radical; it was moderate. Hardy's letter dated 8,
1917 to the Secretary of the Royal Society of Literature shows
that he was in hearty agreement with the League of Peace and
that the sentiment of patriotism should be freed from the
narrow meaning attached to it; in the past and be extended to
the whole globe. Foreignness, if any, may be attached only
to the inhabitants of other planets and not to those of this
world of ours. - 1.

Hardy was indeed much alarmed at the uprooting and
decline of peasantry. Mrs. Florence Emily Hardy in her
compilation of The Life of Thomas Hardy has quoted Hardy's
letter of March, 1902 to Sir Rider Haggard who was investigating
the conditions of agriculture and agricultural labourers
during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Writing to
Sir Rider Haggard about the conditions of peasantry obtaining
in 1980's Hardy remarked that it was a time of great hardship.

1. F.E. Hardy : The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840 - 1928
(Macmillan : London : 1970) P. 376
"I think, indeed know, that down to 1850 or 1855 their condition was in general one of great hardship." - 1.

Turning roughly to the time of his great tragedies Hardy wrote: "Things are of course widely different now .... Their present life is almost without exception one of comfort, if the most ordinary thrift be observed.... But changes at which we must all rejoice have brought other changes which are not so attractive. The labourers have become more and more migratory—the young families in especial, who enjoy nothing so much as fresh scenery and new acquaintance. The consequences are curious and unexpected. For one thing, village tradition—a vast mass of unwritten folk-lore, local chronicle, local topography, and nomenclature—is absolutely sinking, has nearly sunk, into eternal oblivion. I cannot recall a single instance of a labourer who still lives on the farm where he was born, and I can only recall a few who have been five years on their present farms. Thus you see, there being no continuity or environment in their lives, there is no continuity of information, the names, stories, and relics of one place being speedily forgotten under the incoming facts of the next." - 2. These were the changing circumstances of the time which perhaps compounded much of Hardian pessimism. F.B. Pinion has quoted what Hardy said about his own pessimism in course of his conversation with William Archer in 1904.

"I believe, indeed, that a good deal of the robustious,

2. Ibid : P. 312-13
swaggering optimism of recent literature is at bottom cowardly and insincere .... my pessimism, if pessimism it be, does not involve the assumption that the world is going to the dogs .... On the contrary, my practical philosophy is distinctly material. What are my books but one long plea against "man's inhumanity to man"—to woman—and to the lower animals? Whatever may be the inherent good or evil of life, it is certain that men make it much worse than it need be." - L. Undoubtedly these views do have a universal force in them, thereby making Hardy a modern for all time.

It may be added here that the contemporary scientific outlook, that outlook of the survival of the fittest and that which left no place for Providence or the Christian idea of a God of Love, was at the root of Hardy's pessimism. The universe is indifferent to man and reduces man to a level slightly higher than that of other species. There is constant competition; there is struggle for survival; and its consequences are cruelty, disease, and suffering. Man's competitive character, his struggle for survival has also been reflected in careerism and social unrest, in class distinctions, nationalism and war.

Against these modern maladies, Hardy suggested through his novels and poems, if we believe in his professed philosophy of salvation, the practices of the Christian doctrine of 'charity' or 'loving kindness'. He also seemed to have felt the need for an alliance between this humanitarian religion

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and complete rationality. Otherwise, the future of humanity was very bleak on this planet. These views along with those on love, sex, marriage and morality do certainly make Hardy a modern man as well as a modern writer. For Hardy the man and Hardy the writer are inseparable from each other.

Thomas Hardy, a born poet and a genuine lover of poetry, having keenly recognised the distinction between prose and verse, as H.W. Nevinson in his book Thomas Hardy observed, objected to being called a novelist, although he had the genuine merit of a "creative writer" or "creative novelist". And it is as a novelist that he is most widely read, particularly at this troubled time of ours. But paradoxical as it may seem, on more than one occasion he rather pathetically explained that he had become a novelist only because of the necessity to earn a living. By the end of May 1879, an entry in his diary shows:

"Romanticism will exist in human nature as long as human nature itself exists. The point is (in imaginative literature) to adopt that form of romanticism which is the mood of the age." -1.

At that time fiction, in fact, had a distinct tendency towards romanticism. Writers of today will undoubtedly be in agreement with Hardy's opinion that to win monetary success as a writer it is necessary to fall in with the "mood of the age" and with the demands of the reading public. Thus, to meet the demands of the reading public, Hardy turned to be a novelist, writing novels which apart from all other things must have a flavour of romance in them.

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1. Hardy's Note Book as quoted by Clive Holland in His book Thomas Hardy, O.M. (Herbert Jenkins Ltd : London : 1933) P. 96.
As a novelist, Hardy stands in the two-fold relation to his age, being at once its product and its enemy. He was born in the full tide of Victorianism, and imbibed the spirit of the age to some extent. The Victorian age was an age of increased widening of the horizon of human knowledge, and Hardy tried to drink his cup of knowledge full to the brim. He mastered the knowledge of science and art and also made himself thoroughly familiar with the contents and the spirit of modern literature. Instead of making any idle conjecture about his capacity in inventing new techniques for his novels, let us be content with what Hardy has given us. The true position is that Hardy invented no new technique in construction, and in writing novels he followed the beaten track giving the public what it demanded. His plot construction was like that of Fielding, Thackeray and Dickens. But it is in his attitude to the age that Hardy was a deadly rebel. For the materialism of the age, its worship of matter, wealth and its belief in progress and permanence, Hardy had no regard at all. The cheap optimism of the age, its sentimental self-complacency, its idea of absoluteness and orthodox morality made Hardy revolt even at an early age. He found no delight or beauty in civilised life or in Nature; he found no joy in materialism and no hope in the so-called scientific civilisation. It is all these that Hardy condemns in the strongest possible terms. Thus, in deliberate revolt against the spirit of the age, Hardy had his way through the rustic men and women who live far from the madding crowd, whose vitality is not eaten up by the modern disease of thought and in whom the elemental instincts have
found their best soil for nourishment. Indeed, Hardy's preoccupation with the seamy side of life, with the tragic side of life, too, is largely a product of this rebellion against the Christian orthodoxy and gross materialism of his age.

Thus Hardy's novels are the novels of protest, the novels of revolt. He revolted not only against the Victorian conventions but also against the modern civilisation whose essential shamness and hypocrisy he was quite aware of. The decorative veneer of civilisation and progress of knowledge lay uneasily upon his mind and Hardy was most conspicuous in condemning them. In this context Casamian observes: "In some respects there is in him a Rousseau, as extreme in his revolt, but different in his self - mastery, his massive dignity, his admixture of calm with bitterness. Not only does he deny the hope of happiness founded upon the progress of critical reason; it is the whole of modern civilisation that he condemns, and his sore heart seeks, as an wounded animal would, the shelter of the most primitive and untouched earth". 1

Hardy, no less than any other modern novelist, presents a criticism of life in his novels. He is a grim realist with a realist's approach to the problems of contemporary life. He does not see life through the many coloured glass of romance, although there are enough romantic elements in his novels. Seeing life critically and through the white light of reason, Hardy could not feel cheerful in this world where social

injustice, economic injustice, maladjustments and moral problems, the pitiless forces of nature and Destiny are ever slaying human joy and happiness and thwarting away the ambition of aspiring minds. Thus even his earlier novels show a kind of philosophy of life which has been branded as pessimistic. At first this philosophy grew from reflection and experience, but later it was profoundly influenced by the philosophy of Schopenhauer, that famous German philosopher who is rightly called the father of all later pessimistic view of life. Under this influence Hardy readily adopted the theory of immanent will seeking unconscious ends through a blind striving.

Robert B. Heilman holds that Hardy is constantly "designing" a fiction in terms of some special aim and philosophical preoccupation: 1. Here, we may note that an artist in his works presents a series of impressions, life as he has found it to be; he does not propound a set of pre-conceived philosophical notions of his own. Hardy, as a true artist, presents in his novels his aesthetic and artistic vision of life. To him novel is an impression, not an argument; a tale-teller writes down how the things of the world strike him without any intention whatsoever. In defence of his own art Hardy more than once pleaded that the business of an artist is to create a world that shall express the world as he sees it. But in the long run great art helps to make the actual world. The real purpose of fiction, as Hardy felt, is to give pleasure by gratifying the love of the uncommon in human experience. It is, in other

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words, an adjustment between the exceptional and the non-
exceptional. Hence, 'the writer's problem is, how to strike
the balance between the uncommon and the ordinary so as on the
one hand to give interest, on the other to give reality.' - 1.
For Hardy, in fact, art is no mere copying of life. He has
disseminated the "photographic" writing as an 'inaesthetic species
of literary produce'. He wrote: "My art is to intensify the
expression of things, as is done by Crivelli, Bellini, etc.,
so that the heart and inner meaning is made vividly visible". 2.

In the artistic reconstruction of life in his novels, Hardy is
not content to give a mere reproduction of life but an inter-
pretation of life, a criticism of life. These reflections
which help to intensify the inner meaning of things, find most
poignant expression in Hardy's novels. In The Return of the
Native, Bueatacia has cogent reasons for asking the Supreme
Power by what right a being of such exquisite finish has been
placed in circumstances calculated to make of her charms a
curse rather than a blessing. In The Mayor of Casterbridge we
have the most painful and half-apathetic expression of one who
deems everything possible at the hands of time and chance
except perhaps fair play. In the same novel Hardy speaks of
the ingenious machinery contrived by the gods for reducing
human possibilities of amelioration to a minimum. In Tess of
the D'Urbervilles we have the case of a pure woman who is

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1. Thomas Hardy's Notebook Entry (July 1881) as quoted by
Miriam Allott in his Novelists on the Royal;
(Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd : London : 1985) p. 66

2. Thomas Hardy's Notebook Entry (January, 3 1886) as quoted
by Mrs. Florence Emily Hardy in her The Life of Thomas Hardy
(Macmillan : London : 1970) p. 177
more sinned against than sinning at the hands of the orthodox, conventional morality of the society. Again, in Jude the Obscure we have the tragedy of unfulfilled intentions.

The tragedies mentioned above, and also his other novels, apart from making a fuller statement of Hardy's reflections on life, are also in keeping with Hardy's views on artistic functions. In his note book dated April 19, 1886 Hardy wrote: "The business of the poet and novelist is to show the sorrows underlying the grandest things, and the grandeur underlying the sorriest things." 1. Hardy saw life as basically the same through ages, though subject to changes of outlook.

Contemporary scientific thought led Hardy to believe in the insignificance of humanity in the stellar universe, and the Cruelty of Nature, which everywhere evinced the struggle for existence and the 'Unfulfilled Intentions.' Thus, as a novelist Hardy is not merely concerned with the delineation of manners; but he is rather more interested in presenting the substance of life. Though Hardy said that he undertook prose writing only for earning, but this was not perhaps all. To him it was also a means of criticism of life. It may be added however that Hardy's development as a literary artist has been somewhat of a gradual rise. His earlier novels are of a lighter and a more traditional cast showing either the predominance of the plot as in Desperate Remedies, The Hand of Ethelberta etc.; or the traces of an ingenious and fanciful invention in the

action and characters as in *A pair of Blue eyes*, *The Trumpet*
*Major* etc. But it is in his later groups of novels, such as,
*Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*,
*The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *The Woodlanders*, *Tess of the
D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* that Hardy comes to his own
and strikes his most original note. In them is waged almost
the eternal struggle between man and the evil in things,
treated it with a telling realism, close psychology, profound
feeling and with austere and artistic beauty of expression
like that of a poet.

Hardy is perhaps one of the most profoundly tragic
English writers. A tragic apprehension of the world is a deep
characteristic of his mind, and it is at least in his half a
dozen novels of tragic import that he has given expression to
his tragic view of life. More than the joys of life, Hardy was
depthally affected by the still sad music of humanity, the tragedy
that lies in the nature of things. The hard school of life
had taught him that "happiness was but the occasional episode
in a general drama of pain." - 1. In this world of ours
injustice of every kind, maladjustment of every form are in
constant operation along with the attendant diseases of
modern civilization, such as, the disease of thought, sick
hurry, divided aims etc., which Hardy termed as the
'ache of modernism'. The result is the suffering of humankind;
they do suffer either because of lack of adjustment with
upbringing and environment or they are crushed by a law far

1. Thomas Hardy: *The Mayor of Casterbridge*
greater than themselves. Hardy, being painfully alive to this miserable suffering of mankind, naturally develops an outlook on life which is tinged with a profound melancholy. In Tess of the D'Urbervilles Hardy perhaps wanted to amend the view God is in His Heaven: All is right with the world! Thus Hardy's view of life is the result of feeling, observation, study and reaction.

Life to Hardy appears wickedly cruel, a series of hopes perpetually cheated, of aspirations continually mocked. At its best it is 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing.' It is a brief transit through a sorry world and hardly calls for effusiveness. Man lives his life on earth in a chain of agony, in a perpetual misery. Life offers but to deny. Dwelling upon Hardy's philosophy of life Harold Child, who was one of the founders of The Times Literary Supplement in 1902, observed: "Life, which is, so far as human intelligence can understand it, neither good nor evil, neither benevolent nor malevolent, and utterly indifferent to the feelings of man. Such a philosophy refrains from contemplating the possibility of a condition of perfect happiness either in this world or in any world, elsewhere or to come". - 1. There is no merciful God in Heaven who shines benignantly on man and animals. In a poem called God's Funeral, Hardy paints the picture of "God head dying downwards".- 2. An entry in Hardy's notebook dated January 29,

1. Harold Child : Thomas Hardy
   (Miebct & Co. Ltd : 22 Berners Street : London : 1925) P. 10
2. The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy
   (Macmillan : London : 1965) P. 307-309
1900 shows his view about God. "I have been looking for God 50 years, and I think that if he had existed I should have discovered him". — L. Instead of God, a blind and relentless force called the Immanent will, a Purblind Doomsayer, has got a hold over the world. It destroys human hopes with a purposeless and pitiless hand. In his preface to Tess of the d'Urbervilles Hardy quotes from Shakespeare: "As flies to wanton boys we are to the gods. They kill us for their sport."

Time is chanting satirical strains on the doings of humanity. Nature has no 'holy plan' but is indifferent to the fate of mankind. In other words, this is the general measureless existence, wherein all activity is included and which is utterly careless to the needs and desires of individuals. The only relation between the two, the utterly unavoidable relation, is that in the long run the individual must follow the general. The main stream of tendency has an ultimate power over all the vortices within it. What is more unfortunate, a consciously sensitive human being has the additional ill-luck because he has the desire to possess some creative value, the desire to modify the worldly process. In fact, the staple of tragedy, in Hardy's art, is this very faculty of formative desire. But human desire has at best an ironic end, and in its artistic form it is a veritable tragedy.

Thus, the insignificance of man, the briefness of his days and the meaninglessness of his endeavours are always present

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1. Hardy's Notebook Entry: as quoted by Florence Emily Hardy in her The Life of Thomas Hardy: (Macmillan: London: 1970) p. 234
in Hardy. He never fails to see them from the point of view of the indifferent power; and the enormous past is always present in him as a moment of time. For this dark and depressing view of life Hardy is often charged as the most pessimistic of English writers.

But the truth about Hardy is that his art is tragic rather than pessimistic. True, his view of life is dark and dismal; true his picture of life is gloomy and sombre; but what really saves Hardy from pessimism is his high and noble conception of human nature. Hanchard, Jude, Clym, Tess and Giles have a greatness and nobility of their own. They all have their splendid qualities of head and heart, which raise them far above the common level of humanity and make us vividly conscious about the possibilities of human greatness. No doubt, they endure the most pitiless destiny, and even though they finally fall, they always offer the most magnificent resistance to fate, which makes them truly tragic like Hamlet or Othello. There is something heroic in their struggle which moves us to pity and fear. The pessimistic art may be transformed into tragic art when the human beings are able to resist their destiny, if not physically, at least, in the spirit. Their resistance, this power to endure the blows of fate with courage, is the essence of Hardy's tragic art. The tragic novels of Hardy, like the tragic dramas of Sophocles and Shakespeare, instead of causing any disgust or depression, rather leave the readers in a mood of admiration at the greatness and magnificence of human passion, courage and nobility.
It may be further said in this context that Hardy does not show man crushed merely by a whimsical external force, but man himself has also a part to play in working out of his own doom. In other words, sometimes character also becomes destiny. The destroying power is not merely external to the characters who contend with them but is also rooted in them. They must have some fatal flaws in them, such as, some weakness, disability, inherited instinct or perhaps some error in the assertion of their strength, which may prove to be too strong for them to overcome; and so they are crushed. Thus, as in the case of Shakespeare's Hamlet, Othello or Macbeth, so in Jude, Henchard and Tess; their tragedy springs from some fatal flaws in them. They are caught in their own toils and fail damnable. This is specially true of Henchard. Henchard falls as much by his own fault as by the malevolent power that informs the universe. His character is his destiny. In this respect Hardy's view of life resembles Shakespeare's rather than that of the Greek dramatists. The importance laid on human agency in tragedy is comparatively a modern conception.

Harold Child thinks that if Hardy has shown the littleness of man, he has also shown the greatness of man. In his works there is certainly no trace of contempt for human will, endurance and passion. "All may be futile; but all are engrossing to the interest, and all may compel admiration." Hence, there is quite little justification for Hardy being called a pessimist. According to Harold Child, against this charge, Hardy through his story: An Imaginative Woman 1

1. Harold Child: Thomas Hardy
(Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 22 Berners Street: London: 1925) P. 21
indirectly replied that "he was pessimist in so far as that character applies to a man who looks at the worst contingencies as well as the best in human condition. The only true pessimism is indifference; and of indifference, except for here and there a phrase, there is no trace in Hardy. No man can be called pessimist who has created so many instances of powers, in themselves and within their limitations great and beautiful. In this double vision of man's greatness and man's futility lies the secret of Hardy's tragedy." - 1. Every true artist must have a 'double vision', and Hardy as a true artist has his own. Hancock has had his days of prosperity and power. Even when he falls the dark web of his life is occasionally lit by the gleams of joy and happiness in the company of Elizabeth. In this double vision of man's greatness and man's littleness, life's sweetness and life's bitterness lies the secret of Hardy's tragic art.

As for his philosophy Hardy says that he has none. However, a correspondence between him and Alfred Noyes throws an interesting light on the subject. Alfred Noyes held that Hardy's philosophy was pessimistic, and it led to the logical conclusion that the Power behind the Universe was malign. Hardy did not agree with Noyes that his philosophy was pessimistic. He was an evolutionary meliorist rather than a pessimist. 'This view is quite in keeping with what you call a pessimistic philosophy (a mere nickname with no sense in it), which I am quite unable to see as "leading logically to the conclusion

1. Harold Child: Thomas Hardy
(Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 22 Berners Street: London: 1926) P. 22
that the Power behind the universe is malign." -1. "Though I have no philosophy—merely what I have often explained to be only a confused heap of impressions, like those of a bewildered child at a conjuring show." - 2. At the same time he maintains that the poets and the artists 'should express the emotion of all ages' along with the thoughts of their own. They are like the actors in Shakespeare, who while not "closely thinking of what they are doing, but were great philosophers giving the main of their mind to the general human situation." -3. Likewise, Hardy as an artist and above all a poet, by giving the main of his mind to the general human situation has unconsciously become a philosopher, even though he claims to be holding no philosophy. As far as his philosophy goes, the only way of escape open to man at present is to adjust oneself as best as one can to the existing circumstances by integrating one's inner impulses with the aid of knowledge and wisdom. This is the only way to make limited opportunities endurable, at the hands of the Immanent will which is blind, unconscious and purposeless. But in some remote age humanity by subordinating primitive impulses to wisdom, by changing social convention for the better, may succeed in imparting consciousness to the hitherto Unconscious will. Indeed, the Immanent will, where upon hinges his philosophy, "was not percipliant, but

1. Hardy's letter to Alfred Noyes as quoted by Mrs. Florence Emily Hardy in her 'The Life of Thomas Hardy'. (Macmillan : London : 1970) P. 405

2. Ibid : P. 410

3. Hardy's Casual talkas quoted by Mrs. Florence Emily Hardy in her 'The Life of Thomas Hardy' (Macmillan : London : 1970) P. 388
perception was to be found in humanity, and Hardy trusted that it would spread and gradually inform the General will "till it fashion all things fair? For this reason he regarded himself as a 'meliornist' and not a pessimist". - 1. "My practical philosophy is distinctly meliorist". - 2. So what is labelled as pessimism in Hardy should better be called evolutionary meliorism.

Like Scott who has immortalised the Scottish Lowlands in his Waverley Novels, Hardy has done a great service to a primitive corner of England, in his Wessex Novels. But Hardy's Wessex is partly a reality and partly a creation of his own imagination like Shakespeare's 'Forest of Arden'. In his novels he has given to airy nothings 'a local habitation and a name'. W.J.Keith observes: "Hardy himself was well aware that the country side into which the pilgrimages were made had provided the original stimulus without which his 'dream country' could never have been created. We know that he frequently visited a particular locality while writing a novel in order to check up on precise details. He might alter, combine, transpose, but it would be difficult to point to any setting in Hardy's work that was purely imaginary". - 3. Hardy spent the greater part of his life in that region; he had studied it with the scientific

1. F.B. Pinion: Hardy Companion

2. Hardy's Conversation with William Archer in 1904: as quoted by F.B. Pinion in his A Hardy Companion:

   Edited by Blake Nevius: University of California:
   (Los Angeles: 1969) P.92
precision of an antiquary and the imagination and enthusiasm of a poet. The result is that Wessex stands completely visualised in Hardy's novels, in all its minute details and rich historical associations. Wessex is Hardy's name for a district in the South West of England. Lionel Johnson observes: "He (Hardy) has studied it in his maturity of mind; he has loved it with the fervour of a patriot; he has understood it with the instinct of a child; it is his own. It appears throughout his fifteen books." - L. In this respect Hardy is a true Wordsworthian and his art may be said to have exactly carried out in prose what Wordsworth proposed to do in poetry. It consists in choosing incidents and situations from common life and relating them in a language really used by men. At the same time the incidents and situations so chosen, need certain colouring of the imagination so that the ordinary things be presented in the likeness of something extraordinary. It is this aspect of his novels that lends a special charm to them; and the readers who feel sick of the modern industrial civilisation and seek an escape from it, find in Hardy's Wessex Novels an agreeable relief.

Most of the major novels of Hardy are written almost in historical perspectives. They record the disintegration and the uprooting of old families, old villages, their culture, tradition, agriculture and their old system of economies due to the emergence of modern civilisation along with its attendant evil, the new economic system, in which the poor, ignorant

1. Lionel Johnson: The Art of Thomas Hardy
   (John Lane the Bodley Head Ltd. London: 1922) P. 86
and unfortunate village folk could hardly feel at home. Such uprooting of the village folk is the common theme of the Wessex Novels, and Hardy has observed these with the accuracy of a historian and recorded these with the feeling heart of a poet. Arnold Kettle holds: "All of Hardy's novels are, in the broad sense, historical novels ...." -1. Indeed, from the imaginative testimony to the real gradual destruction of a stable agricultural community by the inroads of 19th century industrialisation, the novels of Hardy derive their power and strength. The tragedy of Handale, Tess and Jude is vitally linked up with the onward destruction of the age old agricultural community of Southern England. "New methods of business, the mechanisation of agriculture, the spread of the fly, intimate the decline and fall of Wessex, and Hardy's fiction is the imaginative record of it." - 2. Hardy is sometimes looked upon as an imaginative chronicler of country life. Though his Jude the Obscure was thrown into fine by a Bishop in 1896, but another eminent clergyman of the church advised any priest preparing for the profession of village rectorship to undertake a thorough study of the novels of Thomas Hardy. That eminent clergyman recorded in 1928: "From Thomas Hardy, he would learn the essential dignity of country people and what deep and passionate


interest belongs to every individual life. You cannot treat them in the mass; each single soul is to be the object of your special and peculiar prayer." 1. Samuel Hynes in his article in the Sewanee Review of July-Sept 1975, concludes that the main problem in reading Hardy is historical, because there is the existence of two fundamental points, the point of modern consciousness and the point of historical reality, in him. His sensibility has a date, and it expresses the essential connection between the late Victorian society and the creative imagination. "If you name the principal intellectual movements of the time—the higher criticism, Positivism, Darwinian evolution, the Oxford movement, evangelicalism, radicalism—what you have is a list of conflicting, often contradictory ideas about the relation of man and his world, and all of them were in Hardy's head. So was an entirely different set of ideas—folk customs, parish history and gossips, superstitions, the customary acts of country life." 2. In other words, Hardy should be read and understood in the perspective of history, and thus he satisfies the first requisite of modern literature.

The principal characters of Hardy are constantly aware that they are living in a tragic world. Hanseard, Clym, Eustacia, Tess, Jude, Sue and Elizabeth Jane always smart under a sense of helplessness. In the hands of a malevolent

destiny, they can expect anything and everything, except perhaps fair-play. By far the best tragic note implying man's awareness of living in a tragic world has been struck by Elizabeth Jane towards the end of The Mayor of Casterbridge.

In this tragic world it is futile to expect any happiness which is momentary, only occasional. Suffering is in store for human lot. Perhaps equally significant is Jude's dying utterances: "Why did I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?.... For now should I have lain still and been quiet. I should have slept: then had I been at rest!" 1. Thus, the predominant note is futility and vertigo. It is borne out by the tragic plight of humanity, by its awareness of living in a tragic world. "when we think of Hardy's greatness we think, not of this or that character, but of the tragic plight of humanity itself, seen for a moment against the vast unending background of history, and beyond that, nature and the sky." - 2.

Symbolism, another important characteristic of modern literature, cannot be missed in Hardy's novels. In him bird symbolism is quite conspicuous. The significance of bird symbolism may vary from place to place, but its central theme is one of human joys and sorrows. Sometimes its happy note is ironical, like the one heard by Bathsheba when she finds herself by a pestilential swamp the morning after the discovery

1. Thomas Hardy: Jude the Obscure (Macmillan & Co. Ltd: London: 1957) P.418
of Troy's perfidy. Sometimes bird-symbolism is suggestive of Nature's cruelty. When Clym returns home after a full sense of Bustacia's inhumanity to his mother and infidelity to himself, the only life visible at the front of the house is a solitary thrush cracking a small snail upon the doorstep for its breakfast. Further, when Clym starts from Alderworth to meet his mother, a night-hawk reveals its presence in almost every isolated and stunted thorn 'by whirring like the clack of a mill'. Three miles further on, Clym hears the moan of his dying mother. Again, when Fitzpiers and Luke Damson remain silent on the hay in the moonlight, a hawk bursts forth sarcastically from the top of a tree. For, the season of the nightingale is already over.

The bird which is free and delights in song is the symbol of human happiness. At the end of Under the Greenwood Tree, the nightingale sings with happy overtones quite in keeping with the spirit of the comedy. The experienced wild-duck which eludes the hawk at the opening of The Hand of Ethelberta symbolises the heroine. The escape of the swallow from the furmity seller's tent symbolises Susan's release from Henchard; and the winging heron, like burnished silver in the sunbeams, indicated Mrs. Yeobright's desire to be released from life.

In The Mayor of Casterbridge the caged goldfinch which Henchard brought as a wedding gift for Elizabeth symbolises Henchard himself. He is now repentent, tamed and caged and very much eager for reconciliation. They two (he and Elizabeth) alone would sing like bird in the cage. But the cage is
discovered in the garden only after the death of the
goldfinch, just in the same way the greatness of Denehard's
heart, his depth of feeling for Elizabeth is discovered
after he is found to be dead. Symbolism as well as irony, may
also be suggested by the blindness of Mrs. Urbervilles. She
cares too much for her birds, including bull-finches, but
she is pathetically unaware of Tess's danger. Like these,
instances can be multiplied to show the use of symbolism,
particularly bird symbolism, by Hardy.

Scepticism and criticism which are the result of all
pervasive influence of scientific thought in the modern world
are also present in Hardy's novels, particularly in his later
novels. Harold L. Weatherby observes: "In the later novels,
such as, The Return of the Native, Tess of the D'Urbervilles,
he (Hardy) introduces into the action itself characters who
share his scepticism—Clym Yeobright and Angel Clare—and
thereby he tends to narrow the gap between antique story and
modern sensibility." Clym is sceptical about the modern
rush for material possession. Consequently he leaves his
flourishing diamond trade in Paris and returns back to his
native soil on a philanthropic mission. Similarly Angel Clare
is sceptical about the real worth of the so-called
Christianity, and instead of church profession like his
father and brother, he undertakes farming profession. Never-
theless, Clym and Angel may still be judged by the worlds they
inhabit and by the very shape of the drama in which they are
allowed to play their parts. They are not sceptical from the
beginning. But in Jude the Obscure Hardy allows his doubt and
scepticism to grow with the character, affecting his actions and
dilemmas, leading to a deeper exploration of these themes.
gloom to operate from the very beginning of Jude's career.
Since they are sceptical, they are also critical. Most of
Hardy's men and women have a critical faculty and often
indulge in self criticism. Jude, Sue, Clare, Tess, Clym,
Eustacia, Elizabeth and Henchard, because of their critical
attitude to life, often look back in retrospect and criticise
themselves as well as others.

The secular humanism which is an important mark of modern
literature can also be traced in Wessex Novels. The heroes
and heroines chosen by Hardy are most ordinary and most common-
place. Except Angel Clare who is the son of a clergyman and
Lady Constantine who is the wife of another clergyman, other
prominent characters, such as, Bathsheba, Gabriel Oak, Clym,
Henchard, Elizabeth, Giles, Grace, Tess, Jude and Sue rather
come out of lower strata of the society. But Hardy has treated
them all with equal sympathy, with equal amount of love,
irrespective of any distinction of blood and race. Mary M.
Saunders writes: "In A Laodicean published in 1881 six years
before The Woodlanders appeared in 1887, Hardy deplores the
'hard distinctions in blood and race' that prevailed in the
middle ages ...." L. Hardy's indifference to, rather his
disgust for, the distinction of blood and race expresses his
secular humanism. Even the so-called villains like Troy,
Damon and Alec (of course Hardy has no true villain in
Shakesperean sense) are also treated with sympathy. Further,

1. Modern Fiction Studies : Vol.20, No.4, Winter 1974-75
   A Critical Quarterly : Edited by William T. Stafford &
   Margaret Church,
   (Dept. of English : Purdue University : West Lafayette,
   Indiana : 1974-75) P.529.
Tess and Sue, one an unmarried mother, while the other a married lover, though guilty in the conventional sense of morality, not only secure Hardy's acceptance but also his sympathy and admiration. Thus, Hardy is indeed a secular humanist.

A sense of isolation, which is another prominent feature of modern literature, is also present in Wessex Novels. A novel that portrays the tragic plight of humanity with its characters both sceptical and critical, may often produce a sense of isolation. The veritable tragedies of life and the painful ironical human situations make most of Hardy's men and women feel often isolated. Henchard, Elizabeth, Eustacia, Clym, Tess, Angel, Jude and Sue, all do feel at certain time that they are alone and apart from others. In other words, they suffer from a sense of isolation. Henchard perhaps provides the best example of an isolated character in Hardy's novels. In the beginning of the novel he is found to be isolated from his wife. Again, in the end he also dies an isolated death, cutt off from his society, specially from one whom he subsequently regarded as the prop of his blasted existence: Elizabeth Jane. Daniel R. Schwartz observes:

"In Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure men are becoming restless, isolated and frustrated as they lose their physical and moral roots." - L.

The attitude of revolt against the conventional values of the society, which is perhaps an obvious modern attitude, is also characteristic of Hardy's novels. In his early novels the attitude of revolt exists only in hints and suggestions, but gradually deepens in his later novels. In *A pair of Blue Eyes* Elfride runs away with Stephen against her parental wishes and even agrees to marry him, though he is much inferior to her in social status. Though it does not finally materialise, but her attitude is after all an attitude of revolt in disguise. Henchard's putting his wife on auction, be it under the influence of liquor, also implies an indirect revolt against the institution of marriage. Clym settles in Egdon Heath and marries Eustacia contrary to the wishes of his mother. William R. Rutland observes: "His (Hardy's) most famous book, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, written in 1890-91, is one of the most powerful indictments of social and religious conventionality to be found in the English language".—1. The conventional values of Christianity have no attraction for Clare. He wants to lend his life, not in the service of Christ, but in the service of man. So he wishes to be a farmer, and not a clergyman like his father and brother. Again, in open revolt against the social norm, this youngest son of a clergyman marries an ordinary farm woman, Tess. Tess also shows her spirit of rebellion against the society, particularly when she becomes the mother of an illegitimate son.

Neither ashamed of herself, nor afraid of her neighbours, she brings the child to the open and even carries it to her place of work. Before the death of the child, she even baptises it and gives it a Christian burial, because the village clergy refuses to attend, not on religious but on social ground. The attitude of revolt is perhaps nowhere better exemplified than in Jude the Obscure. In open defiance of the society, particularly its institution of marriage, Jude and Sue, both are cousins and both are married, live as husband and wife and even produce children without legalising their relation at all. Harold Child observes:

"In Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure he (Hardy) brings definite charges against the collective judgement of society; which, in the belief that it can so protect itself, destroys some of its finest and most sensitive material." — 1.

Realism which is another mark of modern literature, particularly of fiction, is also found in Hardy's novels. Mary Ellen Chase observes that with Hardy the 19th century novel has for the first time been freed from the sentimental convention of its predecessors and made the vehicle for expressing every passion known to mankind. With Hardy English Realism has become naturalism, and his realistic art may well be termed as naturalistic art. "In fact because of certain unparalleled features of his art, distinctly his own, he stands away from and, indeed, above all the realists of

1. Harold Child: Thomas Hardy
his century, both English and French. From his early novels Hardy has shown himself to be a tireless observer of the working of Nature. He has thorough knowledge of Wessex-shepherds, farm labourers and furze-cutters. Almost like a scientist Hardy describes the various sounds of the wind as it blows through the different trees, the rain that falls, now on the broad leaves of a plant, now on the ploughed earth or now on the road itself. In all his novels there are quite a good number of passages dealing with colour, sound and smell, with birds sometimes asleep, sometimes awake, with sheep and cows, with ewes with their lambs in springs, with fog over meadows, grass and trees at night, with trees, brooks and flowers, with sowing and threshing, making cider, cutting sedges and furze etc. Such a poetry as this, as Mary Ellen Chase feels, has been added to novel by no other English novelist; and no other English novelist has been found to be so distinctly English. Further, most of the Hardian heroes, such as, Jiles, Clym, Gabriel, Dairyman Crick, the Yalbury farmers, the inhabitants of Hintock, of Egdon etc., live quite close to the earth amongst the sights, sounds and the smells of the natural world. They are permeated by the things of Nature. They have become a part of Nature, and Nature herself a part of them. Again, in Hardy's conception, Nature is a vast, unfeeling power that rules over the world, and is totally indifferent, if not

1. Mary Ellen Chase: Thomas Hardy from Serial to Novel: (The University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis: 1937) P. 190
hostile, to human objectives. Nothing so typifies that power as the well-known description of Egdon Heath, and to a lesser extent, the Hintock Woods. Such minute observation and detailed description of the workings of Nature as well as the beings who are allowed to play their parts in Hardian dramas, their manners, sentiments and susceptibilities, point to the superior realistic art of Thomas Hardy. The effect of his realism is further increased by the artistic unity as well as the dramatic unity of his major novels. There is again an overwhelming consistency of characterisation in Hardy's novels. His men and women react to life as most naturally as possible. Nothing but tragedy can rightly follow from such characters as Stetacia, Henchard, Tess and Jude and Hardy cannot or does not save them because tragedy is their natural culmination. "These are three attributes of Hardy's realistic art - his conception of Nature, the artistic and dramatic unity of his greatest novels, and his overwhelming consistency of characterisation - place him, in my opinion, above all preceding or contemporary English novelists." - 1.

The touch of autobiography, another marked feature of modern literature, is also present in some of the Wessex Novels. According to F.B. Pinion, Hardy himself admits that A Laodicean contains more of his autobiography than any other novel. 2. But there are some autobiographical touches,

1. Mary Ellen Chase : Thomas Hardy from Serial to Novel: (The University of Minnesota Press : Minneapolis : 1927) p.198
though slight, in his other novels too. Hardy himself was an architect; and his earliest novel Desperate Remedies begins with the frustrated love of a young architect, Ambrose Graye. Again, Stephen Smith of A Pair of Blue Eyes is an ecclesiastical architect as Hardy himself was. And so is Jude. 

Jude the Obscure, as Hardy maintains, does not contain any of the incidents of author's life. Nevertheless, the earlier Sue is drawn upon Hardy's cousin Tryphena Sparks, who was one time his fiancee. The later Sue is drawn upon Mrs. Henniker, the sweetest and the most intimate female friend of Hardy's later life. So, in this sense, Jude the Obscure is partly autobiographical. Daniel H. Schwanz calls Jude "Hardy's most autobiographical character." L. Timothy O'Sullivan has recently written an illustrated biography of Thomas Hardy. He, in his book: Thomas Hardy: An Illustrated Biography, finds a 'biographical spectre' in Jude the Obscure and draws similarities between Jude and Sue on one hand and Hardy and Tryphena on the other. For both the ladies were school mistresses and both the couples were cousins.

Hardy, as one of the advanced thinkers of his age as well as a creative artist, presents in his novels all that he considers to be true and just. So in him we do not find any unnecessary palliatives; he tells the truth, rather unpleasant truth. It is the imaginative record of man's eternal struggle for existence against some inimical forces either in the form

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of society, morality or religion or against Nature herself, which are too strong for man to overcome. Again, there is no unnecessary decoration in Hardy's picture of Nature. Nature is at best indifferent, if not hostile, to man's desires and struggles. Further, in order to be true to his pictures he seldom moves beyond the border of his native soil with whom he was thoroughly acquainted right from his very birth. In this context Hardy himself recorded sometime in 1922 in his Note Book: "I am convinced that it is better for a writer to know a little bit of the world remarkably well than to know a great part of the world remarkably little." 1. The result has been indeed spectacular: each of his novels takes us into a most definite sphere, and naturalises us among a most living people. We carry away the conviction that we have dwelt in the woodlands, under the green wood tree, by country market places, upon waste heaths, at dairy farms and among sheepfolds. In other words, Hardy's Wessex Novels are not only the reflections of truth but also the mirrors of truth. It is because Hardy presented his pictures with truth and fidelity that he is being looked upon as a social historian of country life, and that he has been recommended by an eminent clergyman of the church as a term of reference for the knowledge of the essential dignity of country people. Further, almost all the novels of Hardy do have a profound moral purpose, and the purpose being to

convey the grim truth that life offers to deny, that life itself destroys even when man is basically good, and that life is a drama of pain, in which happiness is most intermittent and occasional.

Since Hardy's novels possess the general characteristics as well as the spirit of modern English literature, they are also expected to reflect the general characteristics of modern English novels. The middle class predominance, which is an essential mark of modern fiction, cannot be missed in Hardy's. Unlike Shakespeare dealing with high life and aristocrats, Hardy has chosen his men and women from middle class and lower middle class society. They are most ordinary and the children of the native Wessex soil. Fitzpiers, Eustacia, Wildieve, Mrs. Chetwood and Lady Constantine may be said to belong to the middle class society. On the other hand, Henchard, Elizabeth, Giles Winterborne, Clym, Grace, Tess, Jude and Sue may be said to be hailing from lower strata of society. Hardy's preference for the commonplace and the ordinary middle class characters is owing to the fact that their inner-workings of the heart are always vividly visible. On the contrary, the inner-workings of the aristocrats or the upper class are never revealed because their inner-self is always obstructed by masks of pretension. Hence Hardy's preference for the people of middle class, lower middle class and rustics and so on.

Romance, which has survived even in the modern age of realism, exists in Hardy's novels only in so far as it depends
on love interest. Love is the common theme of Hardy's novels. In *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Woodlanders* and in other novels Hardy shows that people cannot become happy when love is based on the appeal of sex, momentary passion and physical sensation. Bathsheba, for example, is enamoured of Troy. She marries him on being led by her passions, and its outcome is that her marriage ends in tragedy. On the other hand, Giles winterborne's love for grace represents the selfless love which is not the outcome of a momentary passion, which is devoted to the well-being of the beloved, which seeks its reward not in owning the beloved physically, but in her happiness. Hardy's view of love, emphasising its spiritual side, is thus classical rather than romantic. We find an element of majesty and grandeur in Hardy's treatment of love. Further, love at first sight cannot also bring permanent happiness even by marriage. For it is a love based not on mutual understanding but on physical lust. As soon as the lovers are married, the earlier feelings and emotions of the lovers fade away, leaving a vacuum—emotional and spiritual—in their lives to be filled up by misery, sorrow and sufferings. Then is the time for the Immanent will to crush the victims of such marriages. This is what Hardy wants to say in his *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. In *Jude the Obscure* Hardy seems to have gone a step further. If marriage destroys real love, it is better to have the institution of marriage discarded. Here Hardy's stand seems to be in accordance with what he wrote in his
Gabriel's selfless love for Bathsheba is, however, an exception. It reaches its consummation in their marriage at the end, and they are supposed to be happy ever after. Perhaps, the reason is that by now their passions have been subdued to a degree and that they have been much tempered by the harrowing circumstances and the hard experiences of life.

A search for a workable faith in this bewildering world, which is obviously an important feature of modern novel, also exists in Hardy, even though his reflections of life are tragic and his novels grim. Humanity constantly suffers at the hands of an Unconscious will. And the only way to escape the ravages of this will is to subordinate one's impulses and instincts to wisdom, to adjust oneself to the environment as best as one can. Hardy also holds out a dim hope that in some remote future, man's own consciousness may succeed in imparting a portion of it to the hitherto Unconscious will, and forcing it to fashion all things fair. Thus, as an evolutionary meliorist, Hardy in his Wessex Novels, offers his ultimate hope and faith to the tortured humanity.

In addition, Hardy's novels also conform to some of the factors of modern fiction as laid down by David Daiches. The first factor - 'the break down of public agreement about what

is significant in experience' - also applies to Hardy's novels. For Hardy was never on good terms with the reading public and with his publishers. H.P. Draper says: "Though never an angry youngman, or leader of a literary revolt, Hardy was from the first in uneasy relationship with the publishing practices and reading public of his day." - 1. The hostile attitude of his readers deepened with Tess of the D'Urbervilles and reached its climax with Jude the Obscure. The second factor - 'the new view of time' as a continuous flow from the past - can also be felt in Hardy's novels. His various images and pictures of a fast withering agricultural community of 19th century, its primitive practices, customs, manners, superstitions, folk-tales, folk-lore and fables were all stored up in the memory of Hardy as a boy. And Hardy by presenting them in his Wessex Novels along with his pictures of tragic human plight, as an obvious outcome of industrial and intellectual revolts, has undoubtedly established a link between the past and the present. Further the theory of 'Open Novel' as propounded by Alan Friedman may also be applied to some of Hardy's later novels, particularly, Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure. Friedman maintains: "Tess of the D'Urbervilles virtually begins with the heroine's seduction (How unlike the more traditional pattern, as in 'Clarissa Harlowe')! Hardy then goes on to make it deliberately and monumentally clear that the heroine's stream of experience

cannot and will not finally be contained. (His last chapter, however, perhaps written by way of compromise with his audience, then attempts to wrench the book back into the conventional pattern and produces an aesthetic incongruity). In 

Jude the Obscure 

the whirlwind of cruel probabilities, more extensive even than wilful self-destructiveness, including cosmic indifference and an uncontrollable social destiny, is uncompromising: an unreversed expanding experience to the last paragraph." - 1. Thus, Jude the Obscure fully satisfies the Friedman’s theory of 'open Novel' and hence be called modern. The other aspects of modern novel, such as, the growth of regional fiction and sociological study have been dealt with already (vide p. p 41 & 56).

An original and imaginative writer or a creative artist does not really belong to a particular age. His influences are felt in every age, and he is meant for all ages. The readers of every age, will derive some meaning out of his work, will find something contemporaneous in his work, even though the composition of the work itself may date back to an earlier age. If the work lends a mood of universality, readers of all time will find some permanent interest in it. Some of the wessex Novels, particularly, The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge, Tess the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure are so cosmopolitan in their reflections of life view and so universal in their

outlook that they will always be acclaimed by public appreciation, though unfortunately they failed to elicit public acclamation when they were originally written. But with the change of time, a new interest is being shown by the readers in Hardy's novels in recent years. Richard Church observes in the context: "Victorian society in the 1880s, however, found his novels, in spite of their exquisite gentleness of spirit, their rich poetic fullness and their profound moral outlook, to be immoral .... but taste has changed. What remains is the vindication by time, arch critic, of Hardy's purity of purpose." - 1

Indeed the four tragedies quoted above are Hardy's immortal tragedies, and they, because of their cosmic spirit, because of their expression of universal human situation, will perhaps stand the test of time. Out of these four novels Patrick Braybrooke in his observation on Hardy ascribes immortality to three only. He excludes The Return of the Native. But this novel, too, has an immensely universal human situation consisting of tragic human plight arising out of human incapacity to adjust with environment. Again, in a certain sense the tragedy of Clym is more intense and more deepening than that of Manchard, Tess or Jude. Their tragedy has after all a limit which ends in death; but that of Clym does not. Instead of death bringing rest to his tired soul, he is left maimed, crippled. Therefore, the

consideration that guides Braybrooke to ascribe immortality to Hardy's three novels, may be equally applied to the fourth: *The Return of the Native.* "There is, apart from their intrinsic worth, another consideration upon which I should defend the immortality demand that I make for Mr. Hardy. It is that humanity ever loves to dwell on the melancholy, it ever loves to bathe in its own spontaneous tears, it ever loves melancholy sorrow because humanity is inherently kind and good natured, and melancholy draws out these admirable emotions." — I. Indeed, a melancholy tale is apt to touch our inmost soul and evokes our emotion of love, pity and sympathy. Our sweetest songs are indeed those that tell our saddest thought.

Thus, if Thomas Hardy is immortal at least in some of his novels, it is useless to consider the period of his novel-writing career to call him a modern novelist. What is fundamental is always modern. In Hardy there are things fundamental, things universal. But even if we go by the period of Hardy's novel-writing career, then also Hardy is modern at least in terms of what modern literature stands for.

If 1880 is the starting point of modern movement in English literature as stated by both Cyril Connolly and J.L. M. Stewart, vide page 5 of the thesis, Hardy is a modern novelist at least in his last four major novels, such as, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895)

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because all these novels were written and published after 1880. Likewise, all of Hardy's fourteen novels, both major and minor, were written and published after 1870 which was taken for the starting point of Modern Movement by Ellen Moers. I. Again, if the modern American novel is taken to have begun with the last quarter of the nineteenth century as stated by Maurice Legris, all the major novels of Hardy, with the exception of Far From the Madding Crowd (1874) only, were written and published during this period. Further, the consideration that governed the French-Canadian novel Maria Chapdelaine to be categorised as 'modern' should equally apply to Hardy's Wessex Novels. Their subject matters may be old; their techniques of construction may be old; but their themes are modern and are of crucial importance for a thorough understanding of the life of Wessex peasantry. It may be noted that Hardy had revised and re-written most of the prefaces to Wessex novels in 1912. This was done with an obvious intention to fit them into modern perspectives and to make them intelligible to modern readers. In this sense Hardy may be called modern after Philip Toynbee who held that Modern movement in England began in 1910.

Ellen Moers called modern those who survived into the twentieth century. 2. This generation included Thomas Mann, William Butler Yeats, Paul Valéry, Igor Stravinsky, Rainer Maria Rilke, James Joyce, Frank Lloyd Wright, George Bernard

1. Twentieth Century Literature Vol. 20: January 74: No. 1 (Editor: William McBrien) P. 1
2. Ibid: P. 3
Shaw and Pablo Picasso. They were called modern because they all grew up in Victorian age and they were the generation of survivors into the twentieth century. They all witnessed the 'virtual trench' of what may be called the turn of the century. Again, all of them were extremely national in outlook and behaviour. "Among the solidities that obsessed the generation of survivors was nationality: none more Irish than Joyce or Shaw, more German than Mann, more Russian than Stravinsky, more Spanish than Picasso, more American than Dreiser. Their nationality stuck to them like a smell, in their language, gestures and habits." - L. It seems that the list of original modernists as prepared by Ellen Moers should have also included the name of Thomas Hardy not merely because he also grew up in Victorian age and had survived into the twentieth century but also because he witnessed the first world war, came across the trench of the century and was as much national as any other English writer. Hardy was, indeed, basically English.

**Hardy’s modernism does not, however, essentially lie with chronology. "His interest in modern subtleties of emotion and thought", observes Lionel Johnson, "is an interest, which separates him, as a novelist, from older novelists. I do not say which sets him above them. But in the largeness of design, in the march and sweep of imagination, in the**

greatness of his greater themes, he has given to the novel a simple grandeur and impressiveness, the more impressiveness, for his preoccupation with the concerns of modern thought." - L. 'In all the pomp of exquisite distress' tragic yet dignified, the figures of Jude, Tess, Henchard, winterborne, Mrs. Yeobright, Marty South, Bold wood, Rustacia Vye and Sue move across the stage. All of them are thwarted and cast down. Their tragedy, apart from the promptings of modern mental science and of modern emotional thought, gives rise to the troubled questionings and the searchings of heart. There is, on one hand, the rise of old emotion and on the other the new appeal. But there is no clash between the two, between the old passions and new appeals.

L. Lionel Johnson: The Art of Thomas Hardy (John Lane the Bodley Head Ltd: London: 1923) p. 52