Later Victorian Novelists,

Q. 65. Give your estimate of Charlotte Bronte (1816-55) as a novelist and comment on her principal works.

Ans. Charlotte Bronte was the eldest of the Bronte sisters who romanticised English fiction during the Victorian age. Instead of dealing with the manners and ways of an artificial society, she directed her attention to the inner working of the human soul, and revealed the passionate cry of the human heart in her works. She introduced poetry, passion and imagination in fiction and made it a thing of beauty and charm. She harnessed in the service of fiction the vitalising force of imagination and introduced the finest graces of romanticism in her novels mostly grounded on personal experiences of life.

Charlotte Bronte began her career as a poetess and then drifted on to the field of fiction. She wrote four novels in succession. Her fame rests on The Professor, Jane Eyre, Shirley and Villette. "There is emphatically a recurring pattern in Charlotte's literary carpet. As regards their matter: Yorkshire and Brussels, the governess, the tutor and the school are often repeated, interwoven with the cleric and the millowner. In manner a similar recurrence exists, for in all the novels except Shirley the story is told in the first person. A deeper unity is achieved by the consistent theme, this is always the conflict between high integrity and worldliness."* The Professor, her immature work, was published after her death in 1857. In this novel Charlotte Bronte focusses her attention on her impressions of Brussels life. It is autobiographical in character and the main figures of the novel are drawn from her personal acquaintance. The professor of the novel is William Crimsworth. He is the narrator of the story. He recounts his life from the time he quarrelled with his aristocratic uncles and became a professor in

* Phyllis Bentley: The Brontes
Pelets’ boys school. Here he developed love with his half Swiss, half English pupil, Frances Evans Henri, and finally married her though his love was sought to be disturbed by Zoraide. In this novel, Heger, the lover of Charlotte, plays the part of the professor, and her own role is carried out by Frances Evans Henri.

This novel is realistic in character. At this stage Charlotte was of the view that “her story should be as far removed from the land of the Genii and as near to real life as it could possibly be.” The realism of this novel was not appreciated. Charlotte realised that it was not realism but romance that the people of her times were really after, and in her subsequent novels, she produced works in which there was an overdose of romance, thrilling incidents and wild adventures.

Jane Eyre marks a change from realism to romance. This novel is undoubtedly the best of Charlotte’s works. It is frankly autobiographical in character. It was first published under the name of Currer Bell; and the name of the author posed a problem for the public. Was the writer of the novel a man or a woman? It was later on revealed that it was a woman’s work. Jane Eyre is Charlotte Bronte herself and the novel sets forth her experiences of life in a remarkably moving and touching style. “It is a powerful and fascinating study of elemental love, and hate, reminding us vaguely of one of Marlowe’s tragedy.”* It is a lyric poem, the kind of poem written only in adolescence when excess is all and restraint is felt to be a self-betrayal.”**

In Jane Eyre there is a beautiful combination of realism and romance. Jane Eyre’s life at Lawwood Asylum is a realistic portrayal of her own life at Cawan Bride school. The later part of the novel dealing with the experiences of Jane Eyre at Thornfield Hall is saturated with the spirit of romanticism. Thornfield Hall and Rochester are born of desire and imagination. The characters of the novel are vigorously drawn, and we are particularly attracted by the characters of Rochester and Jane Eyre.

* W. J. Long: English Literature.
Shirley, the third novel of Charlotte Bronte, is marked with a strong note of realism. To those who expected to find romance in this work Charlotte gave the warning—"Calm your expectations. Something real, cool and solid lies before you, something unromantic as Monday morning." The novel deals with the efforts of Robert Gerald Moore, a millowner to marry Shirley Keeldar, a young woman of wealth to tide over the financial crisis that faced him in his industry. He is being rejected by Shirley who senses his mercenary motives in marrying her. Shirley marries Louis, Younger brother of Robert. In the character of Shirley we find a full portrait of Emily Bronte, younger sister of Charlotte Bronte.

In Shirley Charlotte wrote a novel in the somewhat desultory style of reminiscences. "The writing never reaches the emotional power, never makes the intense impression found in Jane Eyre, and there are some missish dialogues and diatribes which are frankly tedious."* It is dull in comparison to Jane Eyre.

Villette and Emma are the last fruits of Charlotte Bronte. In Villette, Charlotte Bronte repeats the experiences of an English girl Lucy Snowe in a school at Brussels. The matter had already been used by her in The Professor. Parts of this book seem protracted and laboured. It has the same feverish note that we first meet in Jane Eyre with a less artificial resolution of the plot. "As a work of art Villette is not altogether satisfactory. It bristles with glaring improbabilities, is unequal in conception and shows signs of inevitable emotional overstrain. Memories of Mrs. Radcliffe and the Terror School are looked at every turn and yet flashes of imaginative brilliance are revealed."** Emma deals with the personal experiences of Charlotte Bronte and lacks the warmth and passion of Jane Eyre.

Having examined the main works of Charlotte Bronte let us now evaluate her contribution to the English novel, a novelist of inner life.

Charlotte Bronte broke a new ground in the history of 19th century fiction. Instead of concentrating her attention

* Phyllis Bentley: The Brontes.
** Diana Neill: A Short History of the English Novel.
manners and ways of social life as had been done by Jane Austen, she attempted to probe the inner recesses of the heart and the soul. She replaced the novel of manners by the novel of the spirit. "A literature of manners was to give place to a literature of the spirit in the novel of Charlotte Bronte."* In her novels the soul was revealed in its full glory. The soul was at last awake to its own existence and its relation to a complex and perhaps inscrutable universe.

A novelist of passion and intense life.

Charlotte Bronte was essentially the novelist of passion and storm. In her works we come across deep intensity and powerful emotional onrush of thought and feelings. There is a quivering sensibility that stirs us. Charlotte was dissatisfied with Jane Austen's passionless life and commenting upon her works she once observed, "Jane Austen ruffles her reader by nothing vehement, disturbs him by nothing profound. The passions are perfectly unknown to her; she rejects even a speaking acquaintance with that stormy sisterhood." What she found lacking in Jane Austen was supplied by her in her own works. "What Charlotte Bronte is really concerned with in The Professor, Jane Eyre and Villette is the one thing only, the depiction of the isolated, naked soul responding to the experience of life with a maximum of intensity. The pleasantness or otherwise of the revelation is immaterial; the nakedness is everything. This means that, different though her experience was from theirs, in the last analysis Charlotte Bronte belongs to the same tiny group of novelists as Dostovsky and Lawrence."**

Limited range of her novels.

As regards the panorama of life unfolded in her novels, we have to observe that Charlotte Bronte does not provide a diversified view of life. In her novels the vision of life is restricted to the few experiences that she had of life at Brussels and Yorkshire. The same matter is repeated by her in Jane Eyre and Villette. There is a family likeness, in all the novels of Charlotte Bronte. "There is emphatically a recurring pattern in Charlotte's literary carpet. As regards their matter: Yorkshire

---

and Brussels, the governess, the tutor and the school are often repeated, interwoven with the cleric and the millowner. A deeper unity is achieved by the consistent theme. There is always the conflict between high integrity and worldliness."

**Plot construction.**

Charlotte Bronte does not have any cogency and coherence in her stories. Her plots are rambling and discursive. "They curve in and out, sometimes running, sometimes sauntering. She was altogether clever but knew nothing systematically. It is this logical faculty which makes *Wuthering Heights*, inspite of all defects, a more compact story than *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley* or *Villette"."**

**Characterisation.**

In the field of characterisation, Charlotte Bronte is interested in the study of woman and man as *individuals*, and her characters are drawn with dexterity and skill revealing the inner recesses of her male and female characters. She presents a new conception of heroine which differs from the conventional attitude towards women. Her heroines, particularly *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*, are vigorous and active, energetic and full of verve and zest for life. Among her male characters Rochester attracts us most.

**Her imaginative poetry and painting ability.**

The novels of Charlotte Bronte are rich in poetic touches and pictorial effects. Her descriptions of natural scenery reveal the hand of a poet and a painter. Scenes of tempest and storm flash through her novels. "A special manifestation of this power may be found in her descriptions in *Jane Eyre* of imaginary pictures, which show that she had the spirit, though not the technical skill of the greatest of painters."†

**Lack of humour and over-seriousness.**

In the novels of Charlotte Bronte one finds the lack of humour and light hearted gaiety. She is always in earnest. "She has no lightness of touch. She cannot believe that there are occasions when a smile is more effective than a sermon and a zest more

---

* Phyllis Bentley: *The Brontes*.
* Miss Marjory Baird: *Women Writers of the 19th Century*.
† Hugh Walker: *The Literature of the Victorian Era*. 
crushing than a blow. This lack of humour affords a ground more grave than any other for doubting the permanence of her fame. With few exceptions they whom the world has chosen to remember have been gifted with it, but Milton is among the exceptions."**

Coarseness in Charlotte's novels.

It has been pointed out that Charlotte Bronte's novels are coarse, rough and brutal. But the charge is not justified. "She was unflinchingly sincere, and whatever of coarseness there may be in her works came from her photographic fidelity to the life she knew, and was no part of the fibre of her mind. Among the men and women of her acquaintance it was the custom to speak plainly and to call a spade a spade. The display of uncurbed passion was familiar to her, and hence she frequently depicted her characters as saying words and doing deeds which to some of her readers seemed unnecessarily coarse, brutal and cruel."**

Lack of moral teaching.

In Charlotte Bronte's novels there is little of preaching or moral teaching. In this respect she differs from George Eliot who was a moralist at heart. It is not possible to squeeze a moral out of her productions. "To teach" she said, 'is not my vocation. What I am, it is useless to say. Those whom it concerns feel and find it out. I cannot write a book for its moral."

Her style.

Charlotte Bronte writes with the sensitivity of a poet. There is something exquisite and unique in her phrases. To appreciate her prose we have to read them together rather than in isolation from the context. "Her best phrases are not exquisite when segregated. To appreciate them we must light upon them in the midst of a printed page. To pull phrases is like pulling petals off a flower and exhibiting them as representatives of its beauty, while the charm has evaporated and even the very fragrance is diminished."†

---

† Hugh Walker: The Literature of the Victorian Era.

** Ibid.

† Miss Marjory Bald: Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century.
Conclusion.

"It is not as thinker or poet or social reformer that Charlotte Bronte should be judged. She is essentially a novelist, and as a novelist she merits the warmest praise. The fire of life burns strongly in her works."

Q. 66. Give an estimate of Emily Bronte (1818-48) as a novelist and write a note on her 'Wuthering Heights.'

**Ans.** Emily Bronte, the younger sister of Charlotte Bronte, was one of the prominent novelists of the nineteenth century. She has been able to carve out for herself a place in the history of English fiction by her one single novel *Wuthering Heights*. Emily Bronte was in every way sharper and bleaker than her two sisters and she was of emotion all compact. She was a poetess as well as a novelist but it is by her one single novel rather than by a large number of her poems that she is known to the modern readers. As a novelist Emily is known by *Wuthering Heights*. It is a masterpiece of genius and has been the subject of "many ardent eulogies and appreciation almost poetic in their enthusiasm."** It is an impersonal novel and stands in strong contrast to the extreme subjectivity of Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*. (It is a work of art and is marked with fury and fire, deep emotion, intense passion, strong hate and stormy feelings.) "It is a work of stark grandeur in which a wholly non-moral world of fierce symbolic action is localized quite precisely in the author's experience of Yorkshire life." Emily presents in this novel a very powerful story of terror and revenge and the entire work is enlivened by flashes of lyrical passion and emotional exuberance. The novel fully justifies the opinion of Matthew Arnold that the author's soul.

*Knew no fellow for might,
Passion, vehemence, grief,
Daring, since Byron died.*

In the words of Richard Church this novel is "one of the most odd and unplaceable works in the whole of English fiction."

*Phylis Bentley: The Brontes,
Lionel Stevenson: The English Novel, a Panorama.*
It remains a lonely peak in the landscape of the English novel."**
In the words of Moody-Lovett, "This novel has gradually come
to be recognised as one of the major imaginative creations of
the century."**

The story is filtered through the minds of two
onlookers and the stirring incidents are being presented through
the mouth of Mr. Lockwood and Nelly Dean, the house-keeper
of Wuthering Heights. The story deals with Heathcliff, Cathy,
Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw, Edgar Linton and it is a powerful
tale of revenge. The story tells us how Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw,
owners of the farm house called Wuthering Heights, lived splen-
didly well with their two children, Hindley and Catherine. Another
family of the Lintons lived at a distance of four miles from the
Wuthering Heights. Mr. and Mrs. Linton had two children,
Edgar and Isabella. One day Mr. Earnshaw went to Liverpool
on a business trip and on his way back he brought with him a
homeless boy whom he had picked up on the street. Earnshaw
brought up this young brat and gave him the name of Heathcliff.
This young boy began to grow in years and Catherine started
loving him a little though her brother Hindley had no liking for
Heathcliff. A few days after the arrival of Heathcliff to Wuthering
Heights, Mr. Earnshaw died leaving the charge of his property
to his son, Hindley, who degraded Heathcliff to the level of a
servant behaved rudely with the unsupported boy. Hindley
did not like the growing love between Catherine and Heath-
cliff and insisted that Catherine should marry Edgar Linton.
Heathcliff was deeply mortified at this insult heaped upon him by
Hindley and one day he quietly slipped away from the place only
to return three years later in a much better financial condition
than he had ever seen in his life. On his return to Wuthering
Heights Heathcliff was welcomed by Hindley. Catherine, who
had married Edgar Linton in the absence of Heathcliff once again
revived her old love for Heathcliff. She was torn in a conflict and
died in agony giving birth to a daughter named Cathy. The
death of Catherine produced a feeling of deep resentment in the
heart of Heathcliff and he decided to take full revenge on

Hindley who had stood in the way of his marriage with Catherine. Heathcliff succeeded in ruining Hindley by enticing him in gambling and drinking bouts. Hindley lost everything in gambling to Heathcliff including Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff became the master of Wuthering Heights. He ill-treated Hindley and his son and reduced them to the position of labourers. He eloped with Isabella Linton and hoped to acquire the entire property of Lintons through his son Linton Heathcliff, born as the result of Heathcliff’s life with Isabella Linton. Heathcliff managed to acquire both the property of the Earnshaws and the Lintons. His plan of revenge was accomplished but he could not make all Lintons and Earnshaws wretched for Hindley’s son Harton and Cathy continued to love each other for the rest of their lives. In the meantime Heathcliff died without seeing the complete destruction of the houses of Earnshaws and Lintons.

This novel is “unique for its dark and thunderous atmosphere and its powerful fusion and inordinately passionate love and hatred.”* Though it centres upon an overmastering love, it is devoid of sexual passion as well as moral judgments. It only displays the tragic action with fatalistic impressiveness.**

The plot of the novel is a little confused “but the story abounds in excitement and suspense which are skilfully heightened by the peculiar and complex mode of narrative.”†

The characters of Wuthering Heights are elemental beings and Heathcliff, Catherine and Edgar continue to hold us in their grip. Emily Bronte ‘portrays, with absolute fidelity the weakness of the Lintons, the appalling insensate hardness of Heathcliff, the egoism of Cathy and the fatal consequences of all these qualities, yet she views these characters as she does, the deer, the wolf and the hare; that is, with regret for their defects, but with understanding and compassion.”

This novel exhibits the full play of cruelty in human life, “The action is laid in hell.” says D.G. Rossetti, “only it seems that places and people have English names there,” and hellish feeling

---

** Lionel Stevenson—The English Novel a Panorama.
† Phyllis Bentley—The Brontës.
is created particularly at the behaviour of Heathcliff towards his victims. The reader feels stifled and choked. Throughout the book the capacity of brute force seems magnified beyond endurance. "Every beam of sunshine is poured down through thick bars of threatening cloud, every page is surcharged with moral electricity."

The deep emotional force of the entire novel shall be felt by every reader. (Emotions portrayed in the novel have a terrible force about them. They are "wild as the north wind, dark as the storm cloud and strong as the rock.")

The fire of poetry burns through the pages of this powerful work and the poetic touches emanating from the speeches of its characters are "felt in the blood and felt along the heart." The following lines spoken by Heathcliff provide just a simple survey of the rich poetry that runs throughout the novel. "I cannot look down the floor, but her features are shaped in the flags! In every cloud, in every tree—filling the air at night, and caught in every object by day—I am surrounded with her image. The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist and that I have lost her."

*Wuthering Heights* is rich in vivid portraits of nature particularly of the Moorlands. As we read this novel we come across dark rocks, tumbling blocks and wild wind, wailing and raging over their heads. "The natural setting constantly colours the Moors, the Moors through the changing seasons being described with the poet's observation and a poet's sense of the inevitable word." **"We feel ourselves alone with earth in one of her grand, wild and sombre manifestations."***

The novel has a philosophic, moral and symbolic value of its own. The end of Heathcliff exhibits the defeat of evil. Evil is always self-doomed. The tempestuous passions of the characters are thus tranquillised by being shown against the eternal background of nature's impersonal processes.

*Wuthering Heights* is not so much a symbolic or a philosophic novel as a novel of romanticism. *Wuthering Heights,*

---

* Charlotte's observations regarding 'Wuthering Heights'.
* Lionel Stevenson—The English Novel, a Panorama.
* Phyllis Bentley—The Brontes.
in short, is a be\'t\'rd masterpiece of romanticism. "Just as Jane Austen had been an anachronistic eighteenth-century rationalist in the romantic heydey, so Emily Bronte was an anachronistic romantic visionary amid Victorian practicality."* 

Q. 67. Give a brief account of the main works of Anne Bronte.

Ans. Anne Bronte was the youngest of the Bronte sisters. Her main works are *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.

*Agnes Grey* is another governess story, a *Jane Eyre* without its fire. It lacks both the melodramatic plot and the passionate assertiveness of Charlotte's novel. It has the familiar Bronte scorn of insincerity, the Bronte condemnation of selfish, vain, self-centred women, and the Bronte preoccupation with love. The heroine is a governess who falls in love but is inarticulate with shyness. The hero is a good hearted curate who understands the silent love of his beloved and rewards her for her unexhibited love. The novel ends happily. In place of Charlotte's vehemence we have a quiet tone in the novel and the tedium is relieved by touches of amiable humour.

The second novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is an ambitious attempt and holds the same relationship to *Wuthering Heights* as her preceding one had to *Jane Eyre*. The novel is an interesting study of a drunkard who meets his tragic end because of his excessive addiction to drink. The portrait of the drunkard Arthur Huntingdon is admirably drawn. Huntingdon presents the portrait of Anne's brother who was actually killing himself with alcohol and drugs. Agonised by the moral dissipation and moral disintegration of her brother, Anne intended "her novel to be a terrible warning against sin and self-indulgence. The obvious moral purpose and the author's self-torture in writing the book produced an effect that is painful rather than tragic."**

* Lionel Stevenson—*The English Novel, a Panorama.*

** Ibid.*
Q. 68. What was the contribution made by the Bronte sisters to the English novel?

Ans. The Bronte sisters—Charlotte, Emily, Anne—made notable contribution to the English novel during the nineteenth century. They represent the ‘stormy sisterhood’ in English fiction, and it was their effort to introduce the true spirit of romanticism and emotionalism in fiction.

“The Gothic novelists had rebelled against the ‘reasonable’ limitations of the eighteenth century, but they got bogged on the terror tale and generally failed to go deep enough to make their revolt completely effective. The Brontes had what the Gothic people lacked: they worked against the background of that vast spiritual awakening which we call the Romantic movement. In the Brontes, the Romantic movement captured the English novel. Deserting the drawing room and the town they drove to the elemental things.”

Instead of concentrating on the depiction of the manners and customs of social life as was done by Jane Austen, they turned their gaze to the inner spirit of their characters and presented in their work the study of souls in distress and suffering. They had the ruthless determination to dig down to the roots of the inner life. They were not interested in the portrayal of social life as in the laying bare of the human soul passing through all the trials and tribulations of a chequered life. They chose to study the feminine heart and presented the woman’s point of view in their fiction. They presented a new conception of the heroine as a woman of vital strength and passionate feelings. Jane Eyre, Shirley, Agnes are fine studies of feminine life providing glimpses into the workings of their souls.

The Bronte sisters had limited experience of life, but their narrow and limited experience did not stand in the way of their achieving excellence in their work. Of course the repetition of the same matter made their novels somewhat stale, but the dullness was relieved by the presentation of passion and emotion in an intensified form. Charlotte Bronte and Anne Bronte had experience of being governess, school teachers and pupils, and they repeated the same scenes and experiences again and again in their

* Wagenknecht: The Cavalcade of the English Novel
novels. *Professor* is enjoyable but the repetition of the same theme in *Villette* makes the book uninteresting. But what saves the books from staleness is their emotional fervour and exuberance. They represent emotions and feelings in a picturesque and convincing manner, and that sways the readers.

From the point of plot construction, the Bronte sisters have not much to their credit. The plots of their novels are complex and often formless, and in many cases there are dishevelled and entangled episodes, but what they lose by way of story-telling, they gain by their characterization. Their characters are elemental figures. We can neither forget the male nor the female characters. Jane Eyre, Rochester, Shirley, Heathcliff, Catherine, Agens impress us deeply. The characters are truthfully and sincerely portrayed in all their vices and brutalities.

The Bronte sisters introduced the subject of passionate love in their novels. They were novelists of passion, and often there were scenes of intense passionate life. Charlotte has been compared to George Sand in her presentation of passion in her novels. Romanticism in its passionate aspect, which Sir Walter Scott had missed in his novels, was introduced by the Bronte sisters. Emily used the matter of Gothic Romance to perfection and her *Wuthering Heights* is "a belated masterpiece of romanticism. Just as Jane Austen had been an anachronistic eighteenth century rationalist in the romantic heyday, so Emily Bronte was an anachronistic romantic visionary amid Victorian practicality."

Their novels are poetic and there are passages that almost border on poetry. In their prose passages there is a gleam of poetic fire. In *Wuthering Heights*, the reader will come across many beautiful poetic passages that will move him to ecstasy and joy.

The most obvious contribution of the Bronte sisters was the presentation of the life of Yorkshire and its rich spectacles of nature. "They all present its landscape—Charlotte realistically, Anne nostalgically, Emily fully, poetically and superbly. They all use its rich rough dialect. They all present its people—though they present them in different ways."

---

Lionel Stevenson—*The English Novel: a Panorama.*

Phyllis Bentley—*The Brontes.*
Q. 69. Write a note on the main novels of George Eliot (1819—1880).

Ans. George Eliot was one of the prominent novelists of the nineteenth century. She belonged to the Victorian Age but was very much different from the early Victorian novelists. She was an intellectual writer and like Meredith was interested in the revelation of the inner life of her characters. Her preoccupation was mainly in delving deep into the souls of her characters from an intellectual point of view. She was extremely thoughtful, reflective, moral, ethical and philosophical and in her hands fiction remained no more an instrument of mere entertainment but became an agent of moral edification and psychological study of human motives and actions. "Again and again it has been pointed out that fiction in her hands is no longer a mere entertainment; it strikes a new note of seriousness and even of sternness; it has turned into a searching review of the gravest as well as the pleasanter aspects of human existence, reassuming the reflective and discursive rights and duties pertaining to the novel at its beginnings, without however sacrificing any of the creative and dramatic qualities that had developed in the intervening centuries."

Whatever came out from the pen of George Eliot was marked with an honesty of purpose and courageous determination. "She imparted to all that she wrote a fragrance of ardent sincerity which compensates for many failings of her aesthetic judgement."** With these introductory remarks regarding the general nature of George Eliot’s novels, let us now critically examine her works.

The works of George Eliot are conveniently divided into three groups corresponding to the three well marked periods of her life. In the first group are to be placed her early essays and miscellaneous works. In the second group we include Scenes of Clerical Life, Adam Bede, Mill on the Floss and Silas Marner, all published between 1858 to 1861. The novels of this period are based on the author’s personal life and experiences. The scenes in these novels are laid in the country surroundings and

---


**Legouis & Cazamian—A History of English Literature,
the characters are drawn from the people of the midlands with whom George Eliot had close familiarity. "They are probably the author's most enduring works. They have a naturalness, a spontaneity; at times a flash of real humour, which are lacking in her latter novels and they show a rapid development of literary power which reaches a climax in Silas Marner."* In the third group are included Romola, Felix Holt, Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda. These novels are philosophical and political in character and appear to be the product of a laboured artistry. In them there is the wealth of reflection and analysis of character, but the peculiar charm of the country life and country character is missing from them. In them "there is very little of inspiration."

Scenes of Clerical Life (1858) includes three stories (i) Amos Barton, (ii) Mr. Gilfils' Love-Story, (iii) Jonet's Repentance. These three stories appeared at short serials in Blackwood's Magazine during 1857. When they were published in two volumes as Scenes of Clerical Life, they caught attention. The author's identity was not revealed but when the publisher demanded a name it was given as 'George Eliot,' "In setting and characters the three stories were derived from Mary-Evans' childhood surroundings in Warwickshire. With quiet humour and pathos she depicted rises in the lives of ordinary people with normal weaknesses. Although superficially resembling the domestic fiction of the decade, the stories had deeper qualities of naturalness and insight. They were praised by several leading authors, and Dickens alone suspected that the writer was a woman. The increasing length of the stories showed her development towards the larger scope of the novel, and she soon felt hampered by the monotony imposed by her plan of centring each story upon a clergyman's family. By the time Scenes of Clerical Life was published she was at work upon a full length novel."**

Adam Bede.

Adam Bede appeared in the same year as The Ordeal of Richard Feveral (1859). In writing her first full length novel

** W. J. Long—English Literature.
* Lionel Stevenson—The English Novel, a panorama.
she remained as faithful to the environment of her childhood days as she had been in *Scenes of Clerical Life*. The country atmosphere comes into its fullest play in this novel. The plot of this novel is based on a story told to George Eliot by her aunt Elizabeth Evans, a Methodist preacher, and the original of the Dinah Morris of the novel, of a confession of a child murder made to her by a girl in prison when she had gone to her for the redemption of her soul. The story deals with Hetty Sorrel, a vain and selfish type of girl who starts flirting with Arthur Donnithorne, a young squire of wealth and fame, after discarding the sincere love of Adam Bede, a village carpenter. Arthur Donnithorne is a rake and after enjoying a few years of pleasure with Hetty he deserts her. Hetty, broken-hearted, consents to marry Adam Bede, but before the marriage is performed she gives birth to a child. She makes every possible attempt to find Donnithorne but fails in her search. In sheer desperation she kills her child. She is arrested and transported for the rest of her life. Adam Bede later on marries Dinah Morris, a deeply religious young Methodist preacher whose serene influence pervades the whole history.

In *Adam Bede* George Eliot provides many beautiful and interesting pictures of English countryside particularly of the Poyser's Farm. "The author's abiding love for the countryside and her photographic memory make the local colour authentic."

The characters of this novel are drawn with deep insight. Mrs. Poyser, Hetty, Adam Bede. Author Donnithorne are unforgettable figures. "Unlike any previous novelist, she was able to draw rustic characters humorously without a trace of condescension: the sententious Mrs. Poyser, in particular, partly based on the author's mother, is a noteworthy comic characterization."

This book is ethical in tone and directs our attention to the consequences that most inevitably follow a crime. The moral severity of the novel is well pronounced.

The Mill on the Floss (1860).

*The Mill on the Floss* is an autobiographical novel and is identified with her childhood. In writing this novel George Eliot dipped once more in the storehouse of memory. In this novel

* Lionel Stevenson—*The English Novel, a Panorama.*
she presents her father, brother, aunt and mother with almost painful fidelity. It is a tragedy that moves us to the depth of our heart. Tom and Maggie are brother and sister. They are the children of the innocent but haughty and obstinate Mr. Tulliver, the miller of Dorlcote Mill on the Floss. Tom and Maggie have opposing qualities of character. Tom is prosaic, narrow-minded and hectoring in tone. Maggie representing George Eliot, is a girl of intense sensibility, having deep emotional feelings, and artistic tastes. A conflict ensues between the brother and the sister. Tom does not like Maggie's love for Phillip Wakem, the son of lawyer Wakem, who is supposed to be the evil angel of the family and mainly responsible for the ruin of the Tulliver family. Under the command of her brother, Maggie ceases to have all relations with Phillip. After the death of her father, Maggie leaves the mill and goes to visit her cousin Lucy Deane, who is going to be married to the cultivated and agreeable Stephen Guest. Stephen is attracted towards Maggie and the girl also responds to the call of Stephen Guest. When Tom knows all about this he is enraged and a further rupture ensues between the brother and the sister. In the meantime a flood descends upon the town. Maggie forgets all enmity and goes out to rescue her brother from the flood. They move out in a boat. The brother and the sister are reconciled at the end but unfortunately the boat goes down into the swirling water of the flood and they are drowned. In their death they are reconciled.

The Mill on the Floss is wanting in proportion and too much space is given to the girl and boy experiences. But this is natural and is explained by the tendency in every man and woman to linger over early memories. The background of the countryside exhibits the novelist's interest in nature and country surroundings. The characters of the novel, Tom and Maggie, are drawn with great skill and the character of Maggie is probably George Eliot's most profound study of the inner recesses of the human heart. At places the novel comes over the brink of poetry and it is this poetic freedom that makes the character of Maggie so magnetic and charming. The novel is not overburdened by ethical and moral homilies. It is more psychological than ethical in character
and the style is poetic and graphic at places.

There are certain defects in the novel and they have been pin-pointed by Lionel Stevenson in his panoramic survey of the English Novel in the following words: "The Mill on the Floss, then, is not merely a fervent investigation of love from a woman's point of view, but is also a truthful unveiling of the author's inmost feelings. Perhaps it is this extreme degree of personal involvement that prevents it from being one of her best novels. Unable to restrain her sympathy for Maggie, even when making exasperated comments on her faults, she did not maintain the impartial attitude that gives her other stories the particular power. This defect may have been brought home to her by several unfavourable reviews, which were probably influenced by the knowledge that George Eliot was the scandalous woman who was living with a married man. At any rate, her next novel scrupulously avoided personal elements."*

Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe (1861)—This is briefer than its two predecessors. It is a shorter novel, marked with moral earnestness and psychological insight. The ethical tone comes into prominence for the first time in this novel. The novel deals with the life of Silas Marner, a poor linen weaver, who accumulates gold and takes pleasure in enjoying the sight of his hoard. He is being robbed of his gold by Dunstan Cass, the Squire’s reprobate son. Silas is deeply mortified at the loss of his hard earned gold, but this loss is made up by the incidental coming of a girl, Eppie, to his cottage whom he adopts as his daughter. Later on it is found out that Eppie is the daughter of Godfrey Cass and Nancy, Godfrey Cass being the good son of the squire. Eppie is claimed by her real parents but she refuses to leave Silas and lives with him. At the end Silas gets back the stolen gold, for the draining of a pond near his door reveals the body of Dunstan Cass who had stolen the gold. The story ends happily and Silas is rewarded for his patient endurance of the hardships that came in his life. "The entire story of Silas Marner is a rustic idyll in the Wordsworthian tradition, with roots deep in folk legends. The psychology, however, is as sound as in her other books, and there is mellow

* Lionel Stevenson—The English Novel, a Panorama.
earthly humour in her sketches of unsophisticated types.”* The novel is rich in excellent pictures of country life and is marked with flashes of humour which relieve its gloom. The characters of Silas, Dunstan Cass, Godfrey and Dolly Winthrop are very finely drawn.

Romola (1863).

*Romola* is a great work of George Eliot. In this novel she goes for her plot and characters to Florence of Italy during the Renaissance period when Savonarola was preaching his gospel to the people of his country. George Eliot leaves the familiar background of the midlands for capturing the exotic atmosphere of Italy. The novel deals with Romola, the daughter of an old blind scholar and her love for Tito, a Greek scholar, who ultimately proves to be a rogue and a scoundrel. Romola, being disappointed in love, turns for faith to Savonarola but here too her idealism is shattered when she finds Savonarola falling away from his lofty idealism and grovelling in the mire as many others did in those days.

*Romola* is remembered not for the Italian atmosphere and setting, which dissatisfied many people, who had actually been to Italy, but for the vision of inner life. It is a profound study of moral development in the character of Romola and of moral degeneration in Tito. “In a word, *Romola* is a great moral study and a very interesting book; but the characters are not Italian, and the novel as a whole lacks the reality which marks George Eliot’s English studies.”**

*Romola* had undermined George Eliot’s health and made an old woman of her. For two years she did not write anything and when she resumed her work as a novelist, she turned back to English provincial life, though not to idyllic rural scenes, and produced three works: *Felix Holt* (1866), *Middlemarch*, (1867) and *Daniel Deronda* (1871), which burn with a passionate conviction and contain some of her best character studies.

Felix Holt.

*Felix Holt* is a political novel dealing with the English political affairs at the time of the First Reform Bill. *Felix Holt*

---

* Ibid.
† W. J. Long—*English Literature*
is a noble minded young reformer who seeks to impress upon his fellow workers that their salvation would lie not in agitating through legislature but through education. In contrast to Felix Holt stands the figure of Harold Transome, who is neither lofty in idealism nor moral in his life as a lover. He loves Esther Lyon, who is disillusioned by his hypocritical ways and marries Felix Holt. The chief charm of Felix Holt according to Lionel Stevenson is, "in the love story wherein a frivolous girl is weaned away from her selfish pastimes by her affection for the idealistic radical."*

Daniel Deronda.

It is a novel dealing with Daniel Deronda, a noble-hearted Jew. Daniel is devoted to the mission of spreading religion. He refuses to marry Harleigh, a beautiful woman, who being dissatisfied with the behaviour of her husband Grand Court, turns to Daniel for marriage. Daniel Deronda refuses to marry her and marries Mirah, a Jewish woman. He devotes himself to the noble task of popularising religion.

Middlemarch.

Middlemarch is a study of provincial life and the scene is laid in the provincial town of Middle March in the first half of the nineteenth century. It is a love story principally dealing with the affairs of Dorothea Brooke and Mr. Rosamund Vincy ending in despair. "In Middlemarch, the psychology tends more clearly towards an intuitive idea of mind and consciousness. Her most powerful novel even if it is not inspired or the most harmoniously constructed, is the last in which the activity of her courageous, evermoving mind has been expressed in terms of scenes and figures familiar to herself, and thus endowed with artistic reality."**

Q. 70. Give your estimate of George Eliot as a novelist.

Ans. George Eliot was one of the greatest novelists of the Victorian Age. Among the women novelists of her age she occupies a distinctive place and can easily be considered the

*Lionel Stevenson—The English Novel, a Panorama.
**Legouis & Cazamian—A History of English Literature.
precursor of the psychological novel developed during our times. She was a novelist of intellectual life and like Meredith intellectualised the novel imparting to it a moral fervour and ethical bias which it had not yet possessed. In her hands the novel did not remain merely an instrument of entertainment but became an effective weapon of moral regeneration and ethical redemption. An air of sobriety and seriousness characterises her works and inspite of the humorous thouches that are introduced here and there to enliven the rugged tone, she remains essentially a novelist with a mission. Her seriousness is something which cannot be cast aside. "It must be remembered that George Eliot was one of the Victorian "sages" as well as a novelist, one of those who worried and thought and argued about religion, ethics, history, character, with all the concern felt by those most receptive to the many currents of new ideas flowing in Victorian thought and most sensitive to their implications."*

Plot Construction—George Eliot did not very much care for plot construction on the conventional Victorian lines. In the formation of her plots she was not governed by any standard formula. She had certain ideas to convey through the medium of her novels and she gave them the farthest logical development in her works. Hers are the "first novels which set out to give a picture of life wholly unmodified by those formulas of a good plot which the novel had taken over from comedy and romance. Her story is conditioned solely by the logical demands of situation or character, it ends sadly or happily, includes heroes or omits them, deals with the married or the unmarried, according as reason and observation lead her to think likely. In fact, the laws conditioning form of George Eliot's novels are the same laws that condition those of Henry James and Wells and Conard and Arnold Bennet. Hers are the first examples in English of the novel in its mature form; in them it structurally comes of age."**

Her realism—The novels of George Eliot realistically present the life of Midlands, Warwickshire and Derbyshire. The intimate touch of personal knowledge about the kind of life lived in these areas is felt by every reader who goes through them.

---

** David Cecil: Early Victorian Novelists.
Scene after scene, character after character, in these novels have been identified with places and persons with whom George Eliot had been familiar. In her latter novels, particularly *Romola* she cast aside the realism which had characterised her work in *Adam Bede, Mill on the Floss* and *Silas Marner* but later on, at least once in *Middlemarch*, she came back to her favourite theme of the countryside and its surroundings in Warwickshire and Derbyshire. In *Romola* she had presented Italian life which she had tried to for the first time. However she could not achieve much success in the portrayal of a foreign land. Here she faltered and failed. It is only once again in *Middlemarch* that she could hold out a gleam of her former glory and her realistic portraiture of life.

**As a psychologist**—Meredith and George Eliot are psychological novelists of the Victorian Age and both of them tried to focus the light not on the external trappings of personality but on the inner struggle in the souls of their characters. George Eliot sought to reveal and analyse the motives, impuses, and influences that worked in the formation of her characters. Analysis of the motives of her characters was her main forte. She brought to bear on the novel the searching imagination of a rationalist and philosophical thinker. The stamp of a highly skilled intellect, a probing mind and a searching analytic faculty can be felt on every page of her novel. She was a successful psychological novelist and to represent the inner history and inner life of her characters was her main preoccupation. "All happenings she showed, are but the meeting and intermingling of courses of events that have their source in the inner history of mankind."

**Her seriousness**—The great contribution of George Eliot to the novel was that she made it an object of seriousness, gravity, loftiness and solemnity. For her the novel was not a chief source of entertainment and relaxation. She made it an instrument for philosophic thinking and posed problems in her novels which only very serious thought of a high level could possibly solve. "Again and again it has been pointed out that fiction in her hand is no longer a mere entertainment, it strikes a new note of seriousness and even of sternness; it has turned into a searching review of the

---

*W. J. Cross—Development of the English Novel,*
gravest as well as the pleasanter aspects of human existence, reassuming the reflective and discursive rights and duties pertaining to the novel at its beginnings, without however sacrificing any of the creative and dramatic qualities that had in the intervening developed centuries.**

As a moralist—George Eliot was a moralist at the heart and the general tone and temper of her novels is that of moral earnestness and austere grimness. As a moralist George Eliot laid emphasis on the performance of one's duty and leading a virtuous and righteous life. F. W. H. Myer's conversation with George Eliot at Cambridge in 1873 shows what she thought of duty in life. "She stirred somewhat beyond her wont, and taking as her text the three words which have been used so often as the inspiring trumpet calls of men—the words God, Immortality—Duty pronounced, with terrible earnestness how inconceivable was the first, how unbelievable the second, and yet how peremptory and absolute the third." A slip in conduct in her view was likely to lead to serious consequences resulting in the deterioration of characters. Tito's degeneration in Romola; Lydgate's fall in Middlemarch, Gwendolen Harleth's humiliation and recovery in Daniel Deronda were brought about by their lapses in moral conduct. She showed, through their discomfitures and decline, that disobedience to moral laws brought utter ruin to human life.

George Eliot believed that life is just. She was sure that "those who live virtuous life are essentially contented, that those who live a vicious life are essentially discontented. However well meaning you might be or however lucky, she was sure that you cannot escape the consequences of your own actions; that your sins find you out, that the slightest slip will be visited on you, if not immediately then later."†

Her Characters—George Eliot's principal interest was in character portrayal, particularly the inner man. She was not so much interested in presenting external appearance and idiosyn-

---

* E A Baker—History of the English Novel
† David Cessal—Early Victorian Novelists,
crasies of her characters as in revealing their inner life. "We do not remember her serious characters by their appearance or the way they talk, indeed we do not remember these things clearly at all. Her portraits are primarily portraits of the inner man."

George Eliot's art in characterization lies in the fact that her characters evolve and grow as the novel proceeds ahead. They are not fixed. They continue to grow either for the worse or for the better. They go from weakness to strength or from strength to weakness. This is exhibited in the degradation that comes in the character of Tito in *Romola* and Lidget in *Middlemarch*. In the beginning these two characters are presented to be noble and good but gradually they decline and go down the slippery way of degradation and moral ruin.

The characters of George Eliot are governed by moral considerations. They have a leaning for the moral side. They are always true to themselves. They are consistent. "Through every change of fortune, every variety of circumstance, they remain the same clear recognizable individual moral entities."

George Eliot achieved success in portraying complex characters like Maggie Tulliver and Tito. "It is the habit of my imagination", said George Eliot, "to strive after as full a vision of the medium in which a character moves as of the character itself."

George Eliot's female characters are better drawn than her male characters and her male figures are made with a woman's attitude towards the male sex. Nearly always the subject is studied from the women's point of view, the women are so vastly superior to their lovers that it is difficult for the reader to appreciate all that it means for them.

George Eliot's characters have generally been identified with her relatives and friends. Dinah Morris in *Adam Bede* is after the fashion of her aunt. Mrs. Poyser, Hetty's aunt, is said to show some traits of George Eliot's mother. Adam Bede was drawn from her father. The picture of Maggie Tulliver in *Mill on the Floss* is her own personal study. Her brother Tom is Isaac and her father is portrayed in the owner of the Mill.

* David Cecil: *Early Victorian Novelists*
George Eliot's humour—Though George Eliot was essentially a novelist of the tragic life representing the shadows that cross human existence, yet to relieve the tedium of her novels she introduced comic characters marked with flashes of humour. The humour in her novels rises principally through her rustic characters like Mrs. Poyser. She could paint humorous characters who could provide mirth to her readers. Her humour became ironical and satirical in character. The Dodson sisters are a pleasant source of ironical humour and the same is true of Mrs. Glegg's frequent quarrels with Mr. Glegg.

George Eliot kept certain subjects away from the plain of humour. "She thought it shockingly heartless to make fun of people's tender feelings, or sacred aspirations. Even at its brightest her humour is not exuberant. But within its limitations it is both individual and delightful. Intelligence gives it edge; good humour gives it glow: it sparkles over the comedy of rustic provincial life, at once cool and mellow, incisive and genial."*

Her Pathos—The pathos in the novels of George Eliot is touching. She is genuinely pathetic rather than sentimental in the presentation of her heart-rending tragedies. "George Eliot completed the work of Wordsworth. He dealt with the pathos of the pastoral life in a spirit of measureless humanity; she mingled its pathos with humour and produced the greatest dramatic effect."

Her style—George Eliot's style in her early novels is lucid and simple but later on it becomes reflective and abstract. "Her style, through many a page, through whole chapters and episodes, has the indefinable quality that suggests a lesson in psychology, ethics or history."**

Q. 71. Give a critical account of the main novels of George Meredith (1828-1909).

Ans. George Meredith was one of the greatest of the Victorian novelists. He was a psychological novelist interested in unfolding and unravelling the inner life of his characters and their

---

David Cecil—Early Victorian Novelists.

** Legouis & Cazamian—History of English Literature.
motives. He could not be a popular novelist like Dickens nor was he a feast for pallets nursed on the savoury food of Dickens. He was a novelist for the intellectuals who could have the patience of threading through the intricacies of his thought evolution and crabbedness of his prose style. Only those who had been endowed with a suppleness of mind, a lively wit and a comic spirit could alone possibly enjoy the novels of this great doyen of fiction during the Victorian Age. "With Meredith the "new" novel is upon us with a vengeance-obliqueness, indirectness, elaborate psychological analysis, sustained intellectuality and all the rest of it."

The earliest work of Meredith was *The Shaving of Shagpat* (1856). It is an oriental story and furnishes an elaborate imitation of the *Arabian Nights*. It is a burlesque oriental story and the author adopts the form and style of Beckford who produced *Vathek* in the eighteenth century. "In the love incidents and love scenes, in exuberance of imagery, in picturesque wildness of incident, in significant humour, in aphoristic wisdom, it was a new Arabian Night."

*Farina* (1857) followed *The Shaving of Shagpat*. It is a burlesque of German romance and embodies some interesting reminiscences of Meredith’s education in Germany. It is modelled on the medieval folklore of the Rhineland.

Three years after *The Shaving of Shagpat* Meredith produced his first great novel *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*. This novel represents the conflict between traditional authority of parents and the new upsurge of youth in revolt. Here the author brings out the conflict between Richard Feverel and his father Sir Austin Feverel, a wealthy baronet. Sir Austin brings up his son according to his own pattern of thought. When Richard comes of age he breaks away from his father’s tyrannical hold and starts loving Lucy Desborough, a neighbouring farmer’s niece. They secretly marry. When Sir Austin knows of this marriage he adopts a clever stratagem to break the marriage. He wins over his son to his side and sends him to London to redeem an erring beautiful woman with whom he falls in love. Later on Richard knows that

Wagenknecht: *Cavalcade of the English Novel*,

Hugh Walker: *The Literature of the Victorian Era*
his former wife Lucy had given birth to a child and he had become a father. Lucy is reconciled to Sir Austin and the way to happiness is opened for Lucy and Richard but it is never consummated. Richard learns of the designs of Lord Mount Falcon on Lucy and challenges him to a duel. Richard is seriously wounded. The shock of the serious injury to Richard upsets Lucy and she dies of the shock. *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* is weak in plot construction and the conclusion is rather unbelievable. The scenes of nature and love between Lucy and Richard are presented exquisitely in a charming manner. The poetic touches in this novel make it beautiful. But most of the critics of the day were dissatisfied with the work. The unfavourable reception was based not so much upon its obscurity as upon its immorality. The treatment of sex does not shock modern readers but the Victorians could not possibly swallow it and the book was banned by Moodies' chain of circulating libraries which had the power to establish or destroy the reputation of a new novelist.

*Evan Harrington*, which followed in 1861, is an autobiographical novel and represents the attempt of a sister married to a Pourtugese nobleman to launch her brother Evan Harrington on high life and make him look a nobleman. Evan Harrington is the son of a tailor. Evan's sister, Countess de Saldar, marries a Pourtugese nobleman. She makes every possible effort to present her brother as a person of noble birth and make him look impressive in social life. The novel recounts the adventures of Evan Harrington in search of eminence.

*Rhoda Fleming* (1865) is an interesting study in feminine psychology. The main setting of this novel is a farming community and the central situation is close to that of *Adam Bede*. The author deals with the amorous adventures and intrigues of two sisters, Rhoda and Dahlia Fleming, daughters of Kentish Yeoman farmer. This novel is more realistic than George Eliot's *Adam Bede*. "It stands apart from the rest of Meredith's work not only in its rustic milieu but also in its relatively straightforward narration and unadorned style."

*Vittoria* (1870) is Meredith's nearest approach to a full-dress historical romance. Soon after this historical tale of romance,

*Lionel Stevenson—The English Novel, a Panorama*
The Adventures of Harry Richmond which appeared anonymously in the Cornhill Magazine in 1871. This novel is concerned with delusions of grandeur.

The three great novels of Meredith that deserve special attention are Beauchamp's Career (1875), The Egoist (1879) and Diana of the Crossways (1885). Beauchamp's Career is a political novel and it is very much different from the romantic fervour of The Adventures of Harry Richmond. The disillusioned astringency of Beauchamp's Career seems cold blooded after the romance The Adventures of Harry Richmond. Beauchamp's Career is a political novel and its main theme is that of the English party—politics, shortly after the middle of the nineteenth century. Navil Beauchamp begins his career in navy where he shines out as a gallant officer. He gains the approval of his uncle Rombrey, a medieval baron. Navil enters into politics and falls under the influence of Dr. Sharpnel a radical-thinker. He does not succeed in his plan and is defeated in his political pursuits. Later on Navil falls in love with Cecilia Halkett, an English girl, but is unable to achieve success in love. He is defeated both in politics as well as in love. Happiness comes to him at a later stage but after a few month's happiness he meets his death while attempting to rescue a child from the sea. The tragic conclusion of the novel is arbitrarily imposed on this work and ends with an episode that seems to resemble Hardy's capitulation to blind chance. The concentration of the novelist is on the tragic obscurity of Beauchamp's inadequate power of judgment.

The Egoist (1879) is a 'comedy in narrative' of which the central figure is Sir Willoughby Patterne, a man of position and power, but extremely self-centred and conceited in his life. Sir Willoughby is loved by Laetitia, a poor and shy girl but the self-conceited man rejects her and loves Constantia Durham, who later on elopes with an officer of hussars. This flight of Constantia is the first humiliation that Sir Willoughby has to undergo in his life. Being disappointed, he draws towards Clara Middleton, the daughter of an epicurean professor, and wins her hand in a whirlwind courtship. He is jilted the second time and Clara proves a source of humiliation to the proud, conceited and self-centred man. Clara marries Vernon Whitford, and Willoughby,
in sheer despair, unites himself to Laetitia Dole.

This novel is formless and the plot is extremely complicated and jumbled: "Indeed, one can scarcely speak of plot at all, what we have instead is design, pattern. The pattern, as the hero's name suggests, of the Willow Pattern Plate. Sir Willoughby Patterne, that admirable Crichton, the hero of self-regard, having been jilted by Constantia Durham, jilts Laetitia Dole in order to marry Clara Middleton, is jilted by her in the end, stripped of his pretensions casts into abject nakedness; is compelled to marry Laetitia on her own terms. It is as simple as that."*

"This book has a Molière—like concentration upon the foibles of a central character, Sir Willoughby Patterne, a monster of self-concern. In portraying him, and settling him in his environment of a noble country-house and the English landscape, Meredith offers the reader, through every possible distortion of English syntax, a picture of life in which the Chiaroscurs, the dominant tone, is one of April sun and shower with all the flowers of Botticelli alight in a young green world."** Meredith disapproves the egoism of Sir Willoughby's discomfiture.

"Sir Willoughby, in particular, is anatomized as no previous character in fiction had been. The author apparently despises him to the verge of loathing, and yet makes us realize that his contemptible behaviour springs from traits that are present in every man. Sir Willoughby is not a villain. In the eyes of most people—including himself—he is a paragon. His final humiliation, like that of Malvolio in Twelfth Night, awakens our pity more than our satisfaction."

† From the technical point of view The Egoist shows the fuller development of Meredith's individual manner. Every paragraph of this novel is enriched by the use of figurative language including symbols and metaphors that supply a unifying pattern.

The Egoist was better received than any of Meredith's previous books. Critics had now come round to the view that a

---

* Hugh Walker: The Literature of the Victorian Era.
† Lionel Stevenson: The English Novel, a panorama.
good work of fiction ought to be characterised by intellectual vigour and subtleties. In Meredith’s work they found the new heaven of intellect. Dissatisfied with the traditional products of popular novelists, they acclaimed The Egoist as their ideal.

Diana of the Crossway (1885) is a political novel, and its popularity can be judged from the fact that in three months three editions of the book were sold out. Here for once critical judgment and popular judgment were in accord and harmony. This novel has been recognised “as Meredith’s strongest effort to forward the emancipation of Victorian womanhood, but from it the reader comes to the conclusion that a woman cannot stand alone and triumph.”*

The theme of this novel is based on the romantic story of the lovely and celebrated Mrs. Caroline Norton, Sheridan’s grand daughter. This lady had been badly treated by her husband and she wrote pamphlets on behalf of woman. It was alleged that she had sold a cabinet secret (Peel’s resolve to abolish the Corn Laws) to The Times. This lady formed the heroine of Diana of the Crossways, and everyone recognised in Diana, the figure of Mrs. Caroline Norton. Diana was the emancipated Victorian woman on whom the Victorians frowned with disfavour. “From a literary point of view Diana is inferior to The Egoist, although, like all Meredith’s work it is instinct with beauty, wit and poetry.”**

In a trilogy of novel—One of Our Conquerors, Lord Orment and his Aminta and The Amazing Marriage—written towards the end of Meredith’s literary career, he showed a knack in presenting the relationships between men and women when these were influenced by considerations of pride of birth; social position, and the question of legitimacy.

Q. 72 Give your estimate of George Meredith as a Novelist.

Ans. George Meredith was the great intellectual and psychological novelist of the Victorian Age. “No writer of the nineteenth century stands more alone than he (Meredith), and none is more difficult to deal with. Browning himself is not more

* Richard Church: The Growth of the English Novel
** Hugh Walker: The Literature of the Victorian era,
original. Here and there the reader may be reminded of Carlyle or of Thackeray or of Browning."

Meredith’s art of story telling and plot construction.

As a story teller Meredith could not achieve that success which fell to the lot of Dickens and George Eliot. He was not a narrator and hardly pretended to tell a story. In the opinion of Oscar Wilde Meredith could do anything “except tell a story.

His plots are extremely confusing and complicated and it is really very difficult for a reader to thread through the intricacies of his plot construction.

Sometimes Meredith arbitrarily thrusts certain conclusions on his plots which will not be warranted by the sequence of events. In Richard Feveral and in Beauchamp’s Career the tragic ending arbitrarily imposed and many readers have felt dissatisfied with the way in which these two great novels have been concluded. J. B. Priestley’s opinion regarding Meredith’s story telling is worthy of our consideration. He says in his admirable study of Meredith in the English Men of Letters Series, “If we regard the novel as a tale, pure and simple, an arresting and convincing chronicle of events, Meredith must inevitably appear a colossal failure. From the point of view of narration, every novel that he wrote was not merely faulty but downright bad. The movement of the story is lame and awkward, the different parts are not well knitted; there are loose ends dangling everywhere. We find ourselves caught up in the vast glittering webs of his plots and know the exhilaration of unravelling them.”

As a psychological novelist.

Meredith was a psychological novelist and his interest was not so much in the presentation of external realities of life such as Dickens and Thackeray had viewed: but in the revelation of the inner soul of his characters. He dealt with the invisible life and threw light on the inner problems and involutions of thought. In his novel: all incidents are coloured by psychological touches and are described not as they would strike an observer, but from the point of view of the actor.

Intellectual quality.

Meredith’s novels like that of George Eliot are marked with
note of intellectuality. "Like the chief poets of the times they (George Meredith and George Eliot) reflected far more than their popular predecessors the intellectual interests of England of their times."

Meredith's opposition to sentimentalism.

Being a novelist of the intellectual life Meredith was strongly opposed to any representation of sentimentalism in his novels. It is a standing charge against the novels of Dickens that he often sentimentalises, particularly in the presentation of pathos and death scenes. This charge cannot be levelled against the novels of Meredith. In his novels sentimentalism is subjected to the hammer blows of the comic spirit.

The comic spirit and comedy in Meredith's novels.

The novels of Meredith display the central working of the comic spirit. He tersely explains what he considers to be the essence of the comic spirit in the opening sentences of The Angel.

The comic spirit is the weapon of intelligence and reason against stupidity and dullness. It is the voice of civilisation against barbarism. "It is the 'sword of commonsense', by which such evils as hypocrisy, conceit, egoism, and false pretensions to social eminence are crushed. It is essentially a satiric spirit—against tradition or prejudice, social stupidity or individual folly."

Meredith's novels work under the influence of the comic spirit and the novelist satirises folly, stupidity, egoism, sentimentality where these vices are found. Meredith's comic spirit is very closely akin to Ben Jonson's comedies and plays the same part as it does in the comedies of the great Elizabethan dramatist.

Meredith's creed.

Meredith's novels present an optimistic attitude towards life. The rosy picture of a glossy future is unfolded in his pages. Meredith feels confident in the hope of an improved human race in the future. He suggests that "individual life does not die, it lives on in the larger, richer life of the future which it helps to build up." just as he sees hope for individual and for race in the process of evolution, so, too, Meredith trusts in growth and change, to bring about social and political advance. More brain power, the
cultivation of reason and of intellect, the help of the comic spirit alone can bring the strength to get rid of undesirable conditions. He hates the materialism and meanness and faithlessness of modern life, above all, he hates the undue preponderance given to wealth, and the enervation and weakness to which it leads. Yet everywhere, amid prevalent evil, he recognizes signs of progress and ultimate good, he believes in the worth of human fellowship and the duty of service. Such service can be rendered only as a result of the knowledge that comes from a resolute facing of facts in nature and in human life."*

Meredith's characters

Meredith's characters, both male and female, are drawn from aristocratic and upper middle-class society. His characters are presented with a deep psychological insight and the novelist probes deep into the hearts of his men and women and successfully presents their psychological motives in undertaking a particular line of action. His characters are psychological and seldom speak as naturally as the characters of George Eliot do. "They are more like Browning's characters in packing a whole paragraph into a single sentence or an exclamation."**

"Meredith achieves eminent success in the portrayal of women and his heroines are better drawn than his heroes. As a delineator of women he stands alone among the nineteenth century novelists for the sheer poetic intensity with which he realized the infinite variety."†

Meredith's Style.

Meredith's prose style in his novels is as difficult as that of Sterne, Carlyle and Browning. He is one of those novelists "who have whimsically misused English language."‡

He does not speak directly to the readers. He speaks through maxims and aphorisms. "Both in prose and in poetry Meredith is a difficult writer, and this is due only in part to the profundity of his thought. His wit and his consequent delight in the skilful play of language sometimes lead him astray; he

* E. A. Baker: English Novel.
** W. J. Long: English Literature.
† Diana Neill: A Short History of the English Novel.
‡ Cross: Development of the English Novel.
is so anxious to *avoid the commonplace* that at times he falls into obscurity by what seems sheer wilfulness. Another reason for his occasional obscurity is his wilful and deliberate use of elliptical sentences. No writer is more *allusive in style* than Meredith. His language is naturally metaphorical and symbolical; he does not seek comparisons, they spring to his lips unsought. As a result he is seldom direct and simple in his appeal. Again, he has a great deal to say, and is able to express himself by many different methods which jostle each other for precedence, so that his language is apt to become burdened with the richness of an over-blowing imagination. His aim is to compress into a few words profound thought and memorable images."**

**Conclusion:**

Due to his enigmatic style and his psychology Meredith will never be popular, but by thoughtful men and women he will probably be ranked among our greatest writers of fiction. "He was no poseur. Even those who are most annoyed by his idiosyncrasies find his work persistently coming back to them, long after they had imagined they were done with him. He has vitality despite all his indiscretion; a profound sincerity underlies his innumerable flourishes. In some inexplicable way, his pages seem curiously flooded with light."**

---

**Q. 73. What are the main points of similarity and difference between George Eliot and George Meredith?**

**Ans.** George Eliot and George Meredith were the prominent novelists of the Victorian age. They were psychological novelists interested in the study of inner life. They were equally interested in the problems of human conduct, and considered selfishness as the root cause of all our troubles. The following words of George Meredith in *Rhoda Fleming* seem to be like those of George Eliot.

"He closed, as it were a black volume, and opened a new and bright one. Young men easily fancy that they may

---

W. J. Long: *English Literature.*

' Wagenknecht: *Cavalcade of the English Novel.*
do this, and that when the black volume is shut the tide is stopped. Our deathlessness is in what we do, not in what we are."

The differences between George Eliot and George Meredith are even more striking than their resemblances. George Eliot worked through tragedy, Meredith through comedy. George Eliot's flair is always for the tragic side of life, George Meredith's for the comic. So completely was Meredith committed and engrossed to the comic standpoint that he saw the woeful story of Ferdinand Lassalle and Helena Von Donniges as the history of a pair of "tragic comedians." George Eliot's approach was ethical to the problems confronting her characters, Meredith's approach was that of a poet. "George Eliot identified religion so completely with the dogmas she discarded that having lost the dogmas, she never found religious certitude again. Meredith, on the other hand, worked out a philosophy of life which, whether he was right or wrong, completely satisfied his conscious needs. George Eliot, though she rearranged her material to suit her thesis, still attempted a realistic representation of life. Meredith's picture of life, on the other hand, can be called realistic only if God is a Meredithian."*

---

Q. 74. Give a brief account of the main novels of Thomas Hardy (1840—1928).

Ans. Thomas Hardy was one of the greatest novelists of the modern age, and though he has not been given a place among the ten great novelists by Somerset Maugham, yet his place is ensured among the greater masters of fiction in the Victorian and the Modern Age. Hardy was essentially a writer of tragedies and human life. His interest lay in the presentation of the grim and sombre scenes of human life and he became more solemn and serious than George Eliot could possibly be. He gave to the novel the dignity which had earlier belonged to the epic and to tragedy. "In spite of the loving exactitude with which he deals the characteristic features of Wessex life, he never lets us forget that this Wessex life is the part of the life of the whole human

* Wagenknecht: Cavalcade of the English Novel.
race and is inextricably connected with it.”

Hardy wrote a large number of novels and his works have been classified in a different way by different critics. Some have classified his works as tragedies or comedies or idylls, while others like Professor Lascelles Abercrombie have chosen to classify his novels as dramatic novels and epic novels. Those novels which have a single story and are free from secondary stories and plots and where one single person dominates the entire scene have been included under the heading of epic novels by Abercrombie. *Tess of the D’urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* are included in the list of epic novels because the stories are concerned with the rise and fall in the destiny of a single person. In novels which have been classified as dramatic it is not man but a group of complex characters that interest us. In dramatic novels there is a clash of interests and this clash gives rise to a conflict which is the essence of a dramatic plot. In these novels there is a richness of dramatic episodes. The novelist is always in the background. Whereas in the epic novels the personality of the novelist obtrudes, in the form of moralisings, in dramatic novels it is generally kept apart. Judged from this standard, four novels of Hardy, namely *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Woodlanders* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* are considered dramatic novels. Another method of classifying Hardy’s novels can be as follows:

I. **Novels of Character and Environment.**

1. *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872).
2. *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874).

II. **Romances and Fantasies.**

1. *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873).

---

*David Cecil: Early Victorian Novelists.
2 The Trumpet Major (1880).
3 Two on a Tower (1882).
4 A Group of Noble Dames (1891)
5 The Well Beloved (1897).

III. Novels of Ingenuity.

(1) Desperate Remedies (1871).
(2) The Hand of Ethelberta (1876).
(3) A Laodicean (1881).

IV. Mixed Novels.

(1) A Charged Man, The Waiting Supper and other Tales.

Hardy wrote more than twenty novels but Douglas Brown mentions eight novels to represent Hardy's strength. "The novels I take to represent his strength are Far From the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, The Woodlanders, The Mayor of Casterbridge and Tess of the D'urbervilles. To these five, Under the Greenwood Tree makes a fitting prelude, and Jude the Obscure (where Hardy ranges so much more ambitiously) an impressive epilogue. One other among the novels deserves particular respect, the modest but effective The Trumpet Major."

Having classified the main novels of Thomas Hardy let us examine the novels on which his fame is likely to hinge in the years to come.

Under the Greenwood Tree (1872)

This early novel of Hardy, originally called The Mellstock Quire, reads like a first draft for the fiction of Hardy's maturity. It has been considered a rural idyll. It is an idyll set in the country surroundings of Mellstock village. It describes the life of two young lovers Dick Dewy, son of the local 'tranter' and Fancy Day, the school mistress, who are happily married at the end. The novel is a picturesque study of country life and scenery and foreshadows Hardy's interest in the country surroundings.

Far from the Madding Crowd (1873—74)

In this novel Hardy deals with the life and country surroundings, far away from the madding crowd and ignoble strife of cities. It represents the love of Gabriel Oak, a selfless, devoted shepherd for Bathsheba Everdene, the capricious heroine for the showy Sergeant Troy of the town, whom she marries for his external polish and cultured manners. Bathsheba is disillusioned and
after the death of Sergeant Troy and Farmer Boldwood, another lover of Bathsheba, she marries Gabriel Oak. The novel ends on a note of triumph for the devoted Gabriel. The characters of this novel are finely drawn and the rural surroundings are in keeping with the general tone of the novel.

The Return of the Native (1878).

The scene in this novel is the sombre Egdon Heath, representative of the country near Warhem in Dorset. In this novel Nature enters more than any other novel of Hardy. It is indeed the story of Egdon Heath. Egdon is not only the scene of the tale, it dominates the plot and determines the characters. It is sentient, it feels, it speaks, it slays. The book opens with an impressive introduction to Egdon Heath which works as the main protagonist of the drama. The story of the novel is concerned with five important characters—Damon Wildeve, Thomasin Yeobright, Eustacia Vye, Clym and Diggory Venn. Damon Wildeve, an engineer, marries Thomasin Yeobright who rejects her humble adorer, the redleman, Diggory Venn. Her cousin Clym, a diamond merchant in Paris comes back to Egdon with the intention of becoming a school-master is his native country. The title of the novel refers to the return of Clym Yeobright, the native to Egdon. He is disgusted with Paris life and that is perhaps the reason why he comes back to his native country. He falls in love with Eustacia and she marries him in the hope that she would be able to persuade Clym to go back to Paris and lead a romantic life with her. Much against Eustacia's will Clym settles down in the country surroundings and becomes a furze-cutter after the loss of his eye-sight. Eustacia feels dissatisfied with Clym and carries on her meetings with Wildeve, the engineer, with whom she ultimately elopes. Eustacia and Wildeve are drowned as they manage to escape through a stormy river. Clym considering himself responsible for the death of his mother and his wife becomes an itinerant preacher. Thomasin marries Diggory Venn.

The Mayor of Casterbridge (1826)

The Mayor of Casterbridge is the study of Michael Henchard, a haytresser who sells his wife Sussan for five guineas to a sailor, Newson in a state of drunkenness at a country fair. Returning to
his senses he makes a frantic search for his wife and takes a solemn vow not to touch intoxicants for twenty years. Henchard starts working hard and by virtue of his energy and understanding of corn business, he becomes the Mayor of Casterbridge. After a few years troubles start in his life and his own manager, Donald Farfrae proves to be the greatest stumbling block in the way of his life. Henchard's business is ruined partly because of his own audacity and hot temper and partly because of his faith in a soothsayer. He is being ruined in love and in business by Farfrae. Ultimately Henchard meets his death in very pitiable circumstance. The end of Michael Henchard, the Mayor of Casterbridge, brings tears to our eyes. In this novel Hardy's characterization is superb and the characters of Henchard, his step daughter Elizabeth Jane, Donald Farfrae and Lucetta have been very nicely drawn. This is the only of the Wessex novels in which the action occurs mainly in a town. The play of destiny in human life is brought out in its fullest from in the life of Michael Henchard. The novel is essentially a study of character, the character of Michael Henchard whose problem is "neither religious faith nor sexual relations but self-control."

The Woodlanders (1887).

The Woodlanders has been considered by Lionel Stevenson the best novel of Hardy. The scene in this novel is the wooded country of Dorset. The story deals with the life of Giles Winterbourne who is betrothed to Grace Melbury, the daughter of a timber merchant. The lady goes out to attend a fashionable school from where she comes out with changed colours. She refuses to marry Giles Winterbourne under the instructions of her ambitious father who seeks to bring the former engagement with Giles to an end on account of the financial misfortune that befell Giles at this time. Grace Melbury is attracted by a young doctor Fitzpiers, whom she consents to marry. Fitzpiers marries Melbury but soon deserts her and elopes with Mrs. Charmonds. After the death of Charmonds, Grace and Fitzpiers are reconciled.

Parallel to the devotion of Giles to Grace is the devotion of Marty South, a simple country girl, to Giles Winterbourne. Winterbourne meets his death at the end. Marty and Grace
regularly visit his tomb. At the end of the book Marty alone remains the true remembrancer of Giles Winterbourne, for Melbury is ultimately united to her former husband. The charm of the novel lies in its country surroundings and the devotion of Marty South to Giles Winterbourne.


*Tess* is the study of a ‘pure woman’ who is the victim of an inflexible moral law and inexorable social code. Tess is the daughter of a poor foolish villager of Blackmoor Vale. She thinks that she is the descendant of the ancient family of D’Urberville. Tess is seduced by Alec, a young man whose parents bear the surname of D’Urberville with doubtful right to it. Tess gives birth to a child as the result of her forced indulgence with Alec. The child dies in infancy. After sometimes Tess is attracted by Angel Clare, a clergyman’s son. On their wedding night she confesses to her husband her former love affair with Alec. Angel is shocked at the narration of Tess’s former love with Alec and abandons her. Misfortune and hardship dog Tess and she is once more driven to accept the protection of Alec. Angel Clare, after his return from Brazil, finds his wife in a difficult situation. He repents for his harshness towards his wife Tess. Tess feels uncomfortable under the charge of Alec and murders him to liberate herself from his hold. After a brief period of concealment with her husband Clare in the New Forest, Tess is arrested, tried and hanged. Justice was done and the President of the Immortals (in Aeschyan phrase) had ended his sport with Tess. Tess pays her debt to the social court.” It is Hardy’s tragic masterpiece, and is his most ambitious tragic novel. “It is a great tragedy.”

*Jude the Obscure* (1855).

*Jude the Obscure* is the story, in the author’s own words, “of a deadly war waged with apostolic desperation between flesh and spirit.” The novel concentrates on the aspirations of Jude Fawley, South-Wessex villager, for learning. Jude is not able to achieve success in his plans on account of his sensuous temperament, lack of character and the play of circumstances. Early in his life while he is still eager to acquire knowledge, he is lured by the harm of Arabella Donn, a ‘mere female animal’ and marries her. Jude, the stone mason, is deserted by Arabella. He once again
starts his studies in right earnest and the object that he keeps before him this time is to shine out as a priest. But again he is deflected from his course of learning and falls in love with his cousin Sue Bridehead, a vivacious, intelligent young school teacher. Jude is not able to express his love for Sue but he hovers about her in the hope of getting her at one stage or other of his life. She marries an elderly school master Philloston but finding him intolerable she breaks away from her husband and flies to Jude for shelter. They are married though in doing so they meet with social disapproval. Children are born to them but they all perish by a tragic fate. They are done because they were too many. Sue, in a state of agony and remorse returns to her former husband Philloston. Jude starts drinking and is once again enticed by Arabella Donn. He dies miserably. After this novel Hardy turned from Novel writing to poetry. In this novel Hardy "incensed conventional readers on less than three grounds. In addition to sexual irregularities and utterly hopeless determinism he included a note of social protest that had not been perceptible in his previous work in which poverty was taken for granted as an unavoidable fact of life."*

---

Q. 75. Give your estimate of Thomas Hardy as a Novelist.

Ans. Thomas Hardy was the last great novelist of the Victorian age, though his work, as a poet and a story writer, covers a few years of the twentieth century. He began his career as a novelist at the insistence of his wife Emma, who wanted to see her husband’s name blazing in letters of gold in the galaxy of British novelists. Acting according to his wife’s wishes, Hardy launched on the unexplored region of novel writing and achieved eminent success in his art. Posterity remembers him as a novelist though he himself wanted to descend into annals of literature as a poet.

Hardy’s first experiment in novel writing was an utter failure, and his two early works The Poor Man and Lady and Desperate Remedies were condemned in severe terms by George

Lionel Stevenson: The English Novel, a Panorama
Meredith. He received instructions from the sagacious master in the technique of plot construction, and his later works were acclaimed as successful experiments in fiction writing.

Hardy’s Range.

The range of Hardy’s novels was fairly wide. He was interested in the presentation of conflict arising out of the impact between the country surrounding and the new urban civilization, reared on materialism and machinery. Hardy’s preference for the old civilization of the countryside is well marked out in strong contrast to the conflict and dissensions of modern advanced civilization. Besides presenting the conflict between the old and new ways of thinking, Hardy’s novels represent the problems of marriage and divorce in our society. His range covers social problems particularly the problems of marriage, unhappy wedlocks, divorces and love affairs. The helplessness of man under the impelling force of destiny is also brought out with all its grimness and the novelist feels a sense of frustration in presenting the unhappy lot of human beings swept away by the force of destiny and fate. His subject is not men but man. His theme is mankind’s predicament in the universe. At every moment in the life of man a feeling of helplessness is presented bringing about despair and grief in the life of his characters. The range of Hardy’s novels inspite of the wide canvas covered by the novelist is after all limited. “The theatre of Hardy’s drama is built on a large scale, but it is sparsely furnished. His range does not allow him to present the vast, varied panorama of human life that we find in War and Peace. His scene is too narrow. The subtleties of intellectual life, the complexities of public life, the sophistications of social life-these do not kindle Hardy’s imagination to work.”

The truth is that Hardy’s range excludes the presentation of the finer shades of civilised life or the diversity of the human scene as a whole. The life he portrays can be reduced to its basic elements. People in Hardy’s books are born, work hard for their living, fall in love and die. They do not do anything else. Such a life limits in its turn the range of their emotions. We come across comedy, tragedy, and poetry in his novels, but they centre mostly round rustic life, and fail to take into account the life of urban

* Lord David Cecil: Thomas Hardy
areas, and the sophisticated society of modern times.

As An Artist.

"It would be claimed for the Wessex novels of Thomas Hardy" says Lascelle Abercrombie, "that in them fiction has achieved both style and substance that enable it to fulfil the greatest functions of art." Hardy was a conscientious artist, and believed that the novel should be as much of a whole as a living organism, in which all component parts such as plot, dialogue, character, scenery, are fitly framed together, giving the impression of a harmonious building. He achieved eminent success in his mission of elevating fiction writing into a conscious art. There is the stamp of the architect, that Hardy was, in his artistic productions. His novels are masterly works of art.

Hardy's Theme and Plot Construction.

Great masters of English fiction have always realised the importance of plot in a novel, and have cultivated the art of plot construction in a remarkable way. Hardy was a lover of stories from the days of his childhood and as he advanced in years and became a literary artist, he realised more and more the importance of story telling in his novels. Hardy laid great stress on the plot or story of his novel, and reared the edifice in a skilful manner. He was an architect by profession, and left the impress of his professional proficiency on his novels. There is an architectonic quality in Hardy's plot construction. The plots are well-knit inspite of the presence of chance element and strange coincidences. They are complex for there are many incidents and details, but inspite of this complexity the compactness and unity of his plots is not lost. Nothing is forced and the incidents are bound together by a cause and effect relation—one incident arising out of a former and leading to a latter. In the words of Duffin, "Every novel is an answer to the question. Given certain characters in certain situations, and allowing for the irony of fate what will happen—what will become of them." In this marshalling of events to an ulterior purpose Hardy exhibits his skill as an architect and a master artist in plot construction.

Hardy's plots are not simple. In the words of Cazamian, "They grow out of elementary passions, ambition, greed, love, jealousy and the thirst for knowledge and the springs which move
them are psychological. Hardy tends to shift the construction of his novels to the inner world: he writes a moral drama, shows a conflict of contradictory wills guided themselves by feelings.”

Hardy’s plots are generally based on the following themes. He presents stories of love, involving the love-affairs of the principal characters. Jude, Tess, Eustacia Vye, Bathsheba, Everdene, Troy, Oak, Grace Mulberry have their love affairs. Some of the characters achieve success in their love affairs while others meet with despair. Hardy presents in his novels the trials and tribulations that come in the way of lovers.

Hardy presents in his plots the conflict between the old rural civilization and the new urban civilization. Tragedy in his novels rises from the influence of modern competitive civilization on the primitive and simple life of the old world. The primitive beliefs and manners of the old world people receive a rude shock from the impact of the strange disease of modern life with its sick hurry and divided aims, and misery follows in the wake of such a conflict. The plot of *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* is based on this conflict between the old and the new world, between characters, belonging to the countryside, and characters coming to rural life from urban centres. Hardy’s preference in his novels is for the countryside and rural surroundings. His novels bemoan the loss of rustic simplicity and innocence of country life under the impact of urban civilization.

**Hardy’s Characters.**

Hardy’s creative power is best exhibited in the portrayal of characters. His range in characterisation is limited, and he could draw only people belonging to the Wessex region. Hardy for the first time in English literature has chosen peasant types for his heroes and heroines in a series of literary masterpieces. The Wessex people are his ideals and when he leaves them, he does like Dickens at his own peril. He has given us convincing pictures of Wessex peasants, labourers, shepherds and singers. His Wessex characters seem to be like elemental forces on a background of vaster elemental forces. They are the logical and natural expression of sleepily woodland places, gaunt
austere hills, purling streams, and solitary extensive landscapes. When he attempts to portray characters from the higher aristocratic life of the urban areas, he fails, and his aristocratic characters like Lady Chalmond and Lady Lucetta are not at all convincing.

Hardy's characters are emotional rather than intellectual. He did not adopt the psychological method of character portrayal which had been popularised by George Eliot and George Meredith. He laid greater emphasis on the emotional side of his characters than on their intellectual side. Bathsheba and Tess, Henchard and Oak are emotional characters, and they leave an indelible impression on our minds.

Hardy being a poet and a delineator of emotional characters achieved eminent success in the portrayal of lovers impelled by passion and emotion. He has presented men and women in love. Some of his characters, like Troy and Boldwood, Wildeve and Angel Clare are passionate lovers exhibiting the fervour of their hearts in passionate speeches, while a good many of his characters are quiet and reticent in matters of love like Elizabeth Jane, Marty South, and Fanny Robbin.

It is one of the peculiar features of Hardy's characterisation that he presents good people with great admiration and gusto, and condemns villains and sophisticated persons with a sneering contempt. Hardy's sympathy is always with good, noble, and gentlehearted characters like Tess, Elizabeth Jane, Gabriel Oak, and Venn, The Reddlemen. He has a distinct dislike for shifty, cunning, and hypocritical characters like Sergeant Troy, Dr. Fitzpiers, and Wildeve. He is seldom successful in drawing odious people.

Hardy's characters are generally flat and belong to certain types. His characters can be placed under certain groups, and persons belonging to one group have a family likeness about them. Hardy's concern is with men in general, rather than with individual man or woman. Classification and grouping is easily possible in Hardy's characters. In one group we place characters who are noble, selfless, self-sacrificing, tender-hearted and uncomplaining. To this group belong Gabriel Oak, Giles Winterborne, John Loveday, Diggory Venn, Marty South, Elizabeth
Jane, Tess. In another group we have characters who are dashing, sparkling, vivacious, cunning, shifty, and fickle minded. To this group belong such characters as Troy, Wildeve, Dr. Fitzpiers, Alec D'urbervilles, Eustacie Vye, Mrs. Charmond, Lucetta, Lady Constantine. To these basic types is added a group of characters who are intellectual snobs like Angel and Knight.

It is to be observed that the good, noble and gentle characters of Hardy belong to the country surroundings. In his conviction the rural and the countryside has the capacity of producing noble, gentle, and good hearted souls. City life, with all its sophistications, has a baneful effect on human character and is likely to produce shifty, cunning and hypocritical characters. This preference of Hardy for his rustic and country-bred characters is well marked out in his novel.

Hardy has given a rich picture of human character in his novels. He has drawn men as well as women with remarkable skill. It is necessary to make a few observations about Hardy's men and women characters.

Hardy’s male characters are vivid, passionate, emotional and impulsive. They usually suffer from indecision. They are sometimes the victims of passion and sometimes of stern determination. They sometimes exhibit valour and vitality, and on other occasions effeminacy and moral depravity. Hardy’s male characters are real human beings, men of flesh and blood, and in their portrayal he brings the disinterested objectivity of a detached observer of life. He pictures all classes of male characters. We have selfless, noble, gentle, kindhearted and serviceable men like Gabriel Oak, Diggory Venn, and Giles Winterborne; bold, shifty, cunning and hypocritical characters like Troy, Wildeve, Fitzpiers and Alec. There are men like Henchard who are brave and heroic, and persons like Boldwood who are passionate and stormy.

Hardy’s skill is best exhibited in the presentation of female characters. He is another John Ford in this direction. “Profound as is his comprehension of human nature at large” says Duffin, “it is in the female personality that he is most marvellously learned.” He has unfolded feminine characters
with all their subtlity, emotionalism, and passionate ardour in his novels.

Duffin has classified Hardy's women characters in three groups. The first group includes full-length portraits of women who are of a higher order of personality e.g. Tess, Sue, Eustacia, Bathsheba and Elizabeth Jane. The second group also consists of full-length study of women, but they have less personal significance e.g. Ethelberta, Elfride, Grace, Mulberry, Viviette, Anne. The third group includes women of much less significance e.g., Lucetta, Arabella, Tamsie, Marty South, Paula, Fancy Picote.

It is to be noted that Hardy's preference is for women who belong to the country side. The finest qualities of women are developed and cultivated in rural surroundings. City women are sophisticated, cunning, and hypocritical. Tess, Elizabeth Jane, and Marty South are noble and gentle because they have been reared in the rural surroundings far away from the sick hurry and divided aims of modern life. Eustacia Vye, Grace Mulberry, Lucetta have been spoilt by their contact with the artificial and sophisticated life of the cities.

There is a category among Hardy's characters which may be called 'chorus' characters, the groups of rustics which in his greatest works form, as it were, the chorus of the main drama. They always appear in a group and never separately. They make observations about life and the activities of his characters. They are moralists at heart and carping in their criticism.

**Hardy's attitude towards Life-His Pessimism and Philosophy.**

Hardy was primarily an artist, and as an artist, it was his ambition to present his impressions of life in a detached and objective manner. He did not favour the idea of being called a philosopher, though philosophic ideas are found scattered in all his novels. He did not follow any preconceived pattern of philosophy that could be related to any particular school of thought. He was happy if he was called an artist and an impressionist, recording his impressions of life in his novels. Hardy, in fact, considered a novel as a work of impressionism rather than philosophy. In the preface to *Tess of the D' Urbervilles* he says, "A novel is an impression, not an argument. A tale teller writes
down how the things of the world strike him without any intentions whatever.” Hardy’s novels are impressions that the novelist gathered from life.

Several influences worked effectively in the formation of Hardy’s impressions about life. Hardy’s ill-health, the morbidity of his temper, and his general inclination towards the funeral side of things determined his melancholy and pessimistic outlook and impressions about life. Added to these personal peculiarities of his temperament, were the external factors of his age and the times in which he lived. The rapid advance of industrial life destroying the serenity of country surroundings, and the general acceptance of the Darwinian Theory of Evolution striking a smashing blow at old religious convictions, coloured Hardy’s thoughts and considerably modified his way of looking at life and its problems. Such thoughts as the following began to flash through Hardy’s mind—“If, as seemed possible, it (world) was only a mechanical process evolving from no one knew whither, what was the significance of those moral and spiritual values which he had learned to regard as the most precious things in life? If Christianity was not true, what became of the conception of Divine Justice bringing all to good in the end.”

Considerably impressed by the above stated influences in his mental outlook, Hardy approached life and its varied visions. He cast aside the romantic and the roseate view of life. He viewed life in a realistic manner. He did not look at life through the many coloured glass of romance or of fancy, but in the spirit of a detached observer, accepting without any dismay what life really unfolded to him. It is this realistic approach to life that we find in Hardy’s novels.

Hardy’s vision of life is certainly not very attractive and glamorous. He did not find success, jollity, hopefulness, and ruddy optimism among the people whom he witnessed, and with whom his lot was cast. He came across despair, dejection, failure, frustration in human life. He noticed plenty of tragedy in the life of Wessex people who were poor, dependent, and ignorant. He found them exposed to the oppressions of the social system, the caprice of weather and “The President of the Immortals” every now and then undoing their lives. This is what
Hardy saw, and this is what is actually presented in his novels.

His attitude towards life is pessimistic and gloomy in the sense that almost in all his tragic novels like, *Tess Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Jude the Obscure*, and *The Return of the Native* we come across pictures of despair and dejection, of hopes unfulfilled, and plans uncarried out. Man proves feeble before chance, fate or destiny that so often comes to vitiate man’s plans and schemes. Hardy considers men and women as mere puppets in the hands of a mocking fate which is relentless in its blind justice. He believes in Omar Khayyam’s lines about destiny:

*The Moving Finger writes; and having writ*  
*Moves on: nor all thy piety nor wit*  
*Shall lure it back to cancel half a line*  
*Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.*

Again and again in Hardy’s novels we view the spectacle of misery and suffering for human beings. Man proposes and God disposes stands true in all his works. The tragedy of human life is enacted in all its grimness, for somehow or other, destiny, fate, divinity stands completely opposed to man’s noble plans and schemes. Hardy sees the working of a malignant power and an immanent will pitted against frail human beings spilling disaster and distress in their lives. He feels that some vast Imbecility mighty to build and blind and impotent to tend has framed us in jest and is playing a cruel game with man’s life. Everywhere in his novels human beings appear to be crushed by this power which is indifferent, callous and hostile to man. He considers that gods are opposed to human beings, and it is their pleasure that men and women should suffer, and meet with hard knocks and blows in life. He upholds the Greek view of life according to which the gods are cruel and heartless and kill men for their sport. Hardy presents with firm conviction the working of a sinister intelligence in the affairs of human beings, and reiterates with a firm force what Shakespeare had stated—

*As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods*  
*They kill us for their sport.*

Hardy fails to see any justification in Browning’s observations about God and the goodness of human life. In *Tess*
Hardy controverts Browning's earlier statement about God and his wise dispensation of the Universe, and makes one of his characters remark—

*God's not in the Heaven*

*All's wrong with the world.*

The picture of life in Hardy's novels is thus gloomy and pessimistic. He does not find happiness in human life and in the concluding part of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, he makes the pregnant observation through the mouth of Elizabeth Jane that, "Happiness is an interlude in a general drama of pain." Happiness in human life is an oasis which is easily submerged by the swirling waves of agonies, sorrows and sufferings. Through the wide canvas of his works we notice the shadows of darkness and sombreness pervading the entire scenes of his novels. There is suffering everywhere in the world and the virtuous as well as the vicious share it—

*To each his suffering: all are men*

*Condemned alike to groan*

*The tender for another's pain*

*The unfeeling for his own.*

Striking the keynote of Hardy's general impression and attitude towards life, Duffin nicely remarks—"Take it as you will, accept or reject, like or dislike—his opinion, a hundred times expressed and everywhere implied, is that life is a lost, inglorious and bloody battle, a wide deep sea of misery with but a very few flowering islands, a gift so powerful that it were almost a wise man's part to refuse it altogether."*

To him life does not hold out any charm and he knows what life has in store for human beings. In his poem *To Life* Hardy makes his vision of life very clear. He says—

*O, Life with the sad sacred face*

*I weary, of seeing thee.*

*I know what thou wouldst tell*

*Of Death, Time, Destiny—*

*I have known it long, and know, too well.*

*What it all means for me.*

Hardy's attitude towards life is undoubtedly pessimistic

---

Duffin: Thomas Hardy.
and gloomy. He holds out no hope for human beings. But his
pessimism is not depressing, for he exhorts them to struggle and
fight against the decrees of fate and cruel destiny, rather than
make a weak-kneed surrender to the majesty of the sinister and
malignant power governing the universe. Hardy is of the view
that it is man's lot to suffer and meet with defeat and dejection
in his life, but in spite of this inevitable fate, man should strive
and struggle and fight against untoward circumstances that may
come in his life. He should go down fighting in a brave and
heroic spirit. This attitude towards life is being presented by
Hardy through the character of Henchard in the Mayor of
Casterbridge, where the Mayor struggles and fights against the
decrees of fate throughout his life though he ultimately meets
his tragic end.

Hardy is not for intellectual cowards and invalids. His
pessimism will be depressing to those who are morally and
intellectually incapable of standing shocks in life. Hardy is not
complacent in his attitude. He does not supinely give way to the
cheap optimistic feeling that 'some how good will be the final
gale of ill.' He is a sturdy realist who takes life at its face
value, and what actually is the state of affairs in the world.
He considers it simply wish fulfilment to indulge in cheap
optimism, when the forces of evil, sadness and despair overpower
us on all sides. It is foolish and unwise for anybody to be an
optimist when he sees the conditions of life in a realistic and
faithful light. Such is the realistic vision of life unfolded by
Hardy in his novels. He is a pessimist, but his pessimism is
more satisfying than the cheap optimism of some thinkers who
hesitate to call a spade a spade, and gloss over the realities of
life by a thin veneer of superficial optimism. Hardy's philosophy
and sturdy realism will enable human beings to drive away
day dreaming and come to the realities of a hard and stern world.
Hardy brings home to us to view life realistically as it is
without expecting too much from the world, its controller and
his created beings.

Hardy always impresses upon his readers that it is mere
tolly to seek happiness at the hands of Destiny or Providence.
Man must depend on himself and learn to face the vicissitude
of fortune in a brave and heroic manner. "Abandoned by God, treated with scorn by Nature, man lies helplessly at the mercy of those purblind doomsters,—accident, chance and time from which he has had to endure injury and insult from the cradle to the grave."* Let him face his destiny bravely.

Though Hardy arraigns and accuses God of imbecility and malignancy, yet he is not harsh and bitter against human beings. He is not a cynic like Swift nor a castigator of man like Webster. He has infinite sympathy for human beings crushed under the wheels of an overpowering fate. Hardy exhorts his readers to be sympathetic to the victims of social injustice and inequality and pleads feelingly for those who have to suffer the blows of fate and society in a rapacious manner. He impresses on his readers not to indulge in condemnation of their fellow men even when they are weak and yield to temptation of the world. His philosophy is thus based on a sympathetic and catholic attitude towards life and is surely one of the finest fruits of literary culture in modern times."

Hardy, himself, did not like to be dubbed as a pessimist, but a meliorist. Hardy seems to have winced at the suggestion of pessimism in his thought. He has answered the charge of pessimism in the following words:

"People call me a pessimist; and if it is pessimism to think, with Sophocles, that 'not to have been born is best,' then I do not reject the designation. I never could understand why the word 'pessimism' should be such a red rag to many worthy people; and I believe, indeed, that a good deal of the robustious swaggering optimism of recent literature is at bottom cowardly and insincere. I do not see that we are likely to improve the world by asseverating, however loudly, that black as white, or at least that black is but a necessary contrast and foil, without which white would be white no longer. That is mere juggling with a metaphor. But my pessimism, if pessimism it be, does not involve the assumption that the world is going to the dogs, and that Ahriman is winning all along the line. On the contrary, my practical philosophy is distinctly meliorist." Hardy expresses his own theory about pessimism in these words: "As to pessi-
mism, my motto is; first correctly diagnose the complaint—in this case, the human ills—and ascertain the cause: then set about finding a remedy if one exists. The motto or practice of the optimists is: Blind the eyes to the real malady, and use empirical panaceas to suppress the symptoms. My view is to find a remedy for the ills if one can easily do so." These words of Hardy's sound satisfying and heartening. If things are what they are, why should we not face them without any illusion?

Hardy's treatment of Nature.

Nature has always exercised a fascinating influence on the minds of poets right from the time of Chaucer to our own days. The Romantic Revival in England produced a number of nature worshippers, the chief of them being Wordsworth, who applauded Nature's holy plans and considered her a gentle and kind mother. He took nature as his guide, nurse and sheet anchor of life. There is not a word of criticism against nature in Wordsworth.

Hardy's attitude towards nature is quite the opposite of Wordsworth. Hardy does not regard nature as a kind and generous mother. For Hardy nature is the agent of cruelty and destruction. She has no sympathy for human beings. For him all the resourcefulness, all the beauty, all the charms, all the bewitching powers of Nature are for the destruction of man. Hardy thinks that Nature is insensible to the feelings of man, and finds a sort of fiendish delight in slaying simple human beings. Egdon Heath is the terrible spot where many lives are crushed. The virginity of Tess is ravished by Alec in the very lap of nature and not a word of protest is heard against the act by nature. Hardy complaining asks—

"Darkness and silence ruled everywhere around. Above them rose the primeval yews and oaks of the chase. About them stole the hopping rabbits and hare. But, might some say, where was Tess's guardian angel? Where was the providence of her simple faith?"

Lord David Cecil makes Hardy's attitude towards nature quite clear in his admirable study of Hardy. He says—"However, Hardy's attitude to Nature was not Wordsworthian. He did not believe that Nature has any holy plan or healing power. Being
influenced by the theory of Evolution, he found much in Nature that was cruel and antagonistic to man.

Nature has been used in several capacities by Hardy in his novels. The influence of nature on humanity has been presented in different ways in his novels. Nature influences the moods and actions of Hardy's human characters. To understand the self-sacrificing love of Marty South, we must realize the spell of the brooding woods, the magic of the quiet, enduring trees whose life she knew so well. The strange, unearthly feeling of early morning to Clare in proximity to Tess; the tense, boring atmosphere while Gabriel Oak works to save Bathsheba's ricks from burning—these and many other scenes show natural aspects working on the mood of the persons and through them on the mood of the readers. The influence of nature on human beings is best illustrated in *The woodlanders*, *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *The Return of the Native*.

In most of his Nature scenes, Hardy presents an *emotional connection* between nature and human beings. Sometimes nature is affected by human emotions, and sometimes man is affected by nature's feelings. In *Tess* we notice a change in nature's feelings in accordance with the emotional change in Tess's life. With the progressive wreck of Tess's happiness there is also a symbolic change in the climates and atmospheres of the places where she goes, from the secluded vale of Blackmoor to the silent vale of the Great Dairies, the bleak chalk table-land of Fintcombe-Ash, fashionable sandbownere and at last the Great Plain and the Druid temple of Stonehenge. In the *Return of the Native*, Egdon Heath influences the emotions and feelings of the characters. The Heath imparts a tragic gloom to the characters of the novel. The Heath is employed to create the feelings of terror among the characters of the novel. In fact, nature enters too much in the moods and emotions of human beings in Hardy's novels. Lord David Cecil very nicely puts this inter-relation of man and nature in Hardy's novels in the following words—"Nature, first of all, played a larger part in Hardy's books than in those of any other English novelist. It is not just the background in his drama, but a leading

* Lord David Cecil: Thomas Hardy
character in it. Sometimes, it exercises an active influence on the course of events; more often it is a spiritual agent, colouring the mood and shaping the disposition of human beings. The huge black darkness of Egdon Heath dominates the lives of the character in *The Return of the Native* infusing into them its grandeur and its melancholy. His most living characters, moreover, are always natures of the country side. Farmers and shepherds, thatchers and hedgers, they most of them, never stray beyond its borders."

Whatever may be the relation between man and nature in Hardy’s novels, it cannot be denied that the pictures of nature drawn by the novelist in his novels are graphic, vivid, and exhibit is intense love for the external beauties of nature. Hardy has left innumerable descriptions of birds, grass, flowers, gardens, bridges, sunset, in his novels. He has perception both for the finer shades as well as the solemn harmonies of nature. His acute sense of observation and keen reception of the sounds of nature can be felt in all his novels. His landscapes and pictures of nature, both in its inanimate and animate aspects, exhibit the dexterous hand of a skilled artist and a meticulous painter. He combines the method of general broad line painting with the art of minute and accurate painting in his novels. "He has lovingly described the elementary, and grand aspects of Nature; the land which appeals to him most is that which is freest from human dwellings. He loves to paint the wood, where the seasons go through the infinitely varied circle of rich pastures, the sober hills of his native district; the bare uplands where the furrow of a Roman road runs straight and empty to the horizon; the gloomy vastness of the moor in which every living vanishes as if swallowed up in the depths of the centuries whose image is called by its immobility."

*Hardy’s Humour.*

Hardy was a writer of tragedies and from such a writer we cannot expect pleasant and genial humour like that of Goldsmith. He cannot tickle us to broad laughter like Dickens. He cannot be placed in the category of great humorists like Dickens and Thackeray. The humour that runs through his work is of a grim
and ghastly kind. There is a note of bitterness in Hardy’s novels. “Occupying less space but more characteristic, are his flashes of satiric humour, sometimes grim and occasionally ghastly. Here and there is a delicate, evanescent smile. His humour has not the society grace, nor often the artistic point of finish of Meredith; but it always rings true, and is never gross, coarse or vulgar”*.

 Mostly humour in Hardy’s novels rises from his rustic characters. They create humour out of their ignorance. In A Pair of Blue Eyes, there is pleasant humour when the driver of coach says that, “If there could be a George IV, there should also be a Charles IV. for Charleses are as common as Georges.” Rustic humour also rises when Creedle and Crawtree indulge in mirthful talks in The Woodlanders. The remarks of Mother Cuxom and Solomon Longways on the ‘cannibal deal’ of Christopher Conney in the Mayor of Casterbridge are particularly humorous. “We are made to laugh at the immemorial butts of village life—garrulous, reminiscent old grand fathers, henpecked husbands, ludicrous, timid simpletons, and the incongruity between the facts of life and the countryman’s ignorant comment on them.”**

 The bitterness and satiric force of Hardy’s humour can be seen in his death scenes and funerals. There is a grim humour in the remark that Sue’s children in Jude the Obscure died “because they were too many.” The death of Jude Fawley and Michael Henchard are instinct with ghastly and bitter kind of humour and irony.

Hardy’s view of death.

Hardy does not believe in life after death. He finds no evidence of a conscious state after death. He does not hold out a land of bliss to the virtuous dead. All that virtuous people should expect is to live in the memory of some persons after their exit from the world. Dead persons can continue to live in the fragrant memory of those who are in some way related to the dead. No one should fear death for it marks the end of all miseries and sufferings in the world:

* Of comfort no man speak

Let’s talk of graves, of worms and epitaphs

* Duffin: Thomas Hardy.
** Lord David Cecil: Thomas Hardy,
Hardy's attitude towards marriage and love.

Hardy deals with the problems of marriage and love in two of his novels *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. The problem of marriage is set out with great force. In Hardy's view love at first sight does not very much help in making life happy. Marriages that are the result of love at first sight generally end in unhappiness. Marriages should be performed after matured consideration. The two people should study and understand each other before they rush into marriage. It is only by thoughtful consideration that marriages ought to be cemented. However, when married life becomes irksome or unhappy for anyone of the partners, each one must have the right to divorce the other. Man or woman must have the right to free himself or herself from his or her partnership in case it is impossible to carry on well in the married state of life. In the *Mayor of Casterbridge* Hardy puts his viewpoint in the conversation that takes place between Susan and Henchard. "The conversation took a high turn, as it often does on such occasions. The ruin of good men by bad wives, and more particularly, the frustrating of many a promising youth's high aims and hopes and the extinction of his energies, by an early imprudent marriage was the theme."

In one of his famous prefaxes Hardy writes, "A marriage should be dissolved as soon as it becomes a cruelty to either of the parties, being essentially no marriage." Hardy insisted on breaking the bond of marriage if it fails to make the couple happy.

Hardy's style.

"Hardy's style is essentially of the philosophic type, an immanence of his mind..............And his style is grey—grey as November skies on Odysseus' sullen seas. The Hardy atmosphere is chiefly due to his style: it breathes in every paragraph and it is as recognisable and characteristic as the scent of the salt ocean..... Hardy's style thus satisfies the first demand that all styles are called upon to fill—it perfectly corresponds with and expresses the profoundest intention of the writer. It is not conspicuously beautiful, it is not luxurious or alluringly harmonious, it is in the main a bare significant narrative style of easy but not obtrusiva balance. His
style is the mirror of his profoundest self.”* ‘He is always great when some great occasion is presented.’ Like Shakespeare, he can vary his style with the variation of his themes. 

Hardy, a modern novelist.

As a novelist Hardy belongs to that group of realists who would eliminate every trace of freedom whereby an individual becomes responsible for his acts. As a novelist typical of modern times Hardy loves the complexity of things, clash of principles and motives and the encounter of temperaments. The issues he deals with are great but not clear. There is a sense of entanglement. Right and wrong, courage and cowardice, duty and desire, are presented to us in confused conflicts. “It is no mere transcript of life at a certain time and place that Hardy has given us. It is a vision of the world and of man’s lot as they revealed themselves to a powerful imagination, a profound and poetic genius, a gentle and humane soul”.*

---

* H. C. Duffin—Thomas Hardy.

** Virginia Woolf: The Novels of Thomas Hardy.
20th Century Literature

Q. 76. Give a brief account of the social, political, economic and literary tendencies of the twentieth century, the age of interrogation.

Ans. The Victorian era came to a close in 1900. The dawn of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of new values in the field of social, political, economic and literary life. Compton-Rickett has pointed out three prominent features of the new age. (1) "Its reiteration of the old Revolutionary formula of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity in a new setting (2) Its worship of Power rather than Beauty—here it parts company abruptly with the age of the Romantic Revival and the Victorian age. (3) Its challenging attitude of the elder values in Art and Life—this to some extent is true also of the age preceding, but the challenging attitude is more persistent, more searching to-day."*

Besides these three prominent tendencies in our times, we find the literature and life of the modern age governed more by realism than by romance. The present age is essentially the age of realism and the modern writers, instead of dealing with the times of king Arthur and the Middle ages, have concentrated their attention on the problems of modern life. The realism of the modern age has further been accentuated by the growing upsurge of scientific discoveries. The new inventions and discoveries have brought a transformation in the old romantic values of life and have given a materialistic twist to whatever is considered sacred and valuable in life. This rapid growth of science and materialism and deification of machine has brought about a commercialisation of art, literature and music and the modern age is rightly branded as the commercial age of the world. In the world of today religion and spiritualism are on the wane and everywhere materialism is in the ascendancy. Many poets and novelists have felt disgusted with the growing cult of materialism, and their works

are marked with a note of revolt against this advancing tide of the modern times. Butler and Huxley are the prominent writers of the modern age, who have attacked in their works the modern craze for materialism and machinery. These great authors have exposed the weaknesses of the system based on the warship of machinery.

The age of machinery has brought about not only a feeling of revolt among the writers of our times but has also created a feeling of pessimism and frustration in them. Gissing felt awfully disgusted with modern industrial life and his novels are an attack upon the industrialism of the age. Being disgusted with the humdrum existence of modern life many authors have chosen to retire to the countryside where they seek to find refuge from the rattle and bustle of modern cities. In modern literature there is a growing attack on the dirtiness, seediness and squalor of cities. The seediness of modern life has found expression in the novels of James Joyce and Graham Greene. John Masefield has given expression to the dirtiness of modern trade and commerce in his famous poem Cargoes. He contrasts the beauty and romance of the past with the dirtiness and squalor of modern life in the last stanza of the poem.

The growing tide of materialism has brought about the disintegration of family relationship and authority. Samuel Butler in The Way of All Flesh expressed the revolt of youth against the authority of parents. D. H. Lawrence has also raised his voice against the old Victorian authority and has pleaded for the freedom of the individual. Sex life is no longer eschewed, but finds vigorous treatment in his works.

During the twentieth century there has been a rapid progress of education. Educational facilities are available to all classes of people. Literacy has gone up and with it has come the greater love for the study of books. The rapid progress of education has brought about enormous output of books. In our times books are published endlessly and many inferior writers have started making money by their prolific pen. The sacrifice of art to business is a sorry spectacle of modern life.

In modern times literature has been employed for social purposes, particularly for reforming the festering sores and
maladies of contemporary society. Modern literature is characterized by propaganda, and through this medium dramatists have discussed social problems. "More than ever before would be reformers pinned their faith on the printed word and on the serious theatre as media for social propaganda, and the problem or discussion play and the novel of social purpose may be described as two of the typical products of the period."

In modern literature the novel has become the dominant literary form and it is through the medium of this important instrument of literature that social problems have been very nicely dealt. "In addition, the novel is admirably suited as a vehicle for the sociological studies which attracted most of the great artists of the period. The modern novelist is not only interested in social problems but is also equally well inclined to discuss psychological problems of the modern age." "He is no longer content with his old magic faculty of entering into their consciousness; he now enters into unconsciousness; the better to express the irrationality and disconnectedness of their mental processes, he may abandon syntax altogether and merely jot down disjoined phrases, unrelated words or inarticulate grunts to express their sensations."

In modern literature drama has once again witnessed a remarkable revival after an age-old slumber and obscurity to which it had fallen after the eighteenth century. In the hands of Galsworthy, Bernard Shaw, Barker, T. S. Eliot, drama has made rapid progress in the twentieth century.

The pre-war years were the years of the novel and the drama and there was a relative eclipse of poetry. Modern poetry is not so significant and rich as modern novel and drama, A. C. Ward characterises modern poetry as puerile. Poetry was revived after an early period of stagnation by Yeats and a few other poets of the age. "The demand, long before expressed by Yeats, for a new and living poetical tradition was met between the wars in his own work and in that of the new poets—T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, Cecil Day Lewis and Louis Macniece. Poetry again became a vital literary from in close touch with life, and if it did not oust the..."

* E. Albert, History of English Literature.
** Ibid.
novel from its primacy, it certainly outstripped the drama.”*

New experiments were tried in all branches of literature. The traditional forms were thrown out and in their place new literary experiments were made in the field of poetry, drama and novel. “It is doubtful whether any period of English literature saw experiments so bold and various as those of the inter-war years. A natural corollary for the quest for new values and for a new vital tradition was the desire for new forms and methods of presentation and all the major literary genres of the age produced revolutionary developments.”

Twentieth century English literature has considerably been influenced by foreign artists in the field of drama, poetry, and fiction. The influence of Ibsen on modern drama has been profound in the sphere of form, matter and stage-craft. The influence of Romain Rolland, Dostoievsky and Flaubert is clearly perceptible in the modern novel. The philosophical theories of Henri Bergson and Sigmund Freud have coloured the fiction of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Charles Morgan.