

## THOMAS HARDY'S VISION

### T. Hardy's view of man's place in the universe

He had a deterministic view, deprived of the consolation of Divine order. He could see no intelligent direction of the universe, only the control of "*insensible chance*" over everything.

### The choice of the setting and its reason

Most of T. Hardy's stories are set in a very circumscribed area, the south-west corner of England and his native county of Dorset. He called this area "*Wessex*" by which he meant the old Saxon kingdom of Alfred the Great. Therefore Hardy's Wessex transcends topographical limits combining the imaginative experience of the individual with a sense of man's place in the universe.

### His view of nature

Nature is indifferent to man's destiny and sets the pattern of growth and decay which is followed by human nature.

### His attitude to Victorian values

Hardy exposed the most conventional, moralistic, hypocritical aspect of Victorian society. Also his attitude to religion was critical.

### His narrative technique

He employed the Victorian omniscient narrator, who is always present, and sometimes comments on the action or introduces his opinions and his view of life. Hardy often presents action or introduces his opinions or his view of life. Hardy often presents action through the eyes of a hypothetical observer, with whom the reader is implicitly invited to identify himself.

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### The extract

It provides an example of cinematic technique, in which the character is virtually converted into a camera, focusing on the main object, followed by a close-up of a detail. (lines 3-12).

### The new generation

Little Jude embodies the "new generation". The features of his character are described in lines 44-49. Unlike Dickens's children, who suffer hardship, misery and exploitation but also maintain their wish to survive and to improve their condition through their qualities. Hardy's children have no hope, they have been deprived of their faith in progress and of an optimistic view of life.

### Elements of Hardy's view of society

#### Lines: 54-59

Victorian society judged Sue's and Jude's choice of living together outside marriage as obscene and irresponsible since it affected their children.

#### Lines: 64-65

The reference to God's love for His people is here ironical since God seems to have forgotten Jude and Sue.

#### Lines: 70-7a

The Church condemns Jude and Sue as sinners or does not realize their sorrow because it is busy with sterile arguments about rite.

**Lines: 84-85; 96-97**

Sue's sense of guilt due to the Victorian strict moral code. The loss of faith in man's power : man is only a puppet in the hands of Fate. This view characterizes the last decades of the Victorian age.

**Jude's obscurity**

Hardy denies Jude the possibility to fulfill his hopes and takes him from defeat to defeat. The tragedy of Jude is mainly of frustration and loneliness due to his uprooting. Jude is "obscure" because he does not "exist" for others, is never "seen" by them. Jude's attempt to improve himself fails in the face of centuries of accumulated class prejudice: his ambition and sensibility separate him from his own class while winning him no place in any other.

Jude the Obscure represents a departure from Victorianism with his portrayal of weakened vitality and grey despair, in a bleak urban setting deprived of dynamism and characterized by a sense of anxiety and self-destruction.