Chapter I

Introduction

There is not so agonizing a feeling in the whole catalogue of human suffering as the first conviction that the heart of the being that we most tenderly love is estranged from us.

-Bulwer

Our Life nowadays is commonly characterized in terms of estrangement. Reference is constantly made to it in connection with the growth of superficiality in interpersonal relations, the stunting of personal development, the widespread existence of neurotic personality traits, and the absence of a sense of meaning in life and the “disappearance” or “death” of god. There is almost no aspect of contemporary life which has not been discussed in terms of “estrangement”. Whether or not it is one of the most outstanding features of this age, it would certainly seem to be its watchword.

In spite of the term’s popularity, few people have a very clear idea of precisely what it means. Estrangement is a term which most people understand in terms of their acquaintance with the writing of certain philosophers, psychologists and sociologists whose uses of the term are most significant. It would make no sense to say, “Never mind what Hegel, Marx or Sartre say what they mean by “estrangement”, I want to know what the term itself means”. For it is largely through the influence of these and other recent writers that the term has come to have whatever meaning it has today. Estrangement, self-division, isolation, duality of experience, the deep unrest and the perplexity of nineteenth-century Britain are impressed on all who study the period. Victorian literature is to a large extent the literature of estrangement. It emanated from a specific condition of mind which had grown up within a society seeking adjustment to the conditions of an increasingly changeable life, which arouse the feeling of uncertainty concerning the future. With the publishing of
Darwin’s Origin of species, and the rapid growth of industrialisation and wealth, the Victorians experienced a great period of change. Many of them longed and mourned their old way of life, and thus made a distance themselves from this new changing world, which made them feel infinitely estranged. They suffered from an anxious sense of something lost, a sense of being isolated persons in a world made alien by the technological changes that had been exploited too quickly for the robust powers of the human mind. Human happiness was being sacrificed and this sense of security inevitably led to fears of estrangement. Whether the text is poetry, prose, fiction or criticism, readers find it difficult to see its life steadily and see it whole. All the eminent Victorian writers were at odds with their age. The reader who comes to study the Victorians objectively must be struck again and again by the underlying tone of estrangement which permeates so much that is generally taken as typical of the period.

This chapter shall be concerned with some aspects in which major Victorian writers experienced estrangement self division and duality of vision endemic to their times and gave expression to them in their works. A writer, or his character, may not appear at all concerned with the problem, but the symptoms of estrangement are quite apparent in the breakdown of unity in his work, the so-called “dissociation of sensibility”. Another writer may be aware of this phenomenon and tailor specific themes to suit the experience, or may simply become outspoken about his self- estrangement and create a myth or a framework or a system to argue the problem through the characters of his poem, novel or essay. Despair, unrest and estrangement from the self and from the world appear, from the outset, act as a dominant motif in Tennyson’s poetry. It is evident in the opening lines of his early poem, *Perdidi Diem*.

Intense estrangement and anguished self-division are most apparent in the poem entitled *Supposed Confessions of a Mind not in Unity with Itself* by Tennyson. The poem contains the clearest evidence of Tennyson’s agonizing sense of disunity. Forsaken by
his friends and no longer confident of his ability to do anything at all, the speaker in the poem, an outcast, remembers his past when he used to have a faith.

The two voices is a dialogue of the mind with itself and it takes literally the form of a debate, with the “I” arguing with one or another of two inner voices representing the poles of despair and hope. The poem opens with the despairing voice asking the speaker “were it not better not to be?” The voice argues that since life is miserable and his death is of no significance to the rest of mankind, why should he not terminate his misery? The voice adamantly insists that salvation lies only in the nothingness of death. Although the voice of faith eventually emerges triumphant, it is the voice of doubt which may well be the theme of the poem.

The strength of In Memoriam derives from the clash of the intensely alienated spirit with ideas crowding in from the nineteenth century world, and the consequent isolation of the protagonist. Although the poem reaffirms the possibility of keeping faith, faith in a moral order, faith in the life of spirit, yet this reaffirmation of faith does not happen through any positive act, or through intellectual conviction. There is no clear event to make this conversion, nor does the protagonist really try to reconcile science and faith. His conversion is so passive as to be almost unconvincing. However, the dissociated sensibility, the disunity of thought and feeling is superbly woven into the texture and structure of the poem. (CM 155-169)

The Idylls of the king symbolizes a modern wasteland art, with division and the war of “Sense and soul” as a major theme. When the guilty love of the Queen and Lancelot is exposed, and doubt about the king’s divinity spreads, the unity of sense and soul proclaimed at Lancelot breaks down. With this disintegration the world falls apart. The destruction of Arthur’s court is an analogue to the fragmentation of the self. Lancelot is indeed a modern everyman tormented by his self-division. In the end, he begins to lose his sense of own
Lancelot may finally be a negative figure in Tennyson’s moral scheme, but his anxiety, despair and estrangement are quite authentic within the poem and reflect the experience of many late Victorians.

Browning’s earliest book *Pauline* is subtitled *A fragment of a confession*, which describes what Wordsworth was later to call in *The Prelude* “The growth of a poet’s Mind”. The Poet’s unhappy retrospective journey to his earlier life causes the emergence of his self-consciousness now aggravated by a deeper understanding of his feelings of guilt. In his despair, the hero asks Pauline to go with him into the verdant wood which is evoked in one of the finest passages in Browning’s poetry. However, we feel the speaker’s morbidity, his attraction to the darker paths of human behaviour and his voice of the obsessive.

John Stuart Mill is of the opinion that the writer is possessed with a more intense and morbid self-consciousness than he ever knew in his sane human beings. Mill may seem to be rather exaggerating, yet there are passages in the poem that support his view. Long-buried thoughts and feelings and disordered events come up to consciousness, and the ideas recorded in the poem fit more appropriately in the netherworld of the Id.

The theme of estrangement remains conspicuous in *Sordello* the poem, of epic length almost six thousand lines in six books, is remarkably similar to *Pauline* and *Paracelsus*. Sordello’s failure is the failure of an enfeebled Hamlet more than a Faust. The poem is no mere historical exercise. It is chiefly a psychological analysis of the hero’s inner life. It has been argued that Browning’s *Sordello* anticipated Jung’s *Modern man in search of a soul* “in describing accurately, albeit poetically, the same illness and in prescribing a similar cure”. *Sordello* goes through the spiritual malaise of estrangement which Jung describes as being at the core of modern man’s difficulties. (SW 758-796)

Matthew Arnold analyses and defines most explicitly that the sense of estrangement is characteristically encountered in Tennyson and Browning. Arnold’s opposition to the
Zeitgeist, and his concept of culture as comprising the whole nature of man, his practice as a poet and critic indicate that his estrangement from the spirit of his era was greater than Tennyson’s or Browning’s. His protagonists are invariably lonely and isolated figures alienated from themselves and from their environment. The Forsaken Merman, Mycerinus, The scholar-Gipsy, Empedocles, the author of Obermann, Merope, sohrab and Rustum and Iseult are all projections of their creator’s own essential estrangement in the Victorian world. Arnold’s poetry hardly expresses a unified sensibility.

Carlyle’s works reveal a striking expression of estrangement, doubts and the dark dualities of nineteenth-century existence. His actual sense of estrangement in a society deprived of certainties runs through all his work. He particularly fears the loss of religious traditions, the atomization of the individual, and the estrangement of man from his work and the rapidity of social and technical change. A sense of doom, restlessness, desperation and chaos pervades all his work and threatens both the individual and society with disintegration and ruin. Carlyle’s concern with the unconscious is a central concern which lies behind all his work, from the early essay “characteristics” where he opposes the values associated with the conscious side of life to the true organic growth associated with the unconscious. The concern with the unconscious presupposes the concern with estrangement, for the unconscious is that from which men are mainly alienated. Carlyle constantly uses the world “alienated” in its most modern sense, but he is also concerned with a variety of its forms and effects, both personal and social. Among the more obvious social forms of the problem is the estrangement of and from his political, social, and religious traditions. As he finds himself in the new industrial society of the nineteenth century, he focuses primarily on man’s estrangement from work.

In an essay on John Galsworthy, D.H. Lawrence complains that the characters in Galsworthy’s novels have no private but only public selves, that they had “lost caste as
human beings, and had sunk to the level of the social beings. Their free and “subjective” lives have been swallowed by their restrictive and “objective” allegiances. Lawrence may have been correct in characterizing the source of the essential deadness at the centre of Galsworthy’s novels, yet we recognize the excess in his position. The problem of the novel has always been to distinguish between these two, the self and society, and at the same time to find suitable forms or structures that will present them together. Remove one from the other and the resulting fiction will move away from the novel into another genre. Take away the individual consciousness and we will have history. The novel seems to exist in the common area between social history and individuality. In the great nineteenth-century novels, the balance between the claims of the individual and of the social being holds successfully, but as the century progresses we notice that the balance starts to tilt in favour of the individual and his self consciousness. With Thomas Hardy, at the end of the century, the individual interest is seen as actively opposed to the social interest.

Charlotte Bronte created an imaginative world, Angria, and lived in it for about ten years from the age of 10 to 20. Like so many Victorians; Charlotte Bronte experienced the sense of estrangement. She suffered in her own life the feeling of fragmentation or contradiction which her novels reflect. Secluded, almost imprisoned in Haworth, she taught herself to endure estrangement and deprivation. Feminist critics in particular have taken Charlotte Bronte as a paradigm for the many Victorian women novelists who, they claim, express their sense of estrangement through covert artistic techniques.

The prime function of the novel is to trace the development of the narrator and main character from a sense of estrangement or alienation towards the recovery from that condition – what is often called identity. Critics have paid great attention to the Dickens’s younger Pip’s feelings of guilt and, particularly, alienation in Great Expectations as an orphan, Pip is both the typical Dickens’s hero and a characteristic figure of modern literature, the alienated
man, a product of his civilizations, detached from it, and lonely, wishing to belong but unable to feel at one with it. The principal theme of estrangement which permeates the whole novel is superbly established in the opening pages of the book.

Hegel’s concept of estrangement can be applied to other novels of Dickens. In *Little Dorrit*, for example, several estranged characters see their relation to their social world as one of discordance and they assert their opposition to a society which they regard as external and oppressive. What makes *Great expectations* a particularly remarkable work is that it contains an indirect critique of Hegel’s second sense of estrangement as depicted in Pip. The narrator, the older Pip has lost any vital or energetic engagement with life. The final pages of the novel strongly suggest that Pip experiences no great happiness, only a neutral contentment with life. Even the published ending, with its ambiguous reconciliation between Pip and Stella who meet in the ruins of Satis House, reflects a sense of a half-hearted relationship between a woman “bent and broken” and a man who expects little Joy from life. In this revised ending, Dickens was trying to do two things: to satisfy the reading public who liked novels to have happy endings, and to suggest to more sophisticated readers by the use of ambiguity that the relationship might not last.

Estrangement is a well-established theme that prevails in almost all the works of George Eliot. Estrangement in Victorian literature is not held to be inherent in man’s being in the world, but rather in his being in a particular historical epoch which asserts itself with special force whenever certain social and cultural circumstance fail to satisfy the people in a given society. It appears when a particular generation faces structures, cultural, social or religious, whose permanent features are indifferent to that generation’s desires and aspirations. All the major Victorian writers, with Arnold as their representative spokesman, have been aware of the philosophical, cultural, social and economic changes and how these helped to bring about and reinforce man’s sense of estrangement. At the same time, the entire
edifice of the Victorian society threatens to collapse under the weight of contradiction, dualism and division. The Calm, the cheerfulness, the nonchalant objectivity have disappeared, the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; contemporary problems have presented themselves; we hear already of the doubts, we observe the despondency, of Hamlet and Faust. This is the central intellectual characteristic of the Victorian age which envisages the emergence of the split man in a kind of nineteenth-century “dissociation of sensibility”. (MA 109)

The image, in *The Woodlanders* where Hardy refers to Grace Melbury’s equivocal social status, of her hanging “as it were in mid-air between two storeys of society”, is a characteristic image of being helplessly stranded between two worlds, belonging to neither, yet connected tenuously to both. The problem which the Victorian writers face is, broadly speaking, the possibility of healing the schism between what is loosely conceived as “private” and “public” areas of experience. All the Victorians, and particularly Hardy and late Victorians, express a strong sense of opposition between the inner, personal, subjective and outer, public and objective.

In Victorian imaginative writers one finds on the whole a double movement away from the world and towards the personal and against the world. This appears in the preoccupation with social criticism in the novel. The central achievement of Victorian novelists is that they reflect how disillusioning and frustrating is the discrepancy between the intuitive knowledge of the individual and the mysterious opacity of objective reality. Dickens’s novels, generally, for example, stress the total divergence between the individual’s inner struggle and the intractable society. The increasing difficulty of reconciling spatial and temporal perspectives become a major theme for Hardy and other late Victorians; for the inner space and inner time of particular individuals no longer interact with historical and social space and time.
On the other hand, one finds that the spiritual side of man is most expressed in the substitution of personal relationships for “faith”. All Hardy’s lovers testify to this; Clym, Jude, Angel, Giles and Boldwood—all idealize, almost deify their beloved, and the shattering of their illusions by contact with the objective frustrating reality constitutes a major theme in Hardy’s entire fiction. This, then, in its mere outlines, is the world into which Hardy was born, grew up, and lived. It is a bifurcated sort of existence. The time is out of joint, owing to the dislocation of life from form; and the problem proposes itself as this: to procure realisation and integration in a disintegrated world Hardy aspired to see a society in which man’s faculties are developed to a totality and whose conflicting elements are held in harmonious balance.

Thomas Hardy was born on June 2, 1840, in the village of Upper Bockhampton, a hamlet in the parish of Stinsford to the east of Dorchester in Dorset, England, where his father Thomas worked as a stonemason, a violinist and a local builder. His mother Jemima was well-read, and she educated Thomas until he went to his first school at Bockhampton at age eight. His mother enjoyed reading by relating all the folk songs and legends of the region. Hardy was the eldest of the four children. He grew up in an isolated cottage on the edge of open heath land. Though he was often ill as a child, his early experience of rural life with its seasonal rhythms and oral culture was fundamental to much of his later writing. Between his parents, Hardy gained all the interests that would appear in his novels and his own life, his love for architecture and music, his interest in the lifestyles of the country folk, and his passion for all sorts of literature. At the age of eight, Hardy began to attend Julia Martin's school in Bockhampton. However, most of his education came from the books he found in Dorchester, the nearby town. He learned French, German, and Latin by teaching himself through these books. At sixteen, Hardy's father apprenticed his son to a local architect, John Hicks. Under Hicks' tutelage, Hardy trained as an architect in Dorchester
before moving to London in 1862, where he enrolled as a student at King's College London. He won prizes from the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Architectural Association. Hardy was in charge of the excavation of the graveyard of St Pancras Old Church prior to its destruction when the Midland Railway was extended to a new terminus at St Pancras.

Hardy learned much about architectural drawing and restoring old houses and churches. Hardy loved the apprenticeship because it allowed him to learn the histories of the houses and the families that lived there. Despite his work, Hardy did not forget his academics in the evenings. Hardy never felt at home in London, because he was acutely conscious of class divisions and his social inferiority. However, during this time he became interested in social reform and the works of John Stuart Mill. He was also introduced by his Dorset friend Horace Moule to the works of Charles Fourier and Auguste Comte. Five years later, concerned about his health, he returned to Dorset, settling at Weymouth, and decided to dedicate himself to writing.

In 1862, Hardy was sent to London to work with the architect Arthur Bloomfield. During his five years in London, Hardy immersed himself in the cultural scene by visiting the museums and theatres and studying classic literature. He even began to write his own poetry. Although he did not stay in London, choosing to return to Dorchester as a church restorer, he took his newfound talent for writing to Dorchester as well. From 1867, Hardy wrote poetry and novels, though the first part of his career was devoted to the novel. Hardy as a writer is mainly known for his novels. His first novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady* was written in 1867 and was destroyed when the manuscript was refused publication from a number of publishing houses. After a turbulent first experienced, Hardy anonymously published two novels *Desperate Remedies* and *Under the Greenwood Tree* in 1871 and 1872 respectively. His first success as a writer came in 1873, with the release of his first important
work *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. The book was a recollection of his courtship with his first wife Emma. Like Dickens, Hardy's novels were published in serial forms in magazines that were popular in both England and America. In 1870, while on an architectural mission to restore the parish church of St Juliet in Cornwall, Hardy met and fell in love with Emma Lavinia Gifford, whom he married in 1874. Although they later became estranged, her death in 1912 had a traumatic effect on him and after her death, Hardy made a trip to Cornwall to revisit places linked with their courtship, and his *Poems 1912–13* reflect upon her death. In 1914, Hardy married his secretary Florence Emily Dugdale, who was 39 years his junior. However, he remained preoccupied with his first wife's death and tried to overcome his remorse by writing poetry. In 1910, Hardy had been awarded the Merit.

His first popular novel was *Under the Greenwood Tree*, published in 1872. The next great novel, *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) was so popular that with the profits, Hardy was able to give up architecture and marry Emma Gifford. Other popular novels followed in quick succession: *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), the last of which attracted criticism for its sympathetic portrayal of a "fallen woman" and was initially refused publication. Its subtitle, *A Pure Woman: Faithfully Presented*, was intended to raise the eyebrows of the Victorian middle classes and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). In addition to these larger works, Hardy published three collections of short stories and five smaller novels, all moderately successful. However, despite the praise Hardy's fiction received, many critics also found his works to be too shocking, especially *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. The outcry against Jude was so great that Hardy decided to stop writing novels and return to his first great love, poetry. Over the years, Hardy had divided his time between his home, Max Gate, in Dorchester and his lodgings in London. In his later years, he remained in Dorchester to focus completely on his poetry. In 1898, he saw his dream of becoming a poet.
realized with the publication of Wessex Poems. He then turned his attentions to an epic drama in verse, *The Dynasts*; it was finally completed in 1908. Before his death, he had written over 800 poems, many of them published while he was in his eighties. By the last two decades of Hardy's life, he had achieved fame as great as Dickens' fame. New readers had also discovered his novels by the publication of the Wessex Editions, the definitive versions of all Hardy's early works. As a result, Max Gate became a literary shrine.

Hardy became ill with pleurisy in December 1927 and died at Max Gate just after 9 pm on 11 January 1928, having dictated his final poem to his wife on his deathbed; the cause of death was cited, on his death certificate, as "cardiac syncope", with "old age" given as a contributory factor. His funeral was on 16 January at Westminster Abbey, and it proved a controversial occasion because Hardy and his family and friends had wished for his body to be interred at Stinsford in the same grave as his first wife, Emma. However, his executor, Sir Sydney Carlyle Cockerell, insisted that he be placed in the abbey's famous Poets' Corner. A compromise was reached whereby his heart was buried at Stinsford with Emma, and his ashes in Poets' Corner. Hardy also found happiness in his personal life. His first wife, Emma, died in 1912. Although their marriage had not been happy, Hardy grieved at her sudden death. In 1914, he married Florence Dugale, and she was extremely devoted to him. After his death, Florence published Hardy's autobiography in two parts under her own name. Shortly after Hardy's death, the executors of his estate burnt his letters and notebooks, but twelve documents survived, one of them containing notes and extracts of newspaper stories from the 1820s, and research into these has provided insight into how Hardy used them in his works. In the year of his death Mrs. Hardy published *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1841–1891*, compiled largely from contemporary notes, letters, diaries, and biographical memoranda, as well as from oral information in conversations extending over many years.
Hardy's work was admired by many younger writers, including D.H. Lawrence, John Cowper Powys, and Virginia Woolf. In his autobiography *Goodbye to All That* (1929), Robert Graves recalls meeting Hardy in Dorset in the early 1920s and how Hardy received him and his new wife warmly, and was encouraging about his work. Hardy's birthplace in Bockhampton and his house Max Gate, both in Dorchester, are owned by the National Trust. A Victorian realist in the tradition of George Eliot, he was influenced both in his novels and in his poetry by Romanticism, especially William Wordsworth. Charles Dickens was another important influence. Like Dickens, he was highly critical of much in Victorian society, though Hardy focused more on a declining rural society.

While Hardy wrote poetry throughout his life and regarded himself primarily as a poet, his first collection was not published until 1898. Initially, therefore, he gained fame as the author of novels, including *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). However, beginning in the 1950s Hardy has been recognised as a major poet; he had a significant influence on the Movement poets of the 1950s and 1960s, including Philip Larkin. Most of his fictional works – initially published as serials in magazines – were set in the semi-fictional region of Wessex. They explored tragic characters struggling against their passions and social circumstances. Hardy's Wessex is based on the medieval Anglo-Saxon kingdom and eventually came to include the counties of Dorset, Wiltshire, Somerset, Devon, Hampshire and much of Berkshire, in southwest and south central England. Hardy's first novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady*, finished by 1867, failed to find a publisher. He then showed it to his mentor and friend, the Victorian poet and novelist, George Meredith, who felt that *The Poor Man and the Lady* would be too politically controversial and might damage Hardy's ability to publish in the future. So Hardy followed his advice and he did not try further to publish it. Later, he destroyed the manuscript.
After he abandoned his first novel, Hardy wrote two new ones that he hoped would have more commercial appeal, *Desperate Remedies* (1871) and *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), both of which were published anonymously. In 1873 *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, a novel drawing on Hardy's courtship of his first wife was published under his own name. The term "cliff hanger" is considered to have originated with the serialised version of this story (which was published in *Tinsley's Magazine* between September 1872 and July 1873) in which Henry Knight, one of the protagonists, is left literally hanging off a cliff.

In his next novel *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), Hardy first introduced the idea of calling the region in the west of England, where his novels are set, Wessex. Wessex had been the name of an early Saxon kingdom, in approximately the same part of England. There are strong elements of humour and affection in the characterization of rustic, uneducated people in Hardy’s novels. He captures the rhythm of life and work for those who depend upon the land for their existence. *Far from the Madding Crowd* was successful enough for Hardy to give up architectural work and pursue a literary career. Over the next twenty-five years Hardy produced ten more novels.

Considered a Victorian realist, Hardy examines the social constraints on the lives of those living in Victorian England, and criticizes those beliefs, especially those relating to marriage, education and religion, that limited people's lives and caused unhappiness. Such unhappiness, and the suffering it brings, is seen by poet Philip Larkin as central in Hardy's works. In *Two on a Tower*, for example, Hardy takes a stand against these rules of society with a story of love that crosses the boundaries of class. The reader is forced to reconsider the conventions set up by society for the relationships between women and men. Nineteenth-century society had conventions, which were enforced. In this novel Swithin St Cleeve's idealism pits him against such contemporary social constraints.
Fate or chance is another important theme. Hardy's characters often encounter crossroads on a journey, a junction that offers alternative physical destinations but which is also symbolic of a point of opportunity and transition, further suggesting that fate is at work. Indeed, Hardy's main characters often seem to be held in fate's overwhelming grip. Hardy’s novels capture the messages of the late Victorian period as well. His novels have been described as representing the cross roads of the Victorian and modern eras. They include the intellectual arguments of the day, such as the free will of the individual, the hypocrisy of marriage, the conflict between growing middle class and strict upper class culture, and the rights of women. Most of his works reflect his stoical glumness and sense of cataclysm in human life. As both poet and author, Hardy displayed his mastery in dealing with themes of disappointment in love and life, human suffering and all-powering fate.

Most of Hardy’s works are set in the milieu of social tragedy, injustice and evil laws and often have a fatalistic end, with many of the characters falling prey to the unanticipated conditions. Hardy's short stories and novel series are best remembered for their meticulous portrayal of life troubled by social evils, human suffering and struggle against injustice and ill-comprehended laws. Among his most important works are novels *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, *Wessex Tales* and *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. There are strong suggestions that Hardy's stance on religion swayed between agnosticism and atheism. Most of his works draw heavily upon the strength on all-powering fate and question the existence of God in the times of human suffering. As an author and poet, Hardy seemingly was fascinated with fatalistic ends and expressed pessimism that was impassive, indifferent. His own life was marked by a religious view that was a mixture of philosophy and spiritualism which did not discard the existence of God, yet questioned it. Hardy rather showed an interest in writing about external supernatural forces, and fascination
with ghosts and spirits. However a Church devotee, Hardy drew heavily upon the role of God in the irony and tragedy of life and human suffering.

His most controversial novel, *Jude the Obscure* highlights the prejudice and hypocrisy of Victorian society on sexual conduct. His characters always find themselves trapped and are often defeated by the fate and unforeseen conditions. His books portray people fighting against the cruelty of life, injustice and badly framed laws that constrain the social growth. Thomas Hardy wrote in a great variety of poetic forms including lyrics, ballads, satire, dramatic monologues, and dialogue, as well as a three-volume epic closet drama *The Dynasts* (1904-8), and though in some ways a very traditional poet, because he was influenced by folksong and ballads.

Hardy wrote a number of significant war poems that relate to both the Boer Wars and World War I, including “Drummer Hodge”, “In Time of ‘The Breaking of Nations,’” and "The Man He Killed" and “his work had a profound influence on other war poets such as Rupert Brooke and Siegfried Sassoon”. Hardy in these poems often used the viewpoint of ordinary soldiers and their colloquial speech. A theme in the *Wessex Poems* is the long shadow that the Napoleonic Wars cast over the nineteenth century, as seen, for example, in "The Sergeant's Song" and "Leipzig". The Napoleonic War is of course the subject of *The Dynasts*. Hardy's religious life seems to have mixed agnosticism, deism, and spiritism. Once, when asked in correspondence by a clergyman about the question of reconciling the horrors of pain with the goodness of a loving God, Hardy replied,

Mr. Hardy regrets that he is unable to offer any hypothesis which would reconcile the existence of such evils as Dr. Grosart describes with the idea of omnipotent goodness. Perhaps Dr. Grosart might be helped to a provisional view of the universe by the recently published *Life of Darwin* and the works of Herbert Spencer and other agnostics.
Hardy frequently conceived of, and wrote about, supernatural forces, particularly those that control the universe through indifference or caprice rather than any firm will. He also showed in his writing some degree of fascination with ghosts and spirits. Even so, he retained a strong emotional attachment to the Christian liturgy and church rituals, particularly as manifested in rural communities, that had been such a formative influence in his early years, and Biblical references can be found woven throughout many of Hardy's novels.

D. H. Lawrence's *Study of Thomas Hardy* (1936) indicates the importance of Hardy for him, even though this work is a platform for Lawrence's own developing philosophy rather than a more standard literary study. The influence of Hardy's treatment of character, and Lawrence's own response to the central metaphysic behind many of Hardy's novels, helped significantly in the development of *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1920).

Hardy grouped his novels and short stories into three groups

(1) Novels of Character and Environment

(2) Romances and Fantasies

(3) Novels of Ingenuity

**Novels of Character and Environment**

- *The Poor Man and the Lady* (1867, unpublished and lost)
- *Under the Greenwood Tree: A Rural Painting of the Dutch School* (1872)
- *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874)
- *The Return of the Native* (1878)
- *The Mayor of Casterbridge: The Life and Death of a Man of Character* (1886)
- *The Woodlanders* (1887)
- *Wessex Tales* (1888, a collection of short stories)
- *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented* (1891)
- *Life's Little Ironies* (1894, a collection of short stories)

- *Jude the Obscure* (1895)

**Romances and Fantasies**

- *A Pair of Blue Eyes: A Novel* (1873)

- *The Trumpet-Major* (1880)

- *Two on a Tower: A Romance* (1882)

- *A Group of Noble Dames* (1891, a collection of short stories)

- *The Well-Beloved: A Sketch of a Temperament* (1897) (first published as a serial from 1892)

**Novels of Ingenuity**

- *Desperate Remedies: A Novel* (1871)

- *The Hand of Ethelberta: A Comedy in Chapters* (1876)

- *A Laodicean: A Story of To-day* (1881)

Hardy also produced a number of minor tales; one story, *The Spectre of the Real* (1894) was written in collaboration with Florence Henniker. An additional short-story collection, beyond the ones mentioned above, is *A Changed Man and Other Tales* (1913). His works have been collected as the 24-volume Wessex Edition (1912–13) and the 37-volume Mellstock Edition (1919–20). His largely self-written biography appears under his second wife's name in two volumes from 1928 to 1930, as *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840–91* and *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892–1928*, now published in a critical one-volume edition as *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, edited by Michael Millgate (1984). Hardy has also written nearly 55 short stories and 15 collections of poetries and *The Dynasts: An Epic-Drama of the War with Napoleon* (verse drama) in three parts and an one act play named *The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall at Tintagel in Lyonnesse* (1923).
Hardy also introduces characters in a cinematic style. Many times the reader meets a character off in the distance, walking down a road or off on the horizon. In *The Return of the Native*, Hardy introduces Eustacia and Captain Vye and Diggory Venn the redleman as figures off in the distance. The reader learns Eustacia is the solitary figure on the horizon chapters later. Captain Vye is an old man walking along the road who meets this redleman. Captain Vye acts as the camera in this scene because the reader learns everything about Venn through Captain Vye's eyes. This narrative craftsmanship adds to the sense of suspense and creates interest in the characters for the reader. Early film transformation of Hardy's work occurred while Hardy was still alive. Hardy wanted to have his hand in the re-creations, but soon found this to be next to impossible. Sir Macmillan acted on Hardy's behalf in the film negotiations and helped Hardy secure his rights for the cinematic version of *Tess* with the Warwick Trading Company in 1912.


Hardy's most common theme is humanity's struggle against fate. Hardy is pessimistic in the way he portrays humanity's futile struggle against cosmic forces. His work has a tragic vision; a sense that human life has to be endured. Hardy's vision is said to be stoical as it involves an acceptance of fate. In Hardy’s novels, a combining observation about the human condition is generally implicit rather than explicit. Tempting as it may be to bring in such historical details as Hardy's miserable marriage with Emma, conveys an extraneous matters to colour his or her statement of theme. Even though such a jaded relationship as that of the Henchard’s at the beginning of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* may be related to the Hardy’s' marital problems, one should not assume that the persona or narrative voice is that of the historical Thomas Hardy himself. Therefore, it would be unwise to say that in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* the theme concerns the impossibility of finding personal fulfilment inside a conventional marriage—after all, Elizabeth-Jane's and Donald Farfrae's is a conventional marriage, but it seems happy since the partners are intellectually and emotionally well-matched.
Again, in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, there are a number of themes, but a single
unifying principle of human existence emerges from the relationships of the principal
characters. Although suffering and death are ineluctable, Angel Clare through his lack of
empathy for Tess on their wedding night and his apparent rejection of her brings upon Tess
more suffering than she deserves and unwittingly drives her towards the final catastrophe, the
murder of Alec D’Urbervilles. Only after it is too late does Angel, realising Tess's true worth,
accept responsibility for his own actions. Tess is an odd combination of contraries: a bleak
who nevertheless struggles for happiness and fulfilment in a world bent on denying her both.
Because of his versatile authorial role, Thomas Hardy succeeds in generating his own
regional mythology through the creation of fictional Wessex. Through the establishment of
literary Wessex, Hardy rearticulates the role of the regional writer in depicting his subject.
Half realism, half local mythology, the author’s works depict a Pre-Industrial England with
largely Old World values that is threatened by modern ideology. Hardy was fascinated by
transience, change, mortality, time, human vanity, war, power, nature, human cruelty and the
past. Hardy’s tone is typically ironic. He sees the unexpected twists and surprises that life
throws at people. His work provides keen psychological insights. Hardy's tone ranges from
awe to despair. Images of nature are frequently accompanied by a tone of amazement, while
images of human foolishness are usually conveyed in a bitter or hopeless tone. In his role of
detached observer, Hardy's tone is commonly full of knowing irony. Hardy uses original
images that appeal to the reader's intelligence Hardy's tone is often bleak and communicates a
sense of loss. He is also nostalgic, idealising and longing for the past. Yet he can sometimes
view a memory in an ironic or realistic way. A lot of Hardy's works are relatively simple and
yet skilful. Yet, some of his poetic writing can be difficult due to old-fashioned words and
phrases. Some of his poems are regarded as deliberately obscure. Hardy claimed that he often
tried to hide his art or craft behind awkwardness.
By studying two of his major novels, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* and *The Return of the Native*, the literary enthusiast can better understand Thomas Hardy’s scholarly ability of combining local folklore and tradition with decidedly modern ideologies, for instance the fascinating tension between his modern femme fatale heroines and his anachronistic rural settings. This notion is further demonstrated through the various pagan images present throughout his major works. A major theme in Hardy’s novels is the tension between the Pre-Industrial pastoral world and the Post-Industrial concepts of individuality. Thomas Hardy is perhaps the most successful author to address these two seemingly contradictory ideas: he quite brilliantly preserves pastoral Dorset culture while incorporating modern ideology. This rare combination of ideologies enables the author to critically explore the gradual modernization of the English countryside at the end of the 19th century. The intense bleak novels of Hardy contain themes already like social injustice, the position of women in Victorian society, the hypocrisy of religion and the invalidity of existing societal mores. However, the over-arching theme of the novel is the human condition, which Hardy believes is inescapable and inevitable.

One who reads Hardy imagines his content to be a personal tragedy rather than a fictitious creation. The book created outrage upon its unabridged publication, and Hardy's wife left him soon after. But the consciousness of Hardy, through his masterly use of language, could not be appeased. The moral, spiritual, and emotional face of society passes the reader by, as the characters continually do in relation to the characters of Hardy. Hardy had a vision of a post religious society. He grew up in an era of narrow religious values and certainties. These ideas were beginning to vanish during his mature years as a poet. Instead of the traditional ways of understanding, Hardy realised that science had reshaped humanity's vision of itself.
Hardy is keenly aware that civilisations and political arrangements last a limited time, pass and are replaced. Equally he knows that childhood and youth make way for a different future. Hardy frequently glorifies the past in order to emphasise its passing or to contrast it with the present. Sometimes Hardy ironically suggests people don't learn from the past. He also believes that human lives and events are predetermined, though we don't foresee the outcome. He has a vision that death, decay and mistakes are inevitable in human life. The retrospective view of history is not the only way of understanding events - there are hidden forces that shape our future, long before the destined events occur. Though destiny is inevitable, humans cannot figure it out in advance. Unknown outcomes reshape the plans that people have for themselves. Tragedy, though unforeseen, is never far away. More rarely, Hardy depicts a happy turn of events. Hardy shows an awareness of mutability in politics and human affairs. The present differs from the past, often regrettably. Hardy often displays nostalgia for childhood or for a more innocent time. Yet, one thing that doesn't change in his view is the stupidity of war and human vanity. Sometimes nature illustrates change through its cycles. At other times, forces of nature represent permanence, in contrast to human feelings and prosperity. Though Hardy is often an estranged observer of life, he cherishes intimacy and a sense of belonging. He recognises that these provide human identity. To him, they are essential and universal traits. He idealises family, community and marriage while persisting with his guise as the lone gazer or observer. When Hardy is the speaker, he sometimes seems to be a sensitive individual who internalises his experiences of life through recorded observation and reflection. Sometimes he uses dialogue to dramatise memories of family life. He alters or reworks moments of belonging or intimacy from the past in a romantic way, implying they were sweetly harmonious or more innocent than the present. He glorifies the beginning of his failed marriage as a moment from a medieval romance.
Hardy despises human pride and presumption. He refers with relish to events that show the futility of human schemes. Hardy is didactic in the way he uses mishaps and failures as lessons in the stupidity of human presumption. All the major Victorian writers, with Arnold as their representative spokesman, have been aware of the philosophical, cultural, social and economic changes and helped to bring about and reinforce man's sense of estrangement. Many characters during the Victorian to early Modern literature era were estranged. Causes of alienation during this time period included familial separation, social class or gender restrictions, and self-isolation from society. These characters may display the common causes of estrangement, but are still connected to their families and society. Some characters may alienate themselves, yet find that they can never truly separate from family and/or society. While on the surface many characters may seem to be alienated, it is clear that every character is not alienated and is connected through familial ties, love, or money.

He holds his age in scorn because it is not interested in form. Hardy’s objection to the tastes of his age is grounded in an abhorrence of the results of literary realism. Characters were alienated during this time period due to four main causes: family, social class, gender, or self-estrangement which leads to discovery of oneself. A character that appeared to be alienated because of family problems and social class restrictions which lead them to a sense of estrangement which is evident in the major Victorian writers and this theme of estrangement is dealt with in almost all the novels of Thomas Hardy. The problem of human isolation and estrangement is an extensive theme that has not been sufficiently studied in Thomas Hardy's fiction. This research traces the theme of estrangement focusing on Hardy's major novels. Although the term 'estrangement' is one of the most outstanding features of this age, it is not very clear what it precisely means. The numerous connections in which the term has been used are restricted to include only a few
meanings and applications among which the most important refers to a disparity between one's society and one's spiritual interests or welfare.

The theme of estrangement, then, is investigated in representative texts from the wide track of Victorian literature. It is clear that the central intellectual characteristic of the Victorian age is the sense of want of coincidence between the forms of modern Europe and its spirit. The increasing difficulty of reconciling historical and spiritual aspects has become a major topic for Hardy and other late Victorians.

Chapter I serves as an introduction to the thesis elaborating the contextual meaning of the term, ‘Estrangement’. It also speaks about the life and works of Thomas Hardy. Next, each of Hardy's major novels is given a chapter in which the theme of estrangement is traced. Chapter II deals with Hardy’s *Far from the Madding Crowd*.

*Far from the Madding Crowd* is Hardy’s first masterpiece and it went near to being his greatest. Only *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* surpasses it, and for sheer Hardian quality one I doubt whether even the Mayor of Caster bridge, even Jude the Obscure, quite reaches the wonderful heights of the first wonder of all. – (HCD 10)

*Far from the Madding Crowd* is central in no less than its classic richness and spaciousness convey with an impression of confident ease and surging inspiration. After many readings it remains his most absolutely satisfying novel, the most characteristic expression of Hardy’s genius. (JB 1)

The opening chapter is memorable for an everlastingly beautiful picture of Bathsheba on the halted wagon, with Gabriel oak unseen but critically observant, the whole scene steeped in colour and sunlight. This chapter with its fresh, clear atmosphere, is followed by the classic ‘Norcombe hill by night’, which passes from pure description to a moving picture of lambing operations. The last chapters, where Gabriel and Bathsheba find
beauty in loneliness by breaking it inside of Hardy’s outlook on life: his faith in that camaraderie, the product of experience endured side, which alone can make love strong as death. It is also the logical and long-foreseen end of the story: this is where destiny, character and the fitness of things have been leading.

This novel is one of those few among the Wessex Novels in which beauty is commensurate with greatness. The action passes against a rich background of pasture and byre, sheep-fir and sheep-farm. And when we add to all this the constant and expert use of one of the grandest of the chorus groups – Smallbury, the aged Maltster, with Jacobe and William, his son and a grandson Joseph poor grass of the saintly profile, Jan Coggan, ‘Henery’ Fray, Mark Clark and Matthew Moon – we find we have a pattern woven so cunningly of love, courage and death, beauty, humour and the basic meaning of life, that the annals of creative fiction will not often provide its equal. (HCD 14)

The nature of such comedy is nothing less than things as they really are: its principle is the presentation in art of the incongruity of life. In Far from the Madding Crowd, no less than in Chaucer and Shakespeare in the Odyssey or in Joyce’s Ulysses, ‘Joy after woe and woe after gladness’ is shown forth as the spring and source of art, of the power that a Matthew Arnold said can calm and satisfy us as no other can. (JB 1)

The success of Far From the Madding Crowd confirmed him in his resolve to become ‘a good hand at a serial’. (FEH 100) Critics praised the novel for its intimate knowledge of the rural community and for the vividness and power of Hardy’s imagination although Leslie Stephen, the editor of the Cornhill Magazine in which the novel was first serialized, raised the question of sexual impropriety in his work. This issue was to dog Hardy throughout his career as a novelist. In Far from the Madding Crowd, Boldwood’s neurotic and self-destructive nature makes him the obsessed with Bathsheba, and as a result murders Troy and
suffers the isolation of life imprisonment. Fanny Robin's tragic and lonely death assisted by a dog, is a shameful indictment of society.

Chapter III elucidates the theme of Estrangement in *The Return of the Native*, where Clym is the earliest prototype in Hardy's fiction of alienated modern man. He returns to Egdon Heath only to live in estrangement unable to communicate with the very people whom he thought of as a cure for his estrangement. Eustacia has consistently been leading a life of estrangement in Egdon Heath which leads to her suicide.

Probably none of Hardy’s novels is as popular now as *The Return of the Native*: yet since its first appearance none has provoked more contradictory interpretations. Its strong feeling for the more mysterious qualities of human nature has no doubt been part of its enduring charm. Even so, it is a far more plainly intelligible book than some of its commentators have been prepared to admit – and the published criticism of it is full of curious feats of fantasy and wilful blindness. (DM 11)

*The Return of the Native* is the book of Egdon Heath; without Egdon it would not hold together. With most of the other novels the scene could be reversed to some other part of Wessex without vitally affecting the story: this story could not run its course anywhere other than amid the solitudes of Egdon. Egdon influences all the human characters, moving them to love, to despair, or to the philosophic mind. Even pretty Thomasine, to whom it is just “a ridiculous old place”, confesses she could live nowhere else. (HCD 16). D.H.Lawrence in his ‘study of Thomas hardy’ produced the classic expression of the view that Egdon Heath is the most important character in the book – “Egdon, whose dark soil was strong and crude and organic as the body of a beast”. Egdon has been set before us with all Hardy’s unmatched powers of description. Similarly humanity is also presented in such a way as to leave the spell unbroken. The fantastic reddleman and his unexplained preoccupation; the anomalous old naval officer; mysterious figures on the barrow; the woman
momentarily queen of the solitude, the vanishing into Edgon’s shade, all of them are drawn with humane touch. Nevertheless, the opening, of this novel is not so miraculous as that of *Far From the Madding Crowd*: it is conscious, deliberate not a ‘growth of the soil’, So at the marvellous description of Eustacia that comes presently is the product of an art less exquisite than by which Bathsheba was shown in one bright flash.

Eustacia herself is an otherwise unexampled type in Hardy: a woman who lives to love, and to love in a hot, blind, lustful way. Wildeve is really pitiful, and Eustacia’s intrigues with him are painfully squalid. Troy, at least, had some glamour of tinsel and swordsmanship about him. Troy was fascinating; Wildeve makes even Eustacia yawn.

(HCD 17) It is a grim story, this first of Hardy’s tragedies, with a single, relent less drive to disaster. A striking difference between Shakespeare and Hardy is that in every one of his tragedies, Shakespeare kills both hero and heroine. (HCD 22) This may be due to his sense of artistic finish, or to his tenderness for the children of his hand. Hardy, the president of the immortals, more cruel, leaves, as life generally does, one alive but maimed.

Chapter IV analyses the novel, *The Woodlanders*, which illustrates that wild nature fails to be a regenerative and productive force. It is also human nature that fails to be communicative and assuring. From the streets of a market-town we pass to a scene as remote from civilization as was the life of Egdon, isolated not by space but by trees. In Casterbridge life was complicated by business troubles and the need to make money in little Hintock men are not idle, certainly, but their work consists for the most part in lending a helping hand to nature. In the secluded forest community of little Hintock, Thomas Hardy’s *The Woodlanders* inextricably links the dramatic English landscape with the story of a woman caught between two rivals of radically different social statures. Grace Melbury is promised to her long time companion, Giles Winterborne, a local woodlander and a gentle, steadfast man. When Giles’ socially motivated father pressures her to wed the ambitious
doctor Edred Fitzpiers, Grace’s loyalties shift and her decision leads to tumultuous consequence.

*The Woodlanders*, with its one of Hardy’s most vivid and powerful works. This portrait of five people in an English village who are tangled in a drama of passion, betrayal poverty, and pride of place richly demonstrates all of Hardy’s distinguishing qualities – intimacy with rural England, his feeling for nature, his frankness about physical desire, and his gift for rendering, in the most specific way, the mystery at the heart of things. In this classically simple tale of the disastrous impact of outside life on a secluded community in Dorset, Hardy narrates the rivalry for the hand of Grace Melbury between a simple and loyal woodlander and an exotic and sophisticated outsider. Betrayal, adultery, disillusion, and moral compromise are all worked out in a setting evoked as both beautiful and treacherous. *The Woodlanders*, with its thematic portrayal of the role of social class, gender, and evolutionary survival, as well as its insights into the capacities and limitations of language, exhibits Hardy’s acute awareness of his era’s most troubling dilemmas.

Marty south – ‘ever a lonely maid”, is a superb sketch, but done in too few lines – we should have liked more of her; and Giles Winterborne stands as the only figure in the front rank of Hardy’s great presentations of character. For this reason The woodlanders, though the most beautiful of the Wessex novels has some difficulty in holding place with the greatest of them. The people of Little Hintock fail to communicate with each other. The relationship between Marty and Giles is an "obstructed relationship"; Giles dies a sacrificial death, and Marty ends as a wreck in a rare scene hardly credible in a newly emerging world. Fitzpiers and Mrs Charmond, on the other hand, are estranged in the barren enclosure of their own fantasies. Grace, anticipating Tess and Sue, is torn in a collision between two worlds, neither of which can happily accommodate her.
Tess of the D'Urbervilles, which forms the fifth chapter of the thesis, tells the story of Tess. It is a story of how Tess is cruelly seduced by her relative, the cynical Alec d’Urbervilles, betrayed by the moralist, Angel Clare and haunted by her guilt and shame, becomes in Hardy’s hands an indictment of all the crimes and hypocrisies of nineteenth century England – its pharisaic religion, it’s cruel class – system, the destruction of traditional agriculture and the perversions of the ‘modern’ consciousness. Of all Hardy’s heroines none is more touching than Tess, and of all his novels this is the one with the most universal range, Hardy was never more masterful than here in evoking a vanished rural way of life and even this most tragic of books is lightened by his delightful and clear – eyed humour. This novel was first intended for publication in serial from by the newspaper Syndicate of Tillotson and Son of Bolton, but on seeing a substantial portion of the manuscript, including the seduction a the baptism scene, they rejected it. It was offered in turn to Murray’s Magazine and Macmillan’s Magazine, but rejected by both, on similar moral grounds. When serialized and later on published as book, the novel received an amount of comments and discussion much greater than any of his earlier works. It provoked a storm of critical argument involving prejudices and passions well outside the purely literary sphere. The Atlantic Monthly praised the novel as Hardy’s masterpiece and note particularly its effect of enlarging human sympathy;” it has left at least one reader believing that many of the crimes served up morning and evening in the newspapers would seem less barbarous, less unintelligible, if there were at hand to explain the motives of them, some seer of human nature, some Thomas Hardy”. (COX 11)

Ironical enough, the novel which was rejected for publication by several magazines because ‘magazine must contain nothing which could not be read aloud in any family circle’ did more than any other novel to widen Hardy’s reputation. Tess is the greatest of all the Wessex Novels. The material of Jude the Obscure is vaster and more
varied, but it is not completely digested, where as the development of this story moves with
the rhythmic certainty of music to its predestined end. As beautiful as *Far From the
Madding Crowd* or *The Woodlanders*, it plunges far deeper into the tragic heart of life, and it
has none of the imperfections that mar *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *The Return of the
Native*. Tess herself is the most sublime figure in Hardy, combining supreme beauty with
nobility that elevates the whole conception of human nature. From whatever aspect it is
considered, subsidiary characters landscape background, intellectual and moral content,
adequacy of style. *Tess of the 'Urbervilles* has no superior among Hardy’s novels and it must
take its place among the three or four greatest works of fiction the nineteenth century
produced in England. (HCD 58)

Tess, after her childhood experiences at Marlatt and later at
Trantridge, soon discovers how oppressive society is, particularly when she is rejected by
Angel, whom she loves and through whom she aspires to fulfil herself. Angel suffers from
self-division in his character, and the conflict between received attitudes and advanced ideas
leaves him an embodiment of an alienated man hardly able to reconcile the values of two
worlds. The rarity of studies of the structure of Hardy’s work is surprising, but not difficult to
explain. Both critics and their readers soon became wearied by demonstrations that Hardy’s
mechanical plots were masterpieces of organization. Rigid character alignments like those in
*Far from the Madding Crowd* have lost their appeal, and few readers have attempted to see
more subtle manifestations of structural technique in Hardy. The disinclination to apply
rigorous analysis to Hardy’s novels is the natural result of a strong prejudice still lingering
that Hardy was a simple man and that his books are straightforward, and therefore must be as
structurally innovative as children’s tales. Still, this lacuna in Hardy studies is ironic. Hardy
could reasonably have expected his employment of form to be examined as exhaustively as
any other aspect of his work. Certainly, he was more conscious of the qualities of the forms
of his works than he was of their “philosophy” He always insisted that he was a philosophical impressionist, eschewing responsibility as a thinker.

The formal basis of the last three great novels is open – ended in that no specific demands are made in terms of interrelation of components or interlocking patterns of significance, in contrast to the closed systems of *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *The Return of the Native*. To say that the later novels are open – ended in their formal bases is not to suggest that the forms of these novels are chaotic. The structure of *The Woodlanders* evolves from a concept of local heroism and tragic significance that gives point to its wide range of human types; *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* is a justification of the central role of the protagonist’s consciousness; and the difficulty of accepting the perspective of the narrator or of any character imposes upon *Jude the Obscure* a relativism that the plot fulfills. It is through Hardy’s designs, and through the control they exercise upon the novels, that his concepts of tragedy acquire vitality and specialness. The tragic characters possess intensity and self-awareness; their experiences have universality. Large questions are posed about man’s relationship with the universe he must live in and with the other humans who in personal and social relations constitute his ties to humanity; those questions are explored with responsibility, because choices in Hardy stem from characters inner selves, and bear consequences. In the narrative, tragic vision is focused upon a closely knit series of events, usually occurring in a Wessex scene with qualities of a microcosm, and the vision is maintained through the control of authorial distance and point of view. These characteristics that make up tragedy for Hardy are conventional when stated boldly without attempting to distinguish shadings. But when they operate within his linguistic frame work of yoked naturalness and elaborateness and within his direct and piercing portrayal of the suffering that man causes other men and himself, they help to create the most substantial tragic world which is to be found in English literature during the last hundred years. The novels of Hardy
present to the reader a world of gloom and despair. The influences that formed his gloomy outlook are many. First influence was his lonely childhood. In his young age Hardy loved loneliness and led isolated life which made him strongly give an impact to all of his characters. The only people who are happy in the novel are the rustics who have no desires and aspirations. Hardy believes that a state of desirelessness is the only way to happiness.

The above novels of Hardy foreshadow the modern themes of failure, frustration, futility, disharmony, isolation, rootlessness, and absurdity as inescapable conditions of life. Conclusion, which formulates the seventh chapter, is a formal summation of the thesis through which we can understand that the theme of estrangement in the major novels of Thomas Hardy is a pervasive one. Nevertheless, not all his characters are estranged; however, their happy condition, like that of the rustics in Gray's Elegy, is seen to stem from their intellectual limitations. The novels of Hardy clearly portrays how the Victorian’s felt a sense of something lost due to the rapid changes which were taking place in the society. The above discussed novels of Thomas Hardy expose apprehensive thoughts inside the internal psyche, reflecting the anxious minds of those in the Victorian period who had concerns regarding the future, which ultimately created fears of isolation and a sense of estrangement from the world they were accustomed to.