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Investigating the Eco- criticism and Urbanization Features
in Thomas Hardy's Literary Works

تقصي النقد البيئي وملامح التحضر في أعمال توماس هاردي الأدبية

A Thesis Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for PhD. Degree in
English literature

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my family members .

Acknowledgments

The researcher acknowledges this work to Allah , the Exalted Almighty , and prays that this work may receive His blessing and consent and it may attract those who read it and inspire them . My first and foremost acknowledgment is to all those who support me during the long years of PhD study Specifically my **supervisor Dr. Mahmoud Ali** at University of Sudan for Science and Technology for his effort patience guidance and support ,without his help this study wouldn't have been completed. I am also grateful to **UstazYeheia Saeed** and **Mr. Ahmed Hussein** for their ideas and encouragement at the beginning of this study. I express my high sense of gratitude to **Ustaz Osama Abdallafor** providing me with software facilities . I am grateful to the publication G town and it's staff for taking care of my research and giving it due attention . I finally pray to Allah , the Almighty , to bless my humble efforts with his acceptance and I admit that He is always generous and praise be to him .

Abstract

The English writer Thomas Hardy was able to come out to the world with a great literary production because of his great ability to master his language. Hardy was able to employ his abilities and experiences especially in his novels *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *Return of the Native* and *Tess of d'Urberville*. Hardy thought to bring to our attention how urbanization can have detrimental effect on nature despite the fact that urbanization was highly hailed by industrialists and economists. The analytical descriptive approach to analysis was employed in the present work to examine the novels in depth. The study concluded that Hardy was successful in presenting the culture, customs and traditions of rural English in his literary production in alignment with the concept of urbanization which is the major theme of the study as was visualized by eco-critics. Hardy also took advantage of the western art skills in his novels to reflect the full mastery of portraying the English society with its customs, traditions, and laws in all aspects of its life in the light of the advent of machine and modern architecture. The study made very strong suggestions and recommendations to researchers in areas of urbanization not covered by the present study.

Abstract
(Arabic Version)
مستخلص الدراسة

إستطاع الكاتب الإنجليزي توماس هاردي من الخروج إلى العالم بإنتاج أدبي كبير بسبب قدرته الكبيرة على إتقان لغته. كان هاردي قادرًا على توظيف قدراته وخبراته وخاصة في رواياته بعيدًا عن العالم المجنون ، عودة مواطن وتيس من دوربيرفيل. فكر هاردي في لفت انتباهنا إلى أي مدى يمكن أن يكون للتحضر تأثير ضار على الطبيعة على الرغم من أن التحضر كان موضع ترحيب كبير من قبل الصناعيين والاقتصاديين. تم استخدام المنهج الوصفي التحليلي في التحليل الحالي في دراسة الروايات بعمق. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن هاردي كان ناجحًا في تقديم ثقافة وعادات وتقاليد اللغة الإنجليزية الريفية في إنتاجه الأدبي بما يتماشى مع مفهوم التحضر وهو كان الموضوع الرئيسي للدراسة كما تصوره نقاد البيئة. كما استفاد هاردي من المهارات الفنية الغربية في رواياته لتعكس إتقان كامل لتصوير المجتمع الإنجليزي بعاداته وتقاليد وقوانينه في جميع جوانب حياته في ضوء ظهور الآلات والعمارة الحديثة. قدمت الدراسة اقتراحات وتوصيات قوية للغاية للباحثين في مجالات التحضر غير المشمولة بهذه الدراسة.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter light will be shed on those patterns taken from the three novels in question for the purpose of exploring the major themes relating to the issue in question. The study seeks to pinpoint the question of urbanization as a phenomenon which was raised in literature for the first time in Hardy's novels more conspicuously.

1.1 Preview

This study sets out to explore the effect of urbanization from a purely literary view on nature chiefly guided by the beliefs of Eco critics. In the history of literature there is a deep link between eco-criticism and literature which goes as far back as the pre-Victorian era. However, as a scientific discipline, eco-criticism emerged in 1990s.

As eco-criticism is still a fledgling literary critical approach, scholars and particularly environmentalists are currently working vigorously to furnish the world with a workable definition on what eco-criticism is about. Sheryll Glotfelty, one of the pioneers in the field, defines 'eco-criticism' by saying: "The study of the relationship between literature and physical environment".

The chief objective of eco-criticism is to establish a conceptual foundation between literature and the environment. Literary works are critically held as an aesthetical and cultural structured part of the environment as long as they directly addresses human faculties of imagination, language, value and meaning which are intended ultimately to be linked with the issue ecological consciousness which humans seek to accomplish. Literary works have long addressed environmental crisis and opened human eyes to the hazards of neglecting nature or tamper with. Therefore, raising ecological consciousness and thinking has been one of the salient aims of literary works produced by certain novelists as Hardy and Dickens.

Ethical and aesthetic global crises pertaining to nature and environment are inseparable issues in literary critical thinking. These powerful indicators have forced literary scholars to recognize the important role literature and criticism play in understanding man's position in ecosphere. Literature can be explored to testify to man's destructive behavior towards his environment. Works of Thomas Hardy and Charles Dickens can be taken as good example to account for that behavior. In his essay, "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Eco-criticism," William Rueckert defines eco-criticism as "the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature, because ecology (as a science, as a discipline, as the basis for human vision) has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the world" (1996:107).

In this study the possible relation between literature and nature are closely explored with reference to ecology. The aim is to find a common ground for the human and nonhuman coexistence in this universe in absolutely good terms. Environmental issues are most prominent concerns for the entire humanity as hazardous behavior can endanger all human beings across the globe. This is one of the main targets of eco-criticism is to find a position for literary thinking in handling ecological issues. Eco-critics believe that literature can actually play as much important a central role in solving environmental problems as that of empirical disciplines. Reference was made to ecological problems in literary works before environmentalists have started to think about the deterioration of our environment.

Charles Dickens, for example, touched on the ethical questions of human population growth and density in many of his novels. One of Dickens' most famous characters, Ebenezer Scrooge, said in response to a request to help the poor who "would rather die" than go to the workhouses, "if they'd rather die, then they had better do it and decrease the surplus population." This idea of a "surplus population" was not an uncommon belief in England during the 19th century, though Dickens himself deplored it. Ebenezer Scrooge is the focal

character of Charles Dickens' 1843 novella, *A Christmas Carol*. At the beginning of the novella, Scrooge is a cold-hearted miser who despises Christmas. Dickens describes him thus: "The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, made his eyes red, his thin lips blue, and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice..." Throughout *A Christmas Carol* the personality of Ebenezer Scrooge shifts from a man who only cares about himself and his wealth to a man who cares about others.

1.2 Eco-criticism

Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) is generally held to have inspired modern environmentalism. It begins with 'A Fable for Tomorrow'. Carson's fairy tale opens with the words, 'There was once a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings' and, invoking the ancient tradition of the pastoral, goes on to paint a picture of 'prosperous farms', 'green fields', foxes barking in the hills, silent deer, ferns and wildflowers, 'countless birds' and trout lying in clear, cold streams, all delighted in by those who pass through the town (1999:21). Concentrating on images of natural beauty and emphasizing the 'harmony' of humanity and nature that 'once' existed, the fable at first presents us with a picture of essential changelessness, which human activity scarcely disturbs, and which the annual round of seasons only reinforces. However, pastoral peace rapidly gives way to catastrophic destruction:

Then a strange blight crept over the area and everything began to change. Some evil spell had settled on the community: mysterious maladies swept the flocks of chickens; the cattle and sheep sickened and died. Everywhere was a shadow of death.

In the ensuing paragraphs, every element of the rural idyll is torn apart by some agent of change, the mystery of which is emphasized by the use of both natural and supernatural terminology of 'malady' and 'spell'. The most impassioned passage concerns the collapse in bird populations: 'On the mornings that had

once throbbed with the dawn chorus of robins, catbirds, doves, jays, wrens, and scores of other bird voices there was now no sound; only silence lay over the fields and woods and marsh' (1999: 22). The 'silent spring' of the title alludes, on one level, to this loss of birdsong, although it also comes to function as a synecdoche for a more general environmental apocalypse.

So the founding text of modern environmentalism not only begins with a decidedly poetic parable, but also relies on the literary genres of pastoral and apocalypse, pre-existing ways of imagining the place of humans in nature that may be traced back to such sources as Genesis and Revelation, the first and last books of the Bible. *Silent Spring* initially suggests that the mythical eco-catastrophe of the fable might be supernatural, and emphasizes this by including an epigram from Keats' poem 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci', in which the magical power of a beautiful woman blights the environment: 'The sedge is withered from the lake, / And no birds sing.' But then the fable concludes: 'No witchcraft, no enemy action had silenced the rebirth of new life in this stricken world. The people had done it themselves.' The rest of the book sets out to prove that such an apocalypse was already going on in a fragmentary way all over America, so that the doom befalling this mythical town of the future could be seen as a composite of lesser tragedies already known, and scientifically validated, in 1962.

The interrelation between man and nature owes their origins to ancient civilizations of the world, right from the Pharaohs in African and Mesopotamia and China in Asia. Since that early period of time man has been glorifying and even worshipping different aspects of natural features. The 'mysterious' nature has attracted man throughout history, and the link between them continues to govern the mystic relationship thereon.

Nineteenth century American naturalists and explorers are often credited by eco-critics as having initiated the idea of nature conservation. These writers (naturalists and explorers) were different from the literary authors because their

work mainly focuses on the scientific descriptions of environmental phenomena. Nonetheless, many of their writings are imbued with a poetic spirit that makes their ideas accessible to the ordinary reader. The views of John Burroughs, and John Muir found expressions in their collection of essays 'Wake..Robin' and 'Birds and Poets' in 1877. They strikingly mingle between scientific description and talented literary sense. Muir , who was originally Scottish, finally turned to become an active defender of environment in the United States of America .

The literary movement of eco-critics could also be traced in Britain in the late nineteenth century, when the romantic poets strongly reacted against the eighteenth century emphasis on what they called 'reason'. They sought new ways of expressing their thoughts and feelings. William Wordsworth, for instance, is considered, even in modern times, the spokesman of the Romantic Movement. In many of his poems and lyrics, he celebrated the beauty and mystery of romance.

Modern critics, particularly, those who are associated with the school of eco-criticism, view Wordsworth as the 'godfather' of the eternal physical and spiritual reflection, which is often over- disputed; when it comes to view the relationship between humans and nature from an exclusively sophist perspective.

In the same respect, important figures can be mentioned, including Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, Lord Byron, Percy Shelley, through T. S. Eliot, whose masterpiece, *The Waste Land*, stands a landmark which can be viewed as a bio-diverse source, as well as a transcendental literary work.

Recent studies have viewed *The Waste Land* from an ecocritical point of view. Indeed, it has been associated with the field of eco-critics, and some critics consider it as the border area between romanticism and realism.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

To study Thomas Hardy in relation to eco-criticism, a critical theory introduced in the 1990s can be a challenging question. The problem with this issue is that

literature is never viewed as one of the instruments which can be exploited to find solution for ecological problems. Man's struggle with nature is as old as the creation. Reviewing some old chronicles of ancient civilization will reveal how harsh was nature on prehistoric man who was not well armed to withstand its cruel grip. Sometimes man's suffering mainly comes from interfering with nature. The overlap between man and nature has been noticed in ancient human inscriptions and drawings, as in ancient China, ancient Egypt or the ancient civilization of Bables. Since that early period of time man has been glorifying and even worshipping different aspects of natural features. The 'mysterious' nature has attracted man throughout history, and the link between them continues to environ and govern the mystic relationship thereon.

This trend may explain the lively work of the contemporary environmental movements all over the world. Organizations, like Nature our Mother, Nature's Friends or Eco-friends... etc. believes that ecological influence upon humanity is instinctive, rather than socially organized activities. Our love and respect for nature is believed, according to many scientists, to have a special relationship with our instincts of survival. We love nature because we love to survive. We regret to see a dead wild animal, or to witness the cutting down of a beautiful green tree, or even to see someone who savagely damages flowers or delicate plantations. Thus, nature has continued to formulate the most important source of inspiration in terms of human works of art.

1.4 Objectives

This study takes as its objectives the following points

1. It can be proved that literature has a central role to play in providing solutions to many ecological problems afflicting the world today through its viable handling of these issues.
2. Literature has precedence over empirical science in addressing environmental issues as was reflected in the writings of novelists, like Thomas Hardy, Dickens and even Shakespeare.

3. There is a close interrelationship between literature, nature and culture and each variable affects the other ones quite considerably.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study derives its significance from the fact of addressing an issue from purely literature viewpoint that would seem illogical to handle from that perspective. Laws enacted to protect the environment and stop the ongoing ecological deterioration have vastly failed to curb the environmental damage, to such an extent that some said “law have been made to be broken”. Literature, would then expected to furnish the world with the next best alternative. It may reawaken our deeper feelings about the powerful ties we have with the natural world. Eco-criticism, as a new literary school, weaves together the various strands of culture and nature. It takes the initiative to clarify the interconnected relationships between nature and culture; making new cultural bonds between man and environment. It stresses the fact that our environment cannot be exclusively solved through holding international conferences such as land summits passing of laws for preservation of soils. Rather, that can be achieved through love of nature. Nature writings, including fiction, can well tolerate the responsibility of solving current world environmental problems. Eco-criticism, in this regard, proposes that people should feel and act, not as members, or partners in a particular country, but as members of the planet. Such a notion should inspire humanity to work together to put an end to the shame of environment degradation.

1.6 Hypotheses

1. Passing of new global ecological bills is not enough for the protection of our environment.
2. Literature, through rekindling our deeper feelings and closeness to nature, can be a rich spiritual source that can make a significant contribution to the global efforts exerted to conserve nature.

3. Eco-criticism, by addressing relevant literary works, has proved much more effective in reawakening our spirits and love of nature than global ecological laws.

1.7 Methodology

Critical-comparative analysis method will be adopted here in this study, where different texts by different novelists and poets namely Hardy and Dickens will be presented and discussed. The aim is to show is to trace those parts that relate directly to nature as envisaged by the eco-critics and underscore the role of literature in raising the alarm to the hazards besetting nature due to the irrational intrusion of man.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Eco-criticism

Eco-Criticism is the study of literature and the environment from an interdisciplinary point of view, where literature scholars analyze texts that illustrate environment concerns and examine the various ways literature treats the subject of nature. Some eco-critics brain-storm possible solutions for the correction of the contemporary environmental situation, though not all eco-critics agree on the purpose, methodology, or scope of eco-criticism. Eco-criticism is often associated with the Association for the study of the literature and Environment (ASLE), which hosts biennial meetings for scholars who deal with environmental matters in literature. The Association for the study of literature and environment (ASLE) is the principal professional association for American and international scholars of eco-criticism. It was founded in 1992 at special session of the western literature Association conference in Reno, Nevada for the purpose of the sharing of facts, ideas, and texts concerning the study of literature and the environment. One of the most famous pioneer who works in this field is Cheryl Glot Felty's working definition in the eco-criticism reader is that eco-criticism is the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment, and one of the implicit goals of the approach is to recoup professional dignity for what Glot Felty calls the undervalued genre of nature writing.

The researcher recognize the reader about Lawrence Buell who defines "eco-criticism as study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis". Simon Estok noted in 2001 that "eco-criticism has distinguished itself, debates notwithstanding, firstly by the ethical stand it takes its commitment to rather than simply

as an object of thematic study, and secondly, by its commitments to making connections”. The field of enquiry that analyzes and promotes works about human interaction with nature ,while also motivating audiences to live within a limit that will be binding over generations” In addition of all these definition The researcher added this definition to define eco-criticism as a method of literary theory that incorporates the study of geographic space. The term designates a number of different critical practices .In France Bertrand Westphal has elaborated the concept of geo-critique in several works .In united state Ropert Tally has argued for a geo-criticism as a critical practice suited to analysis of what he has termed literary cartography., The researcher illustrates that how eco-criticism meets geo-criticism in a significant mount. American interest in geo-criticism has been coming from ecologically minded literary critics, with Scott Slovic, founding president of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) and editor of ISLE (Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment), writing approvingly of Bertrand Westphal’s approach and encouraging the integration of his work into the eco-critical canon. Given their mutual interest in issues like place, space, landscape, and nature, it is not surprising to find this kind of convergence between eco-criticism and geo-criticism. Nonetheless, the differences between geo-criticism and eco-criticism, like those between geography and ecology, are significant and worthy of close examination. Although the two approaches are clearly complementary, the questions and goals that shaped them differ in important respects. The purpose of this essay is to examine some of the zones of overlap between the two fields in order to consider some ways in which the two approaches can complement, correct, and inspire each other. Westphal’s primary interest is in the literary representation of space and place: environmental politics and nature writing are secondary concerns for him, a subset of his topic a bout which he has relatively little to say. Thus , although Westphal pays tribute, in passing, to eco-critical studies as one possible form that geo-critical

thinking can take, and although he shows an occasional interest in nature writing, he is silent on questions of environmental activism and on ontological-questions about the place of man within nature. He is clearly much more interested in the cultural history of cities than in natural history and in exploring questions of literary semiotics than in promoting sound environmental stewardship. Eco-criticism, on the other hand, has a strong activist bent, motivated by an acute awareness of the impact that human cultures have on the environment. But it sometimes.

Underestimates the complexity of the referential relationship between text and world, and on this point Westphal's work has much to offer eco-critics, as his approach is especially good at teasing out the semiotic complexity of spatial representations and the dialectical nature of the relationships between texts and their real-world referents. Westphal, and those of us working in his wake, build on this cross-disciplinary effort to bring together humanistic and social scientific of inquiry by asking what, precisely, the literary study of space and place can contribute to work being done in the social sciences and vice versa. To what extent, for example, do fictional depictions of place enrich our understanding of real-world places? More specifically, do they contribute something that other modes of representation do not? Or, given the fact that literary texts are not subject to the constraints of veracity and falsifiability, should they be considered to have a weaker epistemological status than scientific or documentary representations of place?

2.2 Westphal's Role in Ecocriticism

Westphal's answer to this last question is an emphatic *au contraire*. For him, literature has a crucial role to play in this process of breaking down borders and exploring the spaces between established sites. Central to Westphal's conception of literary criticism is the conviction that literature not only represents the world around us, but participates actively in the production of that world. As he writes:

“I will never get tired of repeating that action does not reproduce the real, but actualizes new virtualities that had remained unformulated, and that then go on to interact with the real according to the hyper textual logic of interfaces. [...] fiction detects possibilities buried in the folds of the real, knowing that these folds have not been temporalized. (171)”

In support of this thesis, Westphal turns to possible worlds theory, as exemplified in the work of Thomas Pavel and Lubomír Doležel, as well as related efforts like Paul Ricoeur’s *Time and Narrative* and the fictional pragmatics of Kendall Walton, all of which provide important correctives to the structuralist and poststructuralist emphasis on textuality and auto-referentiality.⁸ This is not the place to go into a full-blown discussion of these theories, but they share the conviction that fiction (and other hypothetical modes of thinking), by creating alternative realities that overlap in various significant ways with the world as we know it, has a powerful referential function, getting us to think about the real world in ways that would have been impossible without this hypothetical instantiation from the world in which we live. They emphasize the extent to which fiction provides a way for ordinary people to better understand the world around them and to think through the problems they may encounter in their practical lives. Fictional texts, in this view, provide not only aesthetic pleasure, but also serve as an aid in the discernment of important features of the real world that would not have become apparent without them. This quasifunctional view of art is as old as Aristotle’s *Poetics*, but Westphal’s use of possible worlds theory and fictional pragmatics illustrates the ways in which these mechanisms can be brought to bear on the places we inhabit and/or visit. Moreover, he pushes this logic one step further, suggesting that fictional representations of place can have a powerful performative function, changing the ways we view the places through which we move, including, and perhaps especially, the places we thought we knew, whose characteristics and “meaning” had seemed to be settled once and for all. Because fictional presentation of place

are unconstrained by the demands of documentary veracity and scientific falsifiability, they can help to bring about real change in the world, fostering the emergence of new kinds of places. Fictions, in this view, are not simply distractions from the real world (entertainment), nor objects meant to be judged in purely aesthetic or formal terms (art), but performative operations, which have the ability to bring about change in the world (action, praxis).

In keeping with this performative, enactive understanding of literature's value as a mode of thinking that works through indirect reference, Westphal formulates his theory of geo-criticism in pragmatic terms, emphasizing the interface between fictional representations of real-world places and the places themselves. These relationships are highly variable, ranging from what he calls "homotopic" depictions of place (in which the fictional place is compatible with what we know of the place, as in Honoré de Balzac's Paris or James Joyce's Dublin) to "heterotopic" representations (which explicitly diverge from the facts as we know them, as in David Foster Wallace's Great Ohio Desert). Westphal also recognizes the importance of purely fictional places (Trantor, Middlemarch, and Poldévie), but what interests him above all is the interface between fictional representations of real world places and the textual dynamics that enable these fictions to work their magic on our understanding of those places.

(Symptomatically, Westphal sometimes uses the term "real world," complete with scare quotes, in order to emphasize the extent to which he sees places in the real world as being shaped by textual representations.) From a literary and theoretical standpoint, there is much useful food for thought here, especially the strategies that Westphal puts into place as part of the effort to overcome the perspectival limits of subjectivity and ethnocentrism, his careful treatment of the complex referential relationship between literature and its geospatial referents, and his demonstration of the performativity potential of literary representations of place and their ability to inflect the social production of space and shape the ways we inhabit the world.

2.3 Eco-critical Perspective

The researcher discusses this:” From an eco-critical perspective, however, there is one surprising thing that Westphal has left out of his account: the role of direct experience in shaping our understanding of the spaces and places we inhabit. At no time does Westphal consider the role that direct observation and field work might contribute to the geo-critical enterprise, even if only as one point of reference among others. To be sure, he does not deny that it might be useful to visit the places studied, or that personal affection for or interest in a place might be the underlying driver of geo-critical research—he simply doesn’t address such issues; they don’t even come up. This is understandable to some extent in what is after all a book of literary theory, but given the fact that he insists so strongly on the relationship between texts and their real-world referents, it seems odd that he shows so little concern for going out to make contact with those real-world referents without textual mediation. How can we explain this surprising omission?

The answer, I think, is that Westphal’s approach is conditioned by a specifically postmodern sensitivity to the difficulty of gaining any sure sense of what the world “out there” is like. Sharing Lyotard’s “incredulity with regard to meta-narratives,” as well as Guy Debord’s and Jean Baudrillard’s awareness of the highly mediatized world we live in, he refuses to accept any simplistic understanding of the world as something that is simply “out there.” For Westphal, it seems a true understanding of any given place can only come from the confrontation of different texts, using the techniques of “multifocalization” to create a “network of literary representations” that “correct and complete each other.” This, he tells us, shall be one of the “methodological invariants” of geocriticism (187–188).

In other words, despite his insistence on the referential function of literature and the interface between fiction and the real, Westphal seems to be leaving us with an interface between some texts and other texts. Or, to put it another way,

Westphal's theory of reality amounts to a theory of intertextuality. This leads him to make statements that seem to fall back into a form of textolatry not too far removed from the structuralist and poststructuralist "segregationism" he had decried in the chapter on preferentiality. This becomes apparent in statements like the following Calvino inspired assertion. As soon as the city ceases to produce text, according to Calvino, it ceases to exist. Like Scheherazade? It is the same for all places, urban or otherwise. Which suggests the following disturbing question: what happens to this city that no one is putting down on paper at the moment I write, or that you read? (234) For Westphal, then, our access to the real is always mediated by various forms of textuality. And in this he seems to remain beholden to the French structuralist tradition that his theory of performativity and possible worlds semantics was meant to overcome. On the one hand, he agrees with Thomas Pavel that it is necessary to break "definitively with structuralism and its autotelic logic" (156), which gave rise to the "textolatry" of the structuralist and poststructuralist moments, and deconstructionist dogma on the nonexistence of any kind of hors texte. On the other hand, he is equally sensitive to the need to avoid falling back into what, quoting Brian McHale, he calls "the nostalgia for a non-problematic mimesis" (156), and this latter concern leads him to fall back into some of the structuralist patterns he is trying to contest.

It is on this point, I believe, that the ecologically oriented epistemology promoted by ecocriticism, which emphasizes the place of humans within nature, may be able to offer an important corrective to Westphal's theory, enabling him to overcome the onto-epistemological conundrum that makes it so difficult to break with the textualist partisanship of the structuralists and their deconstructionist avatars. A few words on the nature of this problem will help to understand how ecological thinking can help, without denying the vital role that textual representations play in shaping our understanding of the world around us.

Westphal finds himself confronted with what is essentially a postmodern variant of the problem of radical doubt, a problem that goes back through Kant and Descartes to Plato and that is itself rooted in the problem of subject-object dualism. How do I know that the world around me is as I believe it to be? Without a convincing answer to this question, one finds oneself subject to all of the aporia of radical doubt that questions our ability to gain reliable information about the world. But, as most ecologically oriented thinkers recognize, if human subjectivity is rooted in the brain, which is in turn integrated into the extended sensorimotor apparatuses of the body, which are in their turn engaged in constant exchanges with the body's environing milieu, then the aporia of dualism and radical doubt tend to disappear. This is why the concept of embodiment plays such an important role in phenomenologically infected theories of human consciousness like those of Edward Casey, Jeff Malpas, Francisco Varela, and others. The human subject is not separable from the world around it, as the mirror image of the subject/object formulation seems to suggest, but a member of the world, whose perceptual and cognitive structuralism belong to and are shaped on every level by the encompassing structures of that world.

One of the underlying tenets of ecocriticism is that human subjectivity is something that is disseminated throughout the larger order of nature and is in turn fully penetrated by it. A quick perusal of *The Ecocriticism Reader*—which, published in 1996, provided the first major definitional moment in the nascent field of ecocriticism—yields a number of statements emphasizing the interconnectedness of human consciousness and its environing milieu. Neil Ever, for example, quotes Northrop Frye in support of his argument that this sense of the human participation in the great chain of being is at the very heart of what aesthetic experience strives to achieve.

The resident is, in short, a part of the place, just as the fish is a part of the territory. And his involvement with that place is, I think, an aesthetic one in the

sense that Dewey and Cobb use the term. And perhaps also in the sense in which Northrop Frye uses it when he claims that the goal of art is to “recapture, in full consciousness, that original lost sense of identity with our surroundings, where there is nothing outside the mind of man, or something identical with the mind of man.”

Sue Ellen Campbell makes a related point in her effort to find common ground between deep ecology and poststructuralist, both of which relativism the autonomy of the human subject by representing it as enmeshed in encompassing material and social networks.

Always we are part of systems larger than ourselves. As Fritjof Capra explains in *The Tao of Physics*, the world is “a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole” (71). Finally we arrive at what I see as the most comprehensive and most important shared premise of post-structuralist and ecological theory. Both criticize the traditional sense of a separate, independent, authoritative center of value or meaning: both substitute the idea of networks.

2.4 Scot Slovic

Scott Slovic, to cite one last example, emphasizes the permeability of the boundaries between self and world, albeit in a way that tends to reinforce rather than contest the language of subject-object dualism.

The facile sense of harmony, even identity, with one’s surroundings (a condition often ascribed to rhapsodic nature writing) would fail to produce self-awareness of any depth or vividness. It is only by testing the boundaries of self against an outside medium (such as nature) that many nature writers manage to realize who they are and what’s what in the world.

Finally, lest we give the impression that this outlook is a recent or exclusively North American phenomenon, it is important to recognize that the emphasis on the interconnectedness of man and nature, and its consequences for the study of textual representations of place, has a longstanding pedigree. We might mention in this regard the Renaissance idea of the great chain of being (as described, e.g.,

by M. W. Tillyard in *The Elizabethan World View*), the Spinozist concept of immanence summed up in the expression *Deus sive Natura*, or, more recently, the Heideggerian concept of *Dasein* and the use that Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari make of notions like the rhizome, molecular exchange, and the plane of immanence.

This conception of the human/natural nexus as an indivisible unity has motivated the work of contemporary European writers like the Scottish poet Kenneth White, whose conception of geo-poetics is strongly influenced by Deleuze. Even more recently, French literary critics of a geo-critical bent have begun to emphasize this dimension of the human/nature nexus. Thus, in a recent issue of the French online journal LHT (*Littérature, Histoire, Théorie*), Christine Baron emphasizes “ce rapport dialectique de l’homme au monde qu’il habite et qui l’habite,” quoting Olivier Lazzarotti on “la consubstantialité de l’espace habité et de l’habitant,” and emphasizing that “cette conception de la géographie ... semble aujourd’hui incontournable dans l’épistémologie de la discipline.” Michel Collot concurs, arguing that this outlook “ne signifie donc pas nécessairement une déshumanisation ou un objectivisme radical. Elle peut être au service d’une redéfinition du sujet lyrique ou du personnage, devenus inséparables du paysage qui les entoure.” He adds that this Outlook “pourrait déboucher sur une poïétique, une théorie de la création littéraire [où il] s’agirait de comprendre pourquoi l’espace peut être source non seulement d’inspiration, mais d’invention de formes nouvelles.” And on this point the importance of developing new “forms” or modes of representation able to fore round the inter-pénétration of self and work—we come back full circle to Westphal’s projet. Once such a perspective begins to manifest itself in literary representations of the world, it begins to have an effect on the way the reading public understands its own relationship to place. It is on this point, I would argue, that the convergence between the geocritical and ecocritical endeavors can be seen most clearly.

Ecocriticism has typically had an activist focus, one that often, although by no means always, emphasizes thematic at the expense of the textual mechanics of representation. But to the extent that ecocritics want to change the way people think about the environment, they will need to promote modes of representation that exemplify the vision they seek to promote. It is, of course, important to talk about the environment, and to militate for a healthier attitude toward the environment, but such activities will serve little purpose unless the public learns to represent their relationship with the environment in new ways. Just as the rise of the bourgeoisie and the emergence of capitalism required the invention of new modes of representation that coalesced into the conventions of nineteenth-century realism, “the troubling awareness that we have reached the age of environmental limits,” as Cheryll Glotfelty puts it, will require the development and dissemination of modes of representation that convey the environmental principles required to react productively to such a situation, beginning with Barry Commoner’s first law of ecology, that “Everything is connected to everything else.”

2.5 Human and Natural Orders

Conceiving of such a relationship between the human and natural orders is not difficult, at least not for those of us who have devoted serious attention to the relationship. It has long been the consensus position in the natural sciences, and has become, as I argued above, central to fields like cognitive science and phenomenological philosophy. But understanding how to fully incorporate this understanding into literary representations intended for the general public, and to do so without relying on the more familiar but only approximate (and therefore falsifying) language of subject/object dualism, has remained an elusive goal. The familiar conventions of literary realism, inherited from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, tend to marginalize such modes of discourse. But this is precisely, I think, where Westphal, with his emphasis on the performative, world-creating dimension of literature, has the most to contribute to eco-critical

theory. Because what Westphal is ultimately trying to do, I think, is to remind us that the medium is the message, that any attempt to modify the way members of the general public understand their relationship with the world of nature will require finding new modes of representation adequate to that vision.

What would such a mode of representation, which we might call “ecological realism,” look like? It would be a mistake to imagine that there could only be one. But we can get a sense of what a perspectival shift from a dualist conception of subject and object to an ecological conception of the subject-object would imply from the kind of eco-logical writing that the great Guyanese writer Wilson Harris developed in order to communicate a sense of his bond with the Guyanese jungle. Consider, for example, the following passage from Harris’s *Heart-land*, which highlights the intuition of what such a perspectival shift entails, as well as the anxiety that it generates in those unused to such a perspective. What an extraordinary and impulsive idea. Stevenson grew ashamed and afraid, not of Kaiser in truth but of his own unreliable senses—if one looked at life in this dubious way—which were capable of playing exceptional tricks upon him, or if he looked otherwise—with religious fear—of invoking a sensibility akin to a phenomenon of all-inclusive agency and humility, vindicating and confirming past, present and future lives and therefore pointing to a community of conscious fulfillment in existence. This kind of perspectival anxiety—the spontaneous intuition of a decentered awareness of “all-inclusive agency and humility,” followed by a troubled recoil from its destabilizing novelty—recalls Jean-Sartre’s evocations of existential nausea, but transferred to an eco-logical register that relativizes human agency by explicitly setting it within the context of an “all-inclusive agency” akin to Buell’s notion of the agency of nature and Deleuze’s conception of immanence.

This newly discovered awareness gives rise to a series of experiences that lead Harris’s protagonist to an increasingly advanced sense of identification with and understanding of the landscape. “His eyes, however, were beginning to grow

sharper than a needle [...] and in the process his emotions fell into step within him upon a meaningful thread of being.”²³ This spiritual progress, however, also has the effect of making his personal and professional goals seem increasingly point-less (which is, no doubt, the primary danger of the ecological point of view pushed to its logical limit). But it is presented in the novel as a laboratory gift .

.If indeed this emanation was a guide leading to the specter of place he was beginning to glimpse, or to the creation of the watch he was beginning to read—if indeed it was all these, then this was a natural true gift he possessed after all, the evocation of visible proportions, however delicate. And such proportions turned the frailest outline in space into the lineaments of the quarry of the muse, something larger than pure spirit.²⁴

The researcher clarifies eco-critical and geo-critical conjunctions in North Atlantic Environmental Multimedia And Place –Based Poetry:

Gerry Smyth has observed that “Environmentalism itself is concerned in large part with explicitly spatial issues,”¹ and Kent Ryden

notes that “Place is created when experience charges landscape with meaning.”²

Ecocriticism and geo-criticism are two interdisciplinary critical paradigms with many commonalities, although one might argue that there remains remarkably little dialogue between scholars of geo-criticism (spatial literary studies) and ecocriticism (environmental literary studies), despite some of the obvious intersections between them, such as the environment, culture, geography, and built and non-built spaces. My intent in this essay is to examine the relationship between these two critical paradigms through two North Atlantic interactive multimedia websites that focus on site-specific poetry. These seemingly disparate forms of web-based environmental poetry, which capture both real and imagined spaces, expand the boundaries among disciplines, genres, and platforms. They also endorse the notion of place, which remains central to both environmental and spatial literary and cultural studies .

One of these two websites showcases the work of Marlene Creates, who is an environmental artist and poet living in Portugal Cove, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. For the past 35 years, her work has engaged with overlapping themes of human experience, memory, and place through poetry, photography, assemblages, video, and in situ poetry walks. Creates's work titled "A Virtual Walk of the Boreal Poetry Garden" (2010) provides a multimedia experience of her reading poems in the places each was written, in six acres of boreal forest.³ The website opens with a high-resolution aerial photograph of the site with a list of video-poems that the viewer can select from.⁴ Once a specific video-poem is selected, a dot appears on the aerial photograph, indicating the poems' location, and then a video window opens and features Creates reading a site-specific poem in that particular place. Creates's environmental and spatial project aims to document a bioregion, which integrates ecological and cultural understanding through a "place-based sensibility,"⁵ through photo-land works, live-art events, and web-based virtual interactions that help to connect viewers across the world with the biodiversity of Portugal Cove.

Across the North Atlantic in Ireland, another website titled "The Poetry Project: Poetry and Art from Ireland" employs a similar multimedia design by incorporating short films with place-based poetry read orally in built and no built environments.

In order to celebrate Ireland's literary and visual creativity, these web-based experiences combine a couple of dozen Irish poets accompanied by thematic video artwork. Many of the poetry and video compilations capture themes of place, environment, and memory in Ireland; however, in this essay, I focus on Eavan Boland's poem "In Our Own Country," which is complemented by Oliver Comerford's short film *Distance*. Boland continues to address the relationships between identity, space, and gender in her poetry and criticism. Comerford, an Irish landscape artist, investigates the ways humans perceive the outside world, particularly in the liminal spaces between destinations.

What striking about these online examples of place-based poetry and video by Creates, Boland, and Comerford is that they engage significant elements of interest for both ecocritics and geo-critics alike, namely, through their layering of literary text and media they use spatial and environmental theories of place, bioregions, and real and imagined environments. Both websites demonstrate, through word, image, and virtual experiences, the ability to promote environmental awareness through spatial representations of place. I argue that the primary overlap between ecocriticism and geocriticism remains in how they both interrogate the relationship between humans and nonhumans in culture and the environment through intimate and multidimensional examinations of place in literary studies. Before examining these place-based web installations, I will first outline some of the critical terrains between ecocriticism and geocriticism that foreground my argument.

The poems in Boland's collection *Domestic Violence* are about charged spaces where people live, particularly the domesticated suburban environments developed during the Celtic Tiger years in Ireland.²⁴ Bethany Smith describes Boland's collection as "archeological" and probing for "layers of significance."²⁵ The poem "In Our Own Country" exemplifies the idea of charged space because it unravels the archeological layers of meaning, both in terms of the environmental impacts and the spatial injustices of dislocation and deterritorialization in Ireland resulting from policies of the European Union (EU) in the name of economic progress. Boland's poem reveals the tension of past and present in these charged spaces by questioning "a new Ireland," one that emerges from the EU and praises economic progress and globalized capital as the way forward.²⁶ Such "a new Ireland" in the poem, however, is juxtaposed against an older Ireland, which contains similar problems of exile, dislocation, and emigration. Comerford's *Distance* visualizes the very spatial effects that occur in the poem, while it also confronts some of the EU policies for developing and commercializing a new Ireland. Even the film's name indicates

spatial qualities that separate or dislocate. Both “In Our Own Country” and Distance lament the loss of place—taken through various forms of spatial injustice—and ultimately affect the local environments. However, the multimedia experience allows for global viewers to also lament the loss of local place, what Buell calls “place-attachment,” through their connective experiences watching the video on the website Stratigraphic vision, one of the four fundamental methodologies of geo-criticism, identifies layered and accumulated pasts, histories, and memories that all construct a given place in space and time. For Westphal, stratigraphic vision relies on temporal factors when reading spaces in literary texts. He argues, The diversity of temporalities that we perceive synchronously in several different spaces, even in a single space, is also expressed in a diachronic. Space is located at the intersection of the moment and duration; its apparent surface rests on the strata of compacted time arranged over an extended duration and reactivated at any time. This present time of space includes a past that flows according to a stratigraphic logic.

Here, Westphal suggests that time impacts the perception of space by challenging the moments of both representation (in the text) and real time (in the actual world). Stratigraphic logic, then, provides a way to examine time (histories or memories) in geographical spaces through literary texts that simultaneously confuse and illuminate spatiotemporal dimensions. If we apply this to “In Our Own Country”/Distance, we can see the stratigraphic elements at work through a “strata of compacted time.”

Both “In Our Own Country” and Distance contain a timeless quality, while they also underscore a clear binary demarcating past and present. The speaker demonstrates the spatiotemporal layers in the poem: “An old Europe/has come to us as a stranger in our city, /has forgotten its own music, wars and treaties,/is now a machine from the Netherlands or Belgium.” The speaker describes historical movement between the past—an old “forgotten” Europe with its legacies of colonization—and the present “machine” running the new Ireland at

the EU headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. The older legacies of colonialism with its “music, wars and treaties” transition in this stanza both in time and space to contemporary forms of neocolonialism in the new Ireland by way of globalization and uneven geographical and economic development. In this way, the speaker also underscores geographical movement of displacement and domestic forms of exile “as a stranger in our city.”

Boland also acknowledges how roads perform as transitions and mark points in Irish history witnessed in the present. The poem’s opening two stanzas mark movement through space and time using the notion of the road as a real and imagined space: “They are making a new Ireland/at the end of our road/under our very eyes,/under the arc lamps they aim and beam/in distances where we once lived/I

vistas we will never recognize.” The focus of this combined text centers on spaces—physical and real spaces of the “vistas” and “roads” in Ireland, but also the imagined spaces of new and old Ireland confused by history and memory. The interplay between visual media and poetry creates additional effects that extend beyond both mediums individually. For example, *Distance* interprets the poem by envisioning through film what loss of place in Ireland might look like “under our very eyes.” If we move back to the opening lines of the poem, the film captures the comparison between the new and old Ireland through two similarly juxtaposed images. The opening begins with a point of view shot in a car down a rural road. This initial establishing shot only contains the diegetic sounds of the car on the road without any of the speaker’s (Regina Crowley) voice-over reading. The film then cuts smoothly to a similar point of view shot of another road; only this road is at night in an unknown city “under the arc lamps.” Once the juxtaposed shot of the city appears, the speaker’s voice begins to read the opening lines of the poem. The real spaces in *Distance* enhance the imagined qualities in the poem, thereby creating connection with the viewer. The film’s emotional charge appears through the emptiness of never-ending

footage of roads leading nowhere and parallels the poem's refrain of being "exiles in our own country."

In *Distance*, traveling on roads indicates spatiotemporal movement through stratigraphic logic because the viewer experiences images of a road moving across histories and topographies that confuse and compact time. There are only seven cuts in three minutes, and each cut produces an image of a road from the point of view of a driver. The roads change and range between rural and urban, and paved and unpaved, driven in night and day. The variations of the roads not only reveal changes in the scenery, but also register a sense of time and movement. J'aime Morrison has argued that roads in Ireland function as "vital cultural spaces" that are "conduits for movement and memory operating within the larger spatial history of Ireland."²⁹ But roads are also markers of direction and certainty, symbolizing development and progress. *Distance* presents roads as the ultimate symbol of modernity, supplementing Boland's description of "making a new Ireland" in the poem, while also underscoring how roads remain integral in Ireland's history. In this sense, roads exemplify stratigraphic vision through memory, history, and territory emerging from the landscape. Building roads allows more movement from a place to another place, but it also destroys environmental habitats connected to these places. In fact, a crucial commentary here is that roads are no-places, functioning as liminal space between places devoid of what Buell calls "associatively think" meanings related to place. inquiries that test the bounds of academic scholarship in new In This chapter the researcher assesses an open form of ecological thought in select works of late-twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century literature, a form that is also manifested in contemporary eco-criticism and geo-criticism. The comportment toward coexistence—interspecies, international, inter-whatever—in these works is achieved through local yet disorienting ecologies of tradition, language, and immanent place-experience contending with global capital politics, recalling in fact a resistance to structural location that Doreen Massey

calls the “dislocation which makes politics possible.”¹ The insouciant preponderance of this ecological/economic space reflects Timothy Morton’s concept of hyper objects that exceed measurable effects, do not translate to scientific scales, and “viscously” bind to object actors even more aggressively in response to resistance.² The works considered show a political form of ecocosmopolitical interspecies (interobjectal) poetics that defamiliarize more than just literary experience and suggest an intricate, robust, and meaningful ecology a comparative space/place “relativism” should otherwise preclude.

Works like Patricia Grace’s *Potiki* (1986) and Karen Tei Yamashita’s

Through The Arc of the Rainforest (1990) imbricate multiple species and political strategies to parody and affirm global scales through experimental narrative, irony, humor, and the frustrated but sincere communal spirit found in twentieth century Italian author Italo Calvino’s persuasively “whatever” political ecotheory. Literature in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has often troubled the stability of This chapter assesses an open form of ecological thought in select works of late-twentieth-century and early-twenty-first-century literature, a form that is also manifested in contemporary ecocriticism and geocriticism. The comportment toward coexistence—interspecies, international, inter-whatever—in these works is achieved through local yet disorienting ecologies of tradition, language, and immanent place- experience contending with global capital politics, recalling in fact a resistance to structural location that Doreen Massey calls the “dislocation which makes politics possible.”¹ The insouciant preponderance of this ecological/economic space reflects Timothy Morton’s concept of hyper objects that exceed measurable effects, do not translate to scientific scales, and “viscously” bind to object actors even more aggressively in response to resistance.² The works considered show a political form of ecocosmopoliticals interspecies (interobjectal) poetics that defamiliarize more than just literary experience and suggest an intricate, robust, and

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Works like Patricia Grace’s *Potiki* (1986) and Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Through The Arc of the Rainforest* (1990) imbricate multiple species and political strategies to parody and affirm global scales through experimental narrative, irony, humor, and the frustrated but sincere communal spirit found in twentieth century Italian author Italo Calvino’s persuasively “whatever” political ecotheory. Literature in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has often troubled the stability of narrative perspective, structure, and, more broadly, the reliability of life “itself,” outside the fictional world, in the modern crises of industrial alienation, global homogeneity, and now, environmental degradation in the form of demolished places and strange, bound- less spaces. Ecocriticism, according to Lawrence Buell, Ursula Heyse, and Karen Thornber in their recent assessment of literature and environment, begins from the conviction that the arts of imagination and the study thereof—by virtue of their grasp of the power of word, story, and image to reinforce, enliven, and direct environmental concern—can contribute significantly to the understanding of environmental problems: the multiple forms of ecodegradation that afflict planet Earth today. In this, ecocriticism concurs with other branches of the environmental humanities—ethics, history, religious studies, anthropology, humanistic geography—in holding that environmental phenomena must be comprehended, and that today’s burgeoning array of environmental concerns must be addressed qualitatively as well as quantitatively. The focus on “understanding environmental problems” in this definition, though seemingly couched in a conventional qualitative vs. quantitative, humanities vs. science dichotomy, then suggests that one could perform this critique with any expressive work. But the authors clearly hold onto a sense of purpose and art—“grasp of the power of word, story, and image to reinforce, enliven, and direct environmental

concern”—that would have to make some choices about what is and is not, at the least, “good” environmental expression.

Narrative unreliability and reflexivity are not new. Don Quixote and Tristram Shandy perhaps mark the novel’s earliest form, and also then the novel’s earliest iteration as an experimental form. And neither are environmental themes new. The earliest known literatures—Sumerian hymns to Innanna, for example—are rife with agrarian motifs. The Epic of Gilgamesh and Genesis both also meditate at length on human engagements of and conflicts with the natural world. And so “situating” contemporary environmental literature is, perhaps, simply a perfunctory period game: Here comes the real crisis and here are the real literary forms that might best represent and negotiate it. Radiation gets in the water—all the water—and cooks you while you’re on your cell phone. Franz Kafka’s Gregor Samsa awakens one morning (any morning) and is alienated from family, work, and self, yet totally intimate with the constructive presence of all of them. And for a consuming subject not yet demolished by modernity, the old Acadian dream of returns to simple, pristine Nature is not only practically impossible in the Anthropocene (or just the Holocene), it’s now tragically unhip, too. Some new global mess is the ecological mode of choice: there is no authentic, natural “there” to return to. Depending upon one’s definition of “environmental literature,” the exploration into biological assembly and identity construction in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* would be another precursor to the reflexive postnatural modes in contemporary literature. In contemporary ecological thought, this critical heritage recurs in concepts such as the post human: humans are nonhumans—discreet bodies on one scale, swarming mixes of other objects and bodies at another, technologically articulated and inconsistently whole or “true” as individuated, free wills of varying activity and effectiveness. All of these forms of decentering or humiliating the human actor invoke ecological thought by employing pluralist perspectives and recombinant spatial logics. Perhaps the strongest argument for contemporary literature’s

efficacy in articulating ecological coexistence is that the contemporary “global” world, complete with its reach into space and other planets, informs a more nuanced ecological perspective in important ways. This might, however, forget that extraterrestrials are not a recent invention, either. Nevertheless, a recent work like Yannick Murphy’s *The Call* (2012) can employ aliens as a disorienting, but possible and funny interlocutor precisely because the contemporary cultural lexicon enables it in ways it did not always. In the novel, a rural veterinarian and his family go through a calendar year through the device of appointment entries and notes (e.g., “CALL: A woman with Icelandic ponies needs a prepurchase.”⁴) and an alien who was crank calling the narrator/note-taker eventually shows up on the veterinarian/protagonist’s doorstep. Once inside, “WHAT THE SPACEMAN SAID: You are my biological father.”⁵ The entire narrative is dominated by a hunting accident that nearly kills the veterinarian’s son and that is part of a conventional rural localist motif, albeit one that marks peripherality by naming specific

U.S. cities like Philadelphia. The novel, in a sense, “rescues itself” from magic realism by revealing the alien to simply be a long-lost foreign object asking for a kidney due to genetic sibilliance. Such an alarmingly mundane yet complex geographical/ecological resolution to a disorienting, experimental novel form reaffirms contemporary eco-geocritical concepts. Ecosystems, like local geographies and communities (rural Maine, in the case of *The Call*), may fit local scales, but then those scales fall apart when considered against global pollution indexes or rises in temperature. And at the intersection of post human critique and less specifically anthropocentric critical theory, ecological thought works tirelessly to resist essentialist categories—to not commit to any wherever possible, it often seems—while attempting to maintain the deepest and most sincere commitments to things like animal rights, environmental justice, or any number of other “objects” influencing thought and action in the new global mess. In the case of *The Call*, specific ecopolitical tasks are considered—the

novel's constant theme is the care of animals and the practical yet compassionate management of livestock, companion animals, wild animals, food animals, human animals, no spacemen, family animals, and more—but not essentialized as massive, total political programs. And yet, without firm or consistent commitments, a work like *The Call* somehow affects a decidedly committed ecological tone and narrative character.

One of the abiding tasks of contemporary eco-criticism is to maintain a nuanced, flexible comportment toward the broad variety of perspectives and practices in the world. eco-criticism does not merely trace expressive works' latent or absent environmentalism, as ecological thought is not simply activist or salvation, and yet neither can it lose sight of such projects. Furthermore, eco-criticism encompasses more than mere nature writing in the vein of nineteenth century North Americans like Henry David Thoreau or the naturalist narrative of Farley Mowat and the narrative ecology of Rachel Carson; it has expanded rapidly to better engage global approaches and strategies. This much can be established by a scan of any of the many new readers in the field coming out every year. One of the primary reasons for any expansion of the eco-critical circle is, certainly, the academic development of the field alongside the ongoing development of multiple other fields of inquiry including critical social theory, environmental history, postcolonial studies, feminist studies, and other modes that reflect the importance of counter-metanarrative work. And of late, driven by the gathering weight of environmental critique across fields, scholars are making even more cross-disciplinary scientific/humanistic comparative modes, producing hybrid sociocultural studies that may forego expressive works as objects of studies altogether or that, perhaps, lean more toward anthropology than literary studies. “eco-criticism,” in the contemporary academy, is not so much having an identity crisis as it is wrestling with its own hegemony. Everything must be fit into the new ecology, which must be fit to everything else.

The litany of disciplines is not meant to suggest that academic articulations have produced the plurality of ecological work at all, then: everyone is catching up to ecological reality, which then requires complicated engagements of the lived world it is part of and that it, increasingly, tangibly and globally impacts. The “ecological thought,” as Tim Morton has put it, doesn’t stop at borders or shuts itself on and off as a critical tool, and as “hyper objects” suggest, neither does it translate effectively to individual timescale or ethical modes. Global warming, for example, exceeds individual life concerns or even generational ethical projection: you can’t save your grandkids from Antarctic shelf depletion. You can only suggest they, and others, have an escape plan in place when the waters rise.

These seemingly irrelevant borders in global ecology are much more than merely academic fields and sub disciplines, and quite clearly, eco-criticism thus does not stop at the edges of expressive works any longer, if it ever did. The ecological thought Morton articulates, but that is perhaps earned of a long process of interdisciplinary inquiry in environmental studies in recent decades, is the recognition of densely interconnected coexistence and confluence. In the wake of “globalization,” a word that at times can seem strangely forgotten in the age of its realization, this ecological thought is massive and challenging, given the multiplicity of interactions and flux it necessarily encompasses. This requires, in order to sustain life—or lives, or species, or populations, or ecosystems, or whatever will suffice as a proper target of activism and concern—frequent reminders of the importance of the local and the culturally specific, but it also suggests an important sibilance of ecological thought and spatial theory.

Massey’s spatial theory is one of interrelations, “contemporaneous plurality,” and “space as always under construction.”

In conjunction with Morton’s ecological thought, this open, processional sense would seem to be responding to the dense mesh of recent cultural theory in that

it articulates the most open, pluralistic, indeterminate, nonessential, constructed, performed, possibly even undecidable set of interests and values. In fact, the “abiding task” of pluralist comportment, which produces seemingly perfunctory book introductions on the breadth of the field and the challenges of properly considerate ecological thought in a complex, multicultural world with numerous belief systems, ontologies, community models, languages, and so on, is likely a condition of the very same categorizing logics that produced the “crisis” in global political thought so many academic works in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries attempted to articulate and work through. In the recent edited volume *American Studies, eco-criticism, and Citizenship: Thinking and Acting in the Local and Global Commons*, Philip DeLoria writes in the foreword that the editors and contributors ask us to step through the nature of the tangle: not simply the rules of tangling (if such can be named) but the particular kinds of tangle that will prove most useful and evocative to the discussion. And they give us hints and roadmaps in the words they use: commons, global, transnational, citizenship, planetary, community, cosmopolitan, cosmopolites, place, among others. The editors’ introduction then warns that the trouble with any “planetary commons” or ecocosmopolitanism is that it might too quickly elide important local and regional legal struggles for citizenship (3). Reviewing other recent scholarship that shows the diversity of current approaches to place, environment, and citizenship, the editors stress the recombinatory innovation—the subtle citizenship, perhaps—of contemporary environmentalist work. They suggest that the volume’s contributors take a “human groups approach” rather than a necessarily radicalized approach, which emphasizes that each of us, as individuals and as groups, is a crossing point for a variety of political orders, from the local, state, and regional to the hemispheric and the global and that each of us has a stake in imagining our common local and global futures.

The general sense of such a work, then, is that articulating ecological communities and engagement is a delicate practice, and one that ought to feature

mindful actors drawing effectively on nuanced understandings of recent cultural theory to attend to pluralities (nonhuman and human) and contested spaces while negotiating the fraught borderlands and citizenships of contemporary global life. Mindful of individual experience as well as social structures and, presumably, populations and ecosystems—including the trouble again with settling too firmly on any one such approach or term—such a volume thus presents a carefully situated but sincerely mobile and forward-thinking project of ecopolitical thought. In *Affective edglands: Wildness history, and technology in BRITAIN, s postindustrial and post natural topographies*. The researcher asserts that Geography has wielded a signifier for the urban phenomena, edglands: “the interfacial interzone” between urban and rural.¹ As Frances Spalding notes, the term is new, freshly brandished by innovative spatial discourse; however, this type of space has subliminally registered in the British imagination for some time: Somehow we know immediately the meaning of “edglands.” The word evokes zones where overspill housing estates peter out or factories give way to black fields or scrubland; where unkempt areas become home to allotments, mobile-phone masts, sewage works, cooling towers, dens, places of forgetting, dumping and landfill. The authors of *Edglands* consider England’s canal networks as one of these spaces, transformed from the highways of commercial carrying during Roman occupation of the south of Britain to the inland arteries of industrial expansion and colonial relations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, of which over 2,000 miles of navigable canals remain today. In their analysis of the “double life” of canals—adopted as natural features where they cut through the countryside, dumping grounds when found in urban spaces—Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts question how this “broken network” can be “reconnected and revived.”³ Their question is partly materialist (the physical bodies of land and water) and cultural (the imagining of these waterways cutting

through the region); the idea of reestablishing bonds, either of communication or of emotion, runs right through this inquiry.

In a critically ant nostalgic text, the authors establish a binary to be explored in their use of the Latin prefix (re): past and present, rural and urban; to reconnect and revive these spaces and yet to do this without looking backward in time. From here, the imaginary realm that seeks “romance” on the canal’s narrow boats is open to intersexual geo-critical scrutiny: Just as the ancient frost fairs allowed for revelry and licentiousness, because the law of the land did not extend to frozen lakes and rivers, so life on a canal seems to offer an escape from convention and restriction. Walk past a mooring and your eye is drawn behind the lace curtains, where couples who have dodged the rat race wave to you, their matching bicycles strapped to the deck of the garishly painted Lady of Shallot, kettle whistling on the stove, and an open copy of *The Wild Places* on the table. Now, across England’s canal network, boat-hire companies let you taste this reverie for anything from half a day to a fortnight. Farley and Symmons Roberts place England’s labor history out of view while a sense of escape—or freedom—is framed and degraded by transformative terms: from the space of carnival to industry into leisure product, to afford an affected bourgeois-conservative lifestyle; who would have reckoned? The evident cynicism reads a very British production of space. It compresses an observational eyewitness account of people in space while alluding to the elision of reality by the image-based landscapes of the nineteenth century and by the authors’ peer—the neo-Romanticist writer Robert Macfarlane. *Edgelands* seeks to expose a grammatical ideology, that is to say, an underpinning archaic literary referentiality between text and world, which speaks to identity at scale (i.e., nationalism) and leads to individualistic cultural practices (i.e., the possibility of escape) which lie at some remove from the mainstream. Both degrees of agency are plastic and impressionable; their coherence can be subject to cultural and historical formulations of space—in this example, a former state of the nation

and its life ways. The narrow boat takes its name (although it drops the definitive article) from Tennyson's 1833 ballad that recasts Arthurian legend to evoke a lost England and incite a medieval British imaginary. Yet the poet laureate's opening—"Long fields of barley and rye, That clothe the world and meet the sky"⁵—suggests something beyond nostalgia in the emphasis on material conditions. This idealism portends a poetic subject cognate with Farley's and Symmons Roberts's connections between industrial capital and the imagination. There is a protospacial discourse in Tennyson's inquiry into the tension between society's utilitarianism and the needs of the human individual, the latter is adaptive yet comparatively slower changing; this tension is written at the altitude of nation formation and has entered the English literary canon for this very reason. However, Tennyson's poem is mobilized for its mood in *Edgelands*—precisely the quality that is used to invoke nostalgia in broadcast media, which when read too quickly (and within the cultural canon that betokens superficial heritage formation)⁶ is understood as fake, disconnected from the real attributes of space. Rather than look to a past, whether to articulate unrealized potential in the present—Tennyson's real subject, as with other English critiques of the extended wake of the Glorious Revolution (1688)—or for historical values, the authors of *Edgelands* have a singular project in mind: to keep focus on the modern. Their concentration is firmly fixed on the symbolism of the hidden fiber-optics lying underneath the canal towpaths connecting cities, companies, and communities; a metaphorical focus, which relates to surfaces and their depths portending a reverse archaeology in their method.⁸ An inverse palimpsest: underneath things there lies the present rather than a past. Conclusively, their attention is not on the less worldly repose of the predigital age. It is thus that Macfarlane's text, *The Wild Places* (2007), is sarcastically framed within an anti-romanticized space. This complex, literary space belies the celebration of the edgelands as constructed, unreal, fragmentary, that is, modern; it is a space where Farley and Symmons Roberts gloss literary

detail to write against history in their text as a means to establish a mode that celebrates contemporary space. Their project is thus not a “geographical inquiry into historical experience”⁹ but a spatially disassembled cartography of particularities of the present. *Edgelands* is not a map of a single totality. It is not a figurative abstraction of a land mass read north to south or east to west, for example. It is a record of the qualities of multiple landscapes and their attributes; these are gathered together in a cluster of modulated kinds, into an emphasis on things or themes, which are clearly distributed in space but are not structured by an overarching geographic pattern. Twenty-eight chapters, ranging from “Cars,” “Containers,” “Canals,” “Ruins,” “Retail,” etc., disrupt any desire to assimilate the edgelands into a two-dimensional cartographic representation of space. The reader does not journey from place to place, but through a series of accumulations of things in multiple spaces: portakabins and palettes, bridges, and cars and lights. *Edgelands* is a model of multifocal geo-criticism. It is social, political, and environmental; it undertakes many excursions through heterogeneous spaces—sites are located between urban and rural, sometimes feral and loose, sometimes over disciplined and contained. The text engages with literary culture and runs through multiple academic disciplines to articulate a dwelling thesis bereft of nostalgia. The generic focus on a traveler in a terrain is thus displaced by both high-brow and humorous meandering through debates in the arts and sciences, which reaches apotheosis in the chapter “Ruins”—significant, I feel, for its historical register. Here, the relationship between the practice of life and the production of space is inflected with biological science; genomics offers fresh ground for polemical attack on conservative thinking. Taking the idea of “progressive detachment,” Farley and Symmons Roberts examine a sense of freedom, of being out in open space, within (and part of) the wild. This move is worth some extended contemplation. With humanism to one side, the authors’ dwelling thesis elects to reject a wild external nature, some distance from our human culture. In preference for ecology without nature, the

text invokes an evolutionary naturalism that is dependent upon our home-making, that is, our technological advantage that might less place us at a distance from a “wild” background world, and more interestingly entangled in a warped version of it. To begin with, Farley and Symmons Roberts take a cue from biology: specifically, genetic faults and errors that switch off certain parts of the genome over time, which results in a species being alienated from instinctive behavior. If a blackbird’s genome dictates that at the first sign of spring it must make a cup-shaped nest lined with mud and grass, then that’s what it will do. Once that part of the genome is inactive, the animal is simultaneously blessed and cursed. If you lose the deep, instinctive pull to make a certain kind of shelter in a certain place at a certain time, then you can, in theory, make whatever kind of shelter you can think of, from an igloo to a skyscraper. I aim to think of this in terms of a species’ action or skill in space, and of the literary project that writes out space in lieu of history (preceding genres, preceding human action). Philosophically, when thinking of genome or text, one might be tempted to contemplate the advantages and disadvantages of working from a historical position to articulate life and its future. To think how a cost might be incurred when culture either leans heavily on the past or draws from archival evidence.¹¹ This disposition might undermine an alternative project that entertains a species’ ability to adapt, a perspective that might understand space as an affordance for life, its properties enable life forms to enact their energies, to perform actions.¹² Again, Farley and Symmons Roberts are alert to a metaphor here that not only speaks to the problem of human technology in the Anthropocene, but also to indicate the import of critical thinking (and eco-criticism and geo-criticism) to escape the epistemological tools and forms that have brought us to this point in history. To take this evolutionary position to the scale of culture (which appears to be moving at a rate faster than our biological adaptations)¹³ is to indicate a tension between longing and belonging; for ideas of the past and those in the spaces of the

present, respectively. For example, Farley and Symmons Roberts celebrate concreted nameless spaces as versions of “wilderness.” What was once the Forest of Arden in the English Midlands for Renaissance England is now the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) Car Park for contemporary poets; and it is these “badly stitched together places” without a name that are overlooked by our culture, neither looked at nor looked into, and by consequence the difficulty of such spaces “to have an imaginative life.” Two things follow from here: space itself generates the possibility for imaginative engagement; as spaces change materially and in our historical (and creative) records, artistic and human dialogues with these spaces moves, too. While the NEC lends itself to new forms of writing, it also frames these new forms as a response to what came before: edge lands that were once something else—and in this case, historically significant. Literary and material spaces are corollaries for one another; as Henri Lefebvre writes: “The space which contains the realized preconditions of another life is the same one as prohibits what those preconditions make possible.”¹⁶ The NEC embodies the potential for many precapitalist places of nature to be transformed by economic pressures; the site also indicates the need to establish a genre and fix this (e.g., Shakespeare’s pastoral) before one can transgress it. Ironically, *Edgelands* steps close toward cliché when the authors distil this bidirectionality between life and life world into a short sentence: “we take the metaphors for our lives from the language we inherit, but we shape and colour them from our own experience.” The primitive forest, home to the exiled court of Duke Senior in *As You Like It* (1599/1600), indicates the attainment of freedom from persecution while also metonymically registering the large-scale forced movement of traditional labor from pastoral spaces to the cities. In the hands of the authors of *Edgelands*, it mocks a sense of perfection or an eternal state of quietude fixed in culture (a physical space or a literary genre), while progressively detaching from the pastoral mode and prohibiting romanticized access to a historical cultural formation. On one hand, the new site is, quite

simply, a former space that is concreted over with neither toponym nor memorial; yet the earlier form of the space is incompletely erased, an active referent that conditions the new space as one dependent upon its predecessor (its former state) for its definition. On the other hand, the site can be read as a space released from its history; the unnamed space might be difficult to access in the cultural imagination, and yet this difficulty portends other materialist issues: (i) unknown, disconnected from the center, the space remains on the edge of life—physically and culturally—and can thus afford critical objectivity from within to measure and reflect back upon our cultural norms to which this space is “other”; (ii) the unnamed, too, can fall foul of further appropriation and assimilation by market forces without the loss or impact registering in the cultural realm. Without a moment given to evaluating the impulse to develop and grow, Farley and Symmons Roberts understand the scientific reduction (“progressive detachment”) on the human scale, as “liberation from instinctive behavior” that leads to “the birth of civilization.”¹⁹ Our culture has evolved from a deep map of instincts; yet, owing to the pull of these instincts and genomic ghosts, we “wax lyrical about hills, forests, rivers, moors”²⁰—the call of the wild. Moreover, and more wittily, the authors claim that if genetic science had not created the term “wilderness,” it would have been “necessary for wilderness writers to invent it.”²¹ Homesickness owing to a memory of wild places and the desire to be at one with nature is a psychological and ideological position misconceived by our cultural frameworks, which invoke an ultimate array of fallacies: historical emotional connections, sustainable place attachment, and the conflation of self-identity and nationhood. Directly after this conflation, humorous counterpoint situates a manifesto of edge lands inhabitation: We would like to start a counter-movement. Rather than escaping to the forests of the Highlands, park your car at Matalan and have a walk around the edge lands woods. This has the added advantage that you won’t die of exposure if you take a wrong turn. And if we must visit mountains, let’s make

sure there's always a café near the summit, so we can have a drink and enjoy the company of our fellow travelers. Snow don has already taken this bold step. Now all we need is a Premier Inn on the top of Ben Nevis and a Little Chef on Scafell Pike. Let the campaign begin.²³ If the reader is immune to satire, they might mistakenly read only a sarcastic tone; however, the critique of nostalgia is coupled to a critique of unbridled fetishization of consumerist, late-capitalist security incurred at significant cultural cost. Throughout *Edgelands* satire keeps late-capitalist consumerism at a distance while simultaneously marking the end of nature (i.e., nature deprived of its independence from humans). This modernism is central to the critical impulse in *Edgelands* that asserts some value in the understated, undervalued, and overlooked places of becoming: Well, our spiritual path would be a track worn down by dog-walkers and school kids, on the outskirts of a north-west English conurbation. It would start on scrappy grass, then weave its way through a copse of feral trees. Every now and then a makeshift den or tree house can be seen, or a water tower looming where the trees peter out. Charred bonfire patches crop up on one side or the other and the sky is overcast above. The scene is clearly a conflation of the authors' home territories, Manchester and Liverpool, a fused imaginary place that is known well and thus valued for its place in the writers' experiences of their country. This affective space is revealing of a range of elements—the site of play, unkempt greens, the feral and the tatty, the edge of nature and ubiquitous energy technologies for our unchecked consumption, the signs of the temperate climate—things that are hardly surprising to the authors, and yet they are remarkable, that is, worthy of remarking, to regard with attention for their personal emotional pull. The idiomatic reference to the suddenness of space “crop up” both alludes to crops (the reduction of pastoral practice in the modern period) while signifying the world arising on its terms, revealing itself in the open. While these spaces are self-animating, they draw from European and national historical contours, local dialect, and personal experiences. This

representational complexity with a focus on things (objects in landscapes) is less the disclosure of spatial relations as presented to the flâneur moving through metropolitan habitations with a view to knitting urban meditation to material conditions, and more the impressionistic glance at the polycentric urban agglomeration, “conurbation.” The edge lands imagination is attuned to the gaps between things in the world and between adjacent cities whose disunion reveals “feral” and “makeshift” spaces. The researcher clarifies that ecocriticism and geo-criticism: overlapping territories in environmental and spatial literary studies presents an interdisciplinary collection of essays which address the complementary and contested aspects of these related ,but sometimes conflicting ,approaches to literature, cultural and society in the twenty-first century Seamus Heaney’s essay “Something to Write Home About” inter- links a specific political hinterland with the environment, as he ties his geopolitical concerns to depictions of nature. Heaney positions himself as a small child pulled between convicting currents, ultimately settling on remaining “rooted to the spot midstream” in the Moyola river. The Moyola runs from the Sparring Mountains to Lough Neagh, which acts as an environmental division between the protestant Castle Dawson and catholic Bellaghy. It is this sense of simultaneous geographical and cultural demarcation which concerns Heaney: Nowadays when I think of that child rooted to the spot in midstream, I see a little version of the god the Romans called Terminus, the god of boundaries. The Romans kept an image of Terminus in the Temple of Jupiter on Capitol Hill and the interesting thing is that the roof above the place where the image sat was open to the sky, as if to say that a god of the boundaries and borders of the earth needed to have access to the boundless. [...] And it is that double capacity that we possess as human beings—the capacity to be attracted at one and the same time to the security of what is intimately known and the challenges and entrancements of what is beyond us—it is this double capacity that poetry springs from and addresses. A good poem allows you to have your feet on the ground and your

head in the air simultaneously. Heaney uses the physical borderland of the river Moyola as a starting point for his imaginative interpretation of “Terminus,” appropriating the river and classical allusion in order to address both the significance and difficulty with boundaries.

It is in this vein that this article explores how contemporary poetry engages with multifaceted and shifting types of borders. Borderland poetry is, of course, not limited to Heaney’s output: a parallel yet contrasting example can be found in Ciaran Carson’s collection *Belfast Confetti* (1989), which responds to sociopolitical border zones in the context of The Troubles. Less obviously, politically-charged border poetry includes William Wordsworth’s engagements with the Wye Valley and the river Duddon, although Damien Walford Davies’s *Cartographies of Culture: New Geographies of Welsh Writing in English* (2012) reads “Tintern Abbey” as “a poem of Monmouthshire and of the Welsh March that is profoundly attuned to the cultural, political, and psychological impact of boundaries.” Walford Davies uses Wordsworth’s poem to help reframe conceptions of Welsh and English writing. Similarly, R. S. Thomas’s Welsh writing in English also provides a literary legacy of borderland writing. According to M. Wynn Thomas in “Prints of Wales: Contemporary Welsh poetry in English,” Thomas’s “pro-nationalist” poetry has resulted in both agreement and contention in contemporary border poets such as Christine Evans, Jo Shapcott and Gillian Clarke, and Robert Minhinnick, revealing frontiers within the genre of borderland poetry itself. Thus, poetry has consistently demonstrated multiple and occasionally convicting perspectives on borderlands. Focusing directly on the Severn Estuary area in particular encourages a consideration of a material boundary which has precipitated both historical and contemporary responses. Although difficult to locate clearly, the estuary runs from the end of the River Severn at the second Severn crossing, and merges with the Bristol Channel before it enters the Celtic Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean. Whereas the Moyola indicates a type of border that apparently

designates sociopolitical and regional difference, the Severn and the channel form a geographical border between England and Wales forming a national boundary. In fact, the geopolitical border between England and Wales lies in the very center of the channel, an ambiguous social construct that cannot be physically marked. The islands Flat Holm and Steep Holm, which are in the middle of the waterway, demonstrate this ambiguity: Flat Holm falls under Welsh administration and Steep Holm under English jurisdiction, despite their close proximity and lack of territorial marker. This political and national boundary interweaves with the material landscape of the channel, making distinguishing between the territorial marker and the physical waterway difficult. Indeed, Philip Schwyzer's article on John Milton's *Comus* (1634), "Purity and Danger on the West Bank of the Severn," illuminates how: From the Middle Ages and well into the seventeenth century, the river Severn was widely known and referred to as the border between England Wales. In this period, the river's status as a border had little if anything to do with the business of demarcating actual boundaries. The Severn passes from Wales into England without at any point marking the divisions between the nations. [...] Yet such mundane facts had little effect on the general understanding that the Severn—now, as ever—separated England and Wales.⁶ In fact, Philip Gross's *The Water Table* and Robert Minhinnick's *After the Hurricane* both consider the Severn Estuary and Bristol Channel as a liminal geopolitical space, providing a useful starting point for an intertwining literary, geographical, and ecocritical focus on Severn poetry. Their work offers up a way of considering how environmental and geographical concerns interlink as the Severn Estuary and *Môr Hafren* present a shifting borderland zone between fresh and salt water, earth and land, and river and sea. Minhinnick and Gross are, therefore, key Severn poets, as they provide not only contrasting national perspectives—from Minhinnick's consideration of the Welsh coast at Porthcawl to Gross's ambiguously located English viewpoint—but they also both consider the inherently shifting nature

of the estuary and channel. An exploration of Gross's and Minhinnick's Severn poetry reveals that the waterway does not necessarily work as a straightforward separator of regional and national representation, as reflected by Gross's own place-identity: he grew up in Cornwall and now works at the University of South Wales, Glamorgan. As well as the implications of national place-identity, both Minhinnick and Gross are fascinated by environmental processes and politics. Minhinnick in particular was a cofounder of Friends of the Earth Cymru and has written on the importance of environmentalism for Wales in his edited collection of essays, *Green Agenda: Essays on the Environment of Wales* (1994), as well as other prose nonfiction, which grants his national identity a particularly environmental focus. Like the intertwined approach of this essay, then, both poets attend simultaneously and unavoidably to the geography and environment of the borderland. Ultimately, the way in which Minhinnick and Gross imaginatively negotiate the matter of the Severn's tidal processes, coastal detritus, and mud highlights the entangled and yet fraught relationship between material borderlands and poetic representation.

As John Mack describes in *The Sea: A Cultural History* (2011), "tides create a shifting boundary between sea and land. Their effect is to emphasize the liminality of the beach as parts of it are successively revealed and then swamped by tidal action." The tidal action of water revealing and also "swamping" the earth is particularly the case for rock pools, as Minhinnick's sequence "From the Rock Pool" explores.²² "From" suggests ambiguously that the poem is "from" the voice of the rock pool, yet also signals how the poems are fragmented and truncated, as if taken from a larger sequence. Rock pools (also known as "tide pools") can only exist when the sea is at low tide, before they merge back into the sea. The rock pool therefore alternates between being separate from the sea and part of the sea as a whole, much like the poems in the sequence. The tidal relationship between the rock pool and the sea creates a sense of liminality that is also a form of interconnection, as the rock pool is dependent on the sea,

recording its “tides”: “I held the microphone/to the water. And now I can play the sea’s voices/at night.”

“From the Rock Pool” calls attention to the fraught border between the human and the nonhuman through considerations of different types of landscapes and communication: “[i]n the Fun land arcade I stood next to the sea./I lost every coin in my pocket/but the sea kept winning money all afternoon.” Porthcawl funfair is located on Coney Beach, behind the beach of Sandy Bay, sitting in-between the beach and the town. The spatial deixis indicates the speaker’s simultaneous location “in” the “Fun land arcade” at Coney Beach as well as “next to the sea,” occupying two places at once. Minhinnick again compares the natural environment of the beach with the tourist resort, as he interlinks the image of throwing money into the sea with playing on “Fun land” arcade machines, likening the push-and- pull of the penny arcade maw rhythms of the tides. The association of seaside entertainment with the beach evokes the notion of the sea as an economic space, creating monetary connections between places. Although the poem is specifically located at the Porthcawl “Fun land arcade,” the speaker’s call for “a dollar, a dinar, a shekel, a goat” extrapolates the image of a person playing on local penny arcades out toward a reference to international currency markets: “[I]end me a dollar, a dinar, a shekel, a goat, I asked./An escudo, a euro, a forint, a florin./A pound, a peso, a crown, a cruzerio.” Indeed, Ian Gregson notes in *The New Poetry of Wales* (2007) how Minhinnick’s “travel writing and, more urgently, his sensitivity to ecological questions [...] have influenced his knowledge of how places which are geographically distant from each other can still interact and intermingle.” Thus the metaphorical crossing of international currencies, commercial enterprise, and the natural space of the coast allows Minhinnick to demonstrate how the Bristol Channel forms an edge to place as well as creating connections with other places. Yet, he also challenges the flow of cultural and economic agency: “the sea kept winning money all afternoon,” shifting the focus from the sea as

creating economic mobility to the sea itself as a metaphorical consumer, swallowing money. “Curious what’s found floating in these seas”: Coastal Detritus

This simultaneous comparison and contrast between the human and nonhuman can also be found in Minhinnick’s representation of coastal detritus: Matthew Jarvis points out in *Welsh Environments in Contemporary Poetry* (2008) that “Minhinnick’s south Wales coastline is quite often littered. [...] It constitutes another form of gap-closing between [the] human and non-human.” In “From the Rock Pool,” the unidentified lyrical perspective compounds the blurred human and nonhuman entanglement:

There is only what the tide leave Sanskrit of coal, a McDonald’s plastic lid, an empty hourglass. Until the next of times and only the next of times these too have their appointed place. But I who was born in the rock pool know nothing has lasted. Here, the flow of the tides leaves traces of other places and matter on the beach. The coal, as well as signifying the long history of Welsh coal mining, is also “Sanskrit,” creating connections between Porthcawl and India. The traces of the coal inscribe the language onto the beach, the image interconnecting the material properties of the coal with written script. The rubbish also emphasizes temporal fluctuations, calling attention to plastic detritus which is technically waste yet at the same time is lasting, non-biodegradable, and therefore potentially permanent. In addition to signaling the ecological impact of coastal waste, Minhinnick’s reference to the McDonald’s lid recalls the relationship between capitalism, the processes of trade, and consumption at the coast’s edge. These representations of waste remind us, as Gillian Whitley argues in *Junk: Art and the Politics of Trash* (2010), that “waste is [...] an adjunct of luxury. Junk, trash, garbage, rubbish, refuse—whatever we call it—is dependent on economic wealth and excess production.” Minhinnick’s litter therefore reinforces his attempt to close the gap between the human and the nonhuman, as his

environmental concern forms an implicit critique of capitalism, intersecting social, political, and ecological preoccupations.

Heaney's understanding of the "Terminus" of boundaries seen in "Something To Write Home About" is Janus-faced: it reveals the "double capacity" not just of borders and boundaries as points of both limit and crossing, but of the double capacity of poetry itself. Despite the common meaning of terminus as a final station, Heaney's metaphor correlates interestingly with the emporia. His poem "Terminus" in *The Haw Lantern* (1987) traverses border lines: "I was the march drain and the march drain's banks/ Suffering the limit of each claim," intertwining the speaker's body with borderland environment of marches as well as with the political marches of *The Troubles*. This essay, then, has shown how in their Severn poetry Gross and Minhinnick take the "double capacity" of poetry further, using the interplay between linguistic representation and material reality to draw out the paradoxical tension inherent in the concept of borders and boundaries. In the "Thinks Bubble" sequence, Gross creates a parallel between human consciousness and water which recalls Minhinnick's aporetic boundary between the human and the nonhuman. The "Thinks Bubble" is, as the speaker states, "meaning gathering," a metaphor for both rain clouds and a "thought bubble" from a comic strip. Like Minhinnick's circular litter imagery, Gross uses the ongoing water cycle to evoke creative processes: "soon learned how it fell/into text."⁶⁵ Rain, acting as a metaphor for writing, creates the text: "slant, side blown," before being returned "seamlessly" into itself: "rain now/falls on water, in the small hours,/as a tree in the forest, as thinks/not quite thought/ returns itself seamlessly/into itself."⁶⁶ For the speaker-poet, this is continual and ongoing: it "thinks" in the present tense. Gross and Minhinnick therefore utilize the Severn Estuary and Bristol Channel region to uncover how far the "double capacity" of poetry can stretch, how far it can mediate between the physical ecology of landscape and its representation. In their explorations of the in-between matter and processes of tides, litter, and mud, the two poets grant their

estuary poetry both a material and a metaphorical focus. Gross's and Minhinnick's differing national and regional perspectives can therefore be viewed through the material and metaphorical lenses of borders and boundaries. This is an paretic poetry that pushes against the limits of representation even while coming up against it. In the field of literary studies, eco-criticism and geo-criticism are currently acknowledged as the disciplines that most prominently and consistently engage with the question of human spatiality, examining the connections between ecology, geography, and fictional representations. Risen out of individual scholarly efforts grounded on the critical categories of place (as natural environment) and space (as real-and- imagined referential world), they emerged in the early 1990s and at the beginning of the twenty-first century as recognizable branches of literary investigation that bring in a variety of methodologically diverse approaches under a common subject heading and a shared theoretical framework. Given their methodological flexibility and their distinctly exploratory agenda, ecocriticism and geo-criticism originate a set of critical practices that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries—for instance, those isolating literature from other nonliterary domains, or the ones that replicate the crisscross of national frontiers—and can be informed by peculiar perspectives, such as the postcolonial angle that will be maintained and emphasized all through this chapter. In fact, post colonialism is less an independent discipline or a fixed, unitary theory than a “wide-ranging political project”¹ that aims at reorganizing Western fields of knowledge formation around issues of (neo)colonial and imperial domination, economic exploitation, and resource dispossession in the so-called Global South (a rather slippery, “ant geographical” label that applies to different microcosms across the North–South hemisphere divide). A combination of geo-criticism, eco-criticism, and post colonialism, made possible by their inherent dynamism and trans disciplinary reach, is at the grounds of my discussion. I will first venture to outline the modes of interaction between these fields—or rather “currents”—of

literary criticism. I will then test the critical possibilities of the resulting integrated approach by presenting a reading of a specific region in the Indian subcontinent, the Sundarbans forest that lies southeast of Kolkata, on the Bay of Bengal. I will look at a range of fictional and nonfictional representations of the place and identify in this inter- textual chain the roots of different conceptions and local practices of environmental activism.

Postcolonializing Geocriticism

The term “geo-criticism” is frequently employed in current academic discourse as a convenient, somewhat trendy label that applies to a wide variety of literary analyses focusing on the relation between real and fictional spaces. Such broad sense is already embedded in early definitions of geo-criticism as “tâtonnement, an “active exploration” continually subject to improvement and change. Yet, this exploratory, thought-provoking openness is potentially turning the term into a rather unstable signifier. For the purpose of this essay, The researcher defines geo-criticism more narrowly as the “science des espaces littéraires,” initially elaborated by Bertrand Westphal and his researchers at the Université de Limoges, based on a specific set of theoretical premises, with a primary object of study and an original method of analysis. Building on the question of referentiality, but avoiding the shortcomings of either a superficial conception of realism that subdues fiction to the dictates of a restrictive mimetic practice, or the reductive textualist constraints of structuralism, Westphal’s geo-critical approach affirms the contiguity and connection between fiction and reality without de-emphasizing the heterogeneity and autonomy of each world. Once a single place is made into the object of inquiry, it is examined in line with four methodological tenets: multifocalization, polysensoriality, stratigraphy, and intersexuality. In short, the geocritical study of a given place takes into account its multiple and contrasting representations (literary and non-literary ones), all together acting on the referential world as major components in the production of social space.

In his 2007 monograph *La géocritique: réel, fiction, espace* (Paris: Minuit), Westphal establishes a close link between geocriticism and minority discourses, not least postcolonial theory; indeed, questions of space and place have always been central to postcolonial literary criticism. It is currently understood that the colonial conquest of overseas territories was preceded and sustained by a cultural process of representation and textualization of the unknown “Other,” shaped into familiar forms and reconceptualized through accepted metaphors. Against this twofold act of violence—geographical and epistemic—imposed on “Oriental Others” by European colonialism, postcolonial literature and criticism have underscored the meaning and narrative function of place, space, and landscape as a way to challenge colonial discourse and geographies and to decolonize both mind and territory. In the context of this process of reclamation, recreation, and reinscription of place and self, Westphal warns about the risk for postcolonial studies of “establishing another centric point of view, the former Other becoming an ongoing One.”⁶ Insisting on multifocalization as the most important aspect (along with “geocentricity”) of the geocritical methodology, he envisions the referential—“real”—world as a polysemic, protean combination of alterities. However, he largely neglects the political nature of (re)imagined geographies, and the history of colonialism and imperialism behind endogenous, exogenous, and allogeous points of view. In fact, as Peta Mitchell and Jane Stadler remind us, “[c]ultural narratives not only mediate and represent space, place, and location, but they are themselves mediated representational spaces.”

A more straightforward engagement of geocriticism with postcolonial concerns will bring prominence to the performative function and the intrinsic ideological significance of fictional and non-fictional textual practices, which at the very least repeat, and more often than not interrogate and reshape, the discourses of colonial empires. The intertextual chain initiated by the referent, which defines the scope of any geocritical research, will be organized into coherent, often

mutually conflicting systems of representations, taking into consideration their diachronical stratification and synchronical complexity. In addition, without losing focus on the given place, the geocentered investigation will expand its spatial compass: postcolonial place must be analyzed through the filter of displacement, bringing to light the symbolic practices by which the metropolitan centers have exercised domination over the peripheries. At the same time, the notion of endogenous, exogenous, and allogeous perspectives must be problematized, since autochthonous representations of postcolonial space may be informed, more or less deliberately, by the ideological underpinnings of the Orientalist and imperialist hegemonic vision. The accent on heterogeneity and displacement that characterizes a geocritical examination invested with a postcolonial perspective does not easily accord with ecocritical concerns. In fact, though in recent years postcolonial studies have been significantly engaging with ecocriticism,⁸ these academic fields seem to be divided by some major epistemological gaps. Rob Nixon identified four of these in his attempt to bring environmentalism into dialogue with postcolonialism: firstly, in contrast to the postcolonial focus on hybridity, ecocritics foreground preservationist discourses of purity; secondly, whereas postcolonial criticism concerns with place and displacement, ecocriticism prioritizes an exclusionary ethics of place; thirdly, the transnational interpretive framework developed by postcolonialists is replaced by ecocritics with a more patently national—often nationalistic—one; finally, the postcolonial commitment to excavating the marginalized histories inscribed in the land is minimized by ecocritics in favor of the idea of a timeless, transcendental geography.⁹ Without denying Nixon's analysis, scholars working on postcolonial ecocriticism have been more recently trying to resist these fissures by drawing attention to areas of overlapping between the two fields. In the introduction to their collection *Postcolonial Ecologies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley point out the speculative limits of Nixon's reflections

(focused exclusively on mainstream forms of American ecocriticism, as he himself acknowledges), and note that his arguments, which elaborate on Ramachandra Guha's 1989 important critique of radical American environmentalism,¹⁰ overlook later forms of ecocriticism that deviate from the "deep ecology" movement that informed early ecocritical research. They then maintain the rapprochement between postcolonialism and ecocriticism on the basis of their mutual re-energization: for example, a consideration of ecological discourses of precolonial purity enables a deeper understanding of the geographical burden of colonialism and its tangible consequences, while attention to the category of the human expands the meaning of sustainability to social as well as environmental well-being. A very convincing proposal for overcoming the contradictions between postcolonialism and ecocriticism was advanced by Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee in 2010. Premised on a careful account of their singular trends and reciprocal overtures, Mukherjee's contention is that such cross-fertilization should be grounded on a revision and strengthening of their unevenly built-in strains of historical materialism. The "ecomaterialist aesthetics" that he develops as a framework to the reading of the literatures and cultures of postcolonial societies stems from an engagement with the issue of representation and calls for an investigation of "the forms, shapes and contents of cultural texts that both determine and express particular relationships with their environments."¹² Sanctioning "the essential unity of humans and environment"¹³ and identifying labor as the keystone of the exchange between postcolonial and ecocritical positions, ecomaterialism avoids the "deep ecological" dichotomy of anthropocentrism and biocentrism. There is in fact an element of epistemological passivity in human cognitive processes—determined both by the activity of the percipient subject and by the stimuli of the external world that leads to a kind of "'weak' anthropocentrism"; at the same time, what we call "nature" is not so much a physical invariant, but the result of human labor and cultural production. In sum, by materializing postcolonialism

and historicizing ecocriticism, the ecomaterialist method draws equal attention to the role of human (cultural) labor and to the enabling conditions that the material environment offers to it.

If we accept Mukherjee's understanding of postcolonial ecocriticism and consider it from a geocritical angle, we see that the eco-materialist methodology engages with Westphal's geocriticism in a complex, provocative way. To begin with, it problematizes the principle of geo-centricity, which calls for a movement "from the writer to the place."¹⁴ Mukherjee's investigation of postcolonial environments unfolds over four Indian English literary texts and focuses on the specific context of contemporary India; still, it would be likely accused by "orthodox" geocritics for its ego-centered logic, on the basis of the manifest interest in the singular representational choices and literary forms adopted by the writers. Besides, the textual corpus selected is rather narrow, while, conversely, the spatial referent rather vast—even more so if we follow the suggestion to grasp postcolonial India as a globalized entity, "its condition speak[ing] simultaneously at local and global, specific and general, levels."¹⁵ Mukherjee's examination, then, seems at odds with the chief characteristics of geocriticism, and yet it does examine "a multiplicity of heterogeneous points of view, which all converge in a given place"—here, the Indian subcontinent, a broad referent that can be compared to those general thematic entities whose analyses, in a geocritical optic, "might serve as theoretical frameworks for studies of more specific geographical referents."

Environmental criticism has held on to its emergent nature. Despite its relatively firm foothold in literary studies, it nevertheless continues to appear as novel, urgent, and slightly agonistic in its quest to unearth what we seem to have forgotten: namely, the role of environment in literature, which is of course just a reverberation of an ever more urgent call to heed the environment in general. In Lawrence Buell's assessment, this emergent dimension of environmental criticism conceals ancient roots: "In one form or

another the ‘idea of nature’ has been a dominant or at least residual concern for literary scholars and intellectual historians ever since these fields came into being.”¹ Yet in spite of the undeniable importance of nature throughout the history of literature and arts, environmental criticism has also been, as Buell reminds us, a fairly marginalized discursive stance, often associated with insufficient theoretical sophistication, uncertainty of its disciplinary self-understanding, and looseness in pinpointing its object of inquiry. Insisting on an increasingly comparatist, interdisciplinary, and postnationalist orientation of eco-criticism, Buell suggests that it may best be understood as a “discourse coalition”: a dynamic and evolving set of positions, propositions, and disciplinary debates that seek to examine the question of environmental vision through its literary representations. In its evolving dialogue with itself and with its critics, environmental criticism has been moving away from the Anglo-American model of nature writing, the narratives of romantic wilderness and escapist pastorals and the simplistic nature-culture dichotomy to include other environments: urban and post-urban environments, territories conquered by colonial and neocolonial ideologies, environments of devastation, pollution and toxicity, places of attachment, non-places, etc. Such environments and their literary representations, far from idyllic, call into question our environmental aptitude and intentions. Recent postcolonial eco-critical publications remind us that “the decoupling of nature and history has helped to mystify colonialism’s histories of forced migration, suffering and human violence”³ and suggest that, if we explore the relationship between landscape and colonization, we discover that the narratives of colonial conquest have as much to do with environmental as with sociopolitical domination. With these crucial additions to the initial project, environmental criticism seems well placed to fulfill its promise of tackling urgent questions that should have concerned us but were conveniently swept aside. At the same time, environmental discourse is increasingly aware of the complexity of the term “environment” as its foundational category. From

David Harvey's perspective, the multitude of uses to which this concept is put testifies "to its fundamental incoherence as a unitary concept." Yet, like the word "nature," the very multi-fariousness of the concept, which ultimately conceals a great deal of human history, proves instructive: Harvey suggests, for example, that the importance of the word "environment" arises from its ability to signify "whatever surrounds or, to be more precise, whatever exists in the surrounding of some being that is relevant to the state of that being at a particular moment." In consequence, "environment," like "nature," manages to convey a kind "commonality and universality of concern." Instead of an antagonistic relationship and alleged anti-urban bias of ecological rhetoric, Harvey suggests a "rapprochement between ecological/environmentalist and socialist politics." Without going as far, Buell also seeks to connect the notion of environment to the social production of space, suggesting that the emergence of contemporary environmental criticism is in part the story of an evolution from imaging life-in-place as deference to the claims of (natural) environment toward an understanding of place-making as a culturally inflected process in which nature and culture must be seen as a mutuality rather than as separable domains. Many eco-critics thus challenge the unproductive but often entrenched opposition between the human and the natural, seeing in the very concept of "environment" the inextricability of nature and culture. The environment is thus not only a referential reality under discussion but also a series of tropes that allow "attention to be paid to the thematic, historical, and geographical particularities of environmental discourse," whose ultimate goal of confronting the vast ecological crisis with the "apparently flimsy tools of cultural analysis must be seen by the eco-critic as a moral and political necessity."

Performing a mandatory abortion on a teenage woman who is forced into sexual servitude during World War II, a Japanese gynecologist in the military camp in Nora Okja Keller's novel *Comfort Woman* (1997) pontificates about "evolutionary differences between the races, biological

quirks that made the women of one race so pure and the women of another so promiscuous.” Assuming the position of a social Darwinist, he refers to these seemingly natural differences to make sense of the possible causes for Korean women to enter sexual labor. The gynecologist justifies the oppression, commodification, and sexual exploitation of women by suggesting that men, at the top of the evolutionary ladder, hold dominion over women who, he suggests, are “almost like animals.” He thus concludes in a self-gratifying way: “Luckily for the species, Nature ensures that there is one dominant male to keep the others at bay and the female under control. And the female will always respond to him.”¹ Nora Okja Keller’s novels challenge this biological determinism by offering a critique of the interrelated effects of military occupation and sexual exploitation. While her novels are fictional, the subject matter they treat, namely forced prostitution of Korean women during World War II and the Korean War, is not. The locations of warfare in Keller’s novels *Comfort Woman* and *Fox Girl* (2002) are not the trenches and battlefields, but the sex camps and strip joints where the ideological submission of South Korea manifests itself in the sexual exploitation of Korean women. In *Comfort Woman*, Akiko is forced into sexual servitude by Japanese soldiers during World War II and is haunted by the traumatic experiences of systematic rape for the rest of her life. Similarly, Hyun Jin in *Fox Girl* ends up working in the sex trade in a military camp called “America Town,” where prostitution appears to be a logical consequence for the protagonist once her parents throw her out and her only friends and confidants are also women employed in sex shops and strip clubs meant to entertain American soldiers stationed in South Korea. Through retrospective first-person narration, Akiko and Hyun Jin present what Keller has termed “a history that’s not acknowledged,” which exemplifies how colonialism and militarism are also enacted on the female body in the form of sexualized violence.

Nature plays a crucial role in Keller’s critique of colonialism and militarism: it connects the women to the physical landscape and resonates in the myths and

legends the women rehearse. The symbolic significance of nature is part of the “environmental imagination” with which Keller promotes a deeply feminist and anticolonial politics. Keller not only bridges the “unproblematized division between people (on the postcolonial side) and nature (on the eco-critical one),” but offers a critique of this division in her depiction of resistance to and agency amid sexualized violence. This critique emerges in the form of an ecofeminist aesthetics that draws a connection between women’s suffering and the domination of the nonhuman biosphere, considering ecology “more as aesthetics than as methodology in eco/environmental criticism, providing the literary-minded critic with a storehouse of individual and collective metaphors.” The symbolic mythical animals and places nurture and inspire the protagonists, equipping them with strength to survive the atrocities, resist colonialism, and find ways out of the systemic oppression that regulates their femininity. To be sure, Keller’s novels do not uncritically align women and Asia with nature, but highlight their performative resistance to colonization and its aesthetic representation through metaphors and symbols in which the women, the landscape, and the animals that surround them are interconnected.

Much has been written about Keller’s representation of sexual violence, her accurate historical research on forms of sexual slavery during World War II and the Korean War, and antiessentialist

representation of the female body. The thematic and aesthetic richness of Keller’s work has generated critical arguments that examine her “Asianizing” of the genre of the Bildungsroman, her narrative imagination of sexual violence without “reaffirm[ing] existing stereotypes of Asian countries as the opposites of an enlightened, feminist West where women have complete freedom and equality,”⁸ her “strategy to translate sexual colonialism in multilayered experiences,”⁹ and on a metacritical level, interest in the comfort woman debate as a case in point which highlights the potential of transnational feminist networks.¹⁰ To consider Keller’s novels from an ecofeminist perspective shows

how colonialism and militarism equally exploit human and non-human nature. Drawing a connection between women and nature, Keller's novels, as does ecofeminist criticism itself, "synthesizes different branches of radical politics" and produces a multilayered critique of patriarchal power structures.

Ecofeminism is a heuristic that synthesizes the feminist movement and the ecological movement, arguing that the domination of sexual, ethnic, and social minorities and the domination of nonhuman nature are interrelated. When the term *écoféminisme* was first introduced by the French philosopher Françoise D'Eaubonne in her book *Le Féminisme où la Mort* (1974), it denoted women's potential role in bringing about ecological change. D'Eaubonne considers women's rights to their own bodies, one of the main goals of second-wave feminism, detrimental to saving the ecosystem strained by the effects of overpopulation including excessive energy consumption, deforestation, and waste production.¹² In the United States, ecofeminism entered feminist scholarship with the publication of Rosemary Radford Ruether's *New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (1975), an analysis of Western society and its hierarchical structure which relies on subjugation, conquest, and domination. In its place, Ruether, who argues that "there can be no liberation for women and no solution to ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination," envisions a social model based on commonality and reciprocity, one which embraces lateral connections.

While for ecofeminist critics, bringing together feminism and ecological activism has always been an expression of political resistance to patriarchy and capitalism, their feminist politics were often second-guessed. Adversaries mistook the gynocentric and gynocratic social models ecofeminists proposed as uncritical conflation of women with nature, seeing women as closer to nature, essentially apolitical and reactionary, and ecofeminism therefore as overtly feminine, spiritual, and esoteric. In defense of

such critiques, Carolyn Merchant distinguishes between a radical ecofeminism that “analyzes environmental problems from within its critique of patriarchy and offers alternatives that could liberate both women and nature” and social ecofeminism that “grounds its analysis in capitalist patriarchy and would totally restructure, through a socialist revolution, the domination of women and nature inherent in the market economy’s use of both as resources.”¹⁶ Similar to Marxist criticism, postcolonial criticism, and queer theory, the ecofeminist scholarship from the 1990s is pronouncedly poststructuralist in its suggestion that nature and gender are social constructs coming into effect through binary opposites such as male/female and nature/culture. For Ynestra King, for instance, ecofeminism is “a genuinely antidualistic, or dialectical, theory and practice” with which to constructively rethink existing patterns within modernity including constructions of identity along the lines of class, race, ethnicity, and gender. Greta Gaard postulates a queer ecofeminism that seeks to undo the constructed binarity of reason and the erotic, a binarism resulting from the original culture/nature dualism that lies at the basis of Western patriarchy.¹⁸ Similarly, Ophelia Selam suggests that “being an ecofeminist is, at its basis, a belief that calls for the end of oppression and a rethinking of the ways in which we see ourselves and others within the world.”¹⁹ Pointing at global interconnectedness (ecological activism, vegetarianism, and pacifism), ecofeminism goes beyond the regional and national emphasis of early studies in nature writing and shows affinities with the anti-essentialist and anti-dualistic heuristics of transnational feminism. Keller’s work intervenes precisely at this intersection of ecofeminism and transnational feminism. What becomes clear from the connection Keller draws between colonialism and militarism on the one hand and the systematic abuse of Asian women’s bodies on the other hand, is that the categories of woman, nature, and Asian are controlled, constructed, and corrupted by the same system of oppression. If “we can relate ecofeminist principles and interpretation to existing literary study by building on feminist

attention to the concept of the ‘other, Keller’s representation of nature can be understood best through the spatial significance of the locations in her novels. Both locations, the military camp and the military town, are examples of what Michel Foucault calls heterotopias, meaning “counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.” They are heterotopias in the sense that they are both inside and outside of society, solidifying social structures in a closed-space environment while allowing permeation and exchange with all other spaces. In Keller’s novels, these heterotopias are simultaneously “crisis heterotopias,” characterized by their temporary existence, and “heterotopias of deviation,” characterized by their deviation from the preexisting social norms before their existence. They are spatial manifestations of imperialism, constructed in the wake of and in order to effectively enact military occupation. These heterotopias render visible the regulation of women’s lives, the commodification of their bodies, and the assigning of new names and identities; in all of these instances, they invert pre-existing social orders by applying various means of physical violence. Cartographically, these sites in Keller’s novels encompass places of habitation, leisure, medical treatment, and burial, all of which are governed by the military regime.

Nature within these heterotopias functions as imaginary counter-site to military oppression. Akiko in *Comfort Woman* runs away from the camp and into the woods, the only place available where she can sing the songs of her ancestors, paying tribute to her cultural heritage and to the river as source of all spirituality. In a more abstract sense, Hyun Jin in *Fox Girl* initially refers to herself as a domesticated animal as a means of indicating the suppression and claustrophobia of the camp town and later identifies with the subversive power of the mythical figure fox girl. Nature is, however, not “uncontaminated by civilization,” but full of historical, social, and cultural signifiers of Korean

myths, rituals, and kinship ties.²⁴ At the same time, the natural space is also the location of the socially abject, such as in the case of a treatment center for venereal diseases called the “Mon- key House,” or as sites of military execution. The oppression that Keller’s novels describe with reference to the female body also extends into the realm of the non-human biosphere, where natural resources are exploited in order to sustain the infrastructure of the military posts. What Keller’s novels show is that, like gender, “nature is a cultural construct” because “notions of nature and culture can only be formulated inside an already established cultural order.” What is conceived of as nature, how the so-called natural world figures within the spatial logic of the camp, and how it permeates the physical borders of the camp forcefully embrace an antidualistic model in which nature and woman are neither synonymous nor are they oppositional.

This anti-dualism, as my discussion of Keller’s novels will show, not only precludes a reading of the novels in which nature can be seen as disconnected from the ideological, cultural, and historical legacies of the settings, but also explains Keller’s use of ambivalent imagery. What is noteworthy here is that in Keller’s ecofeminist aesthetics, nature can have an allegorical function, signaling both women’s oppression and women’s agency. While this may seem inconsistent or even contradictory, the plethora of meanings that Keller attributes to the non-human biosphere is reminiscent of her anti-essentialist representation of Korean women. Keller’s refusal to “theorize comfort women’s experience strictly in terms of their suffering” invites the reader to rethink prevalent assumptions about the victimization of Asian women, deessentializing the line between suffering and agency, oppression and emancipation.²⁶ In turn, Keller’s depiction of Korean women as “composed, composite, and positional” figures within the phallogentrism of Korean patriarchy and Western hegemony further resonates with her depiction of nature as ideologically constructed. Depicting military prostitution and transnational sexual labor, Keller’s work holds some important ground in the transnational focus of much contemporary

Asian American literary scholarship. By delineating the interconnectedness of her protagonists' experiences in Korea and in the United States, Keller blurs the social realities of the two nations and shows to what degree their histories overlap. The conceptualization of her protagonists as sustained by an intricate relationship with the natural world around them is not specific to their national heritage, but emerges as an emancipatory strategy in the face of militarism and colonialism. This relationship with nature equally informs the protagonists' sense of self and equips them with survival strategies both in Korea and in the United States. To the same degree as the heterotopic spaces of the military camp and the military town are not limited to local phenomena, but encompass global manifestations of militarism and colonialism, the protagonists' sense of nature not only exists within their specific native environments but also has global repercussions. Streams running into rivers and rivers running into the Pacific Ocean symbolize the interconnectedness of sexism, racism, classism, and capitalism in Korea and in the United States. Keller's ecofeminist aesthetics challenges the nation-state as representational logic and endorses instead a planetary vision.

For the purpose of this essay, I will concentrate on selected passages from Derek Walcott's celebrated epic poem *Omeros* (1990) and Agha Shahid Ali's collection *A Nostalgist's Map of America* (1991). These two books of poetry are of special import here because they are pre-occupied with displacement and also evoke a complex layering of U.S. landscapes that invites investigation from both a geocritical and an ecocritical perspective, "place" being one of the terrains where these two critical approaches meet conceptually. As Lawrence Buell points out in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, the concept of "place" has proven productive for ecocriticism since it gestures "toward environmental materiality, toward social perception or construction, and toward individual affect or bond."⁸ Buell acknowledges that his definition owes much to the writings of human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, whose works are routinely

cited by ecocritics and geocritics alike.⁹ By returning to “place” as a category of analysis, I thus continue the work of ecocritics such as Buell or Ursula Heise and geocritics such as Eric Prieto or Sten Pultz Moslund, all of whom have stressed the importance of a renewed engagement with place in literary studies. In considering place in the context of displacement, I join their efforts of putting pressure on the conceptualization of places as closed and stable sites of human attachment and engagement. By turning to the transnational American poetry of Walcott and Ali as my object of analysis, I furthermore hope to elucidate the special means poetry has to evoke the physicality, complex historicity, and diverse sociality, along with the rich symbolism of American places in the context of displacement. In fact, I would argue that it is the challenging multidimensionality and multidirectionality of poetry as a form of expression rather than any kind of explicit environmentalist message that makes texts like those of Walcott and Ali powerful responses to the current environmental crisis, a crisis that can be conceived as resulting, at least in part, from a narrowing down of human-place relations to those of economic exchange.¹⁰ By depicting landscapes as profoundly historical, social, and material, as both real and imagined, Walcott’s and Ali’s poetry not only depicts places that are complexly layered sites of individual as well as communal attachment, their poems also foreground multiple world-text relations that are of interest to both geocriticism and ecocriticism.

Like Ali’s speaker Shahid, Walcott’s speakers also frequently struggle with the limits of representation. Yet, while the tone in Ali’s poems remains genuinely earnest and gentle in the face of the fear that writing may be a futile or even destructive activity, and while Ali’s texts continue to express faith in the power of poetic language, Walcott’s poetry on U.S.-American places is highly ironic, even bordering on the sardonic, and often leaves the reader with hardly any assurances about the poet’s right to act as witness. Book Four of Walcott’s award-winning twentieth-century epic poem

Omeros follows the Caribbean poet Derek, the main narrator of the long poem's different storylines, to the United States, where he finds himself in different locales, ranging from New York to Colorado and rural Georgia. Over and over again, the poet-speaker draws attention to the complex material, historical, and social texture of the places before him. By staging the act of poetic creation, Walcott, like Ali in the poem "No," makes explicit the process by which landscapes become texts, or perhaps rather the extent to which landscapes are texts open to individual interpretation. In Book Four Chapter XXXIV, Section I of Omeros, Walcott writes:

The Crow horseman pointed his lance at the contrail higher over the Dakotas,
over Colorado's

palomino mountains; [...]

Clouds whitened the Crow horseman and I let him pass into the page, and I saw
the white wagons move

across it, with printed ruts, then the railroad tracks and the arrowing interstate, as
a lost love narrowed from epic to epigram.²⁸ [...]

While contemplating the majestic landscapes of the American West, the speaker envisions a Crow horseman, a heroic but also tragicomic figure of a long-gone, mythical past, who points to condensation trails in the sky. Like the "arrowing interstate" mentioned a few lines later, these contrails are not only symbolic of a late twentieth-century America constantly on the move. The word component "trail," together with the reference to "white wagons" and "railroad tracks," also evokes other, much more violent histories of movement in the country's past: the American westward expansion and the resulting Native American removal most harrowingly instantiated by the Trail of Tears. These evocations, finally, are what give the above lines a bitter aftertaste: while the rather stereotypical image of the Crow horseman acknowledges the history of Native American displacement granting it representation, the warrior's "whitening" by the ephemeral clouds highlights the precariousness of his memorialization in poetry.

The horseman's accusatory gesture as he points to the contrails, which appear like writing in the desert sky, and his gradual erasure by the passing time and a natural world that does not record human suffering foreshadow his eventual disappearance "into the page" of the poet. What is more, the history of the Crow and his people as well as that of all the other tribes forced on the Trail of Tears is literally "narrowed from epic to epigram" in Walcott's Caribbean-centered epos, in which U.S.-American landscapes and the Native American presence (and absence) remain on the margin.

Throughout Walcott's U.S. passages, and in particular Chapter XXXVI, ostensibly jarring metaphors are assembled to form incongruous images:

Under the crumbling goes of a gliding Arctic were dams large as our cities, and the icy contrails scratched on the Plexiglas hung like white comets left by their seraphic skis .These odd equivalences produce an unease in the reader which becomes almost unbearable in the last two lines of the section, where the speaker laments the end of his marriage by describing his face as "frozen in the ice-cream paradise/ of the American dream, like the Sioux in the snow."²⁹ And yet, the ill-proportioned imagery in this passage is not a sign of thoughtless callousness on the part of the author, I would argue, despite what some critics have suggested.³⁰ Rather and in some ways more urgently than Ali's poetry, Walcott's lines attest to the poet's self-conscious exploration of the limits of poetic representation and to his desperate will to act as a witness despite these limits, especially when it comes to histories of violent displacement.

At this point it is important to again draw attention to the fact that Walcott's concerns with histories of displacement, like Ali's (as we will see later), are directly linked in the text to a preoccupation with specific places, or more precisely natural landscapes that appear as reluctant and yet compelling mnemonic sites. At the beginning of Book Four, Chapter XXXV of *Omeros* Walcott writes:

“Somewhere over there,” said my guide, “the Trail of Tears Started.” I leant towards the crystalline creek. Pines shaded it. Then I made myself hear the water’s language around the rocks in its clear-running lines and its small shelving falls with their eddies, “Choctaws,” “Creeks,” “Chocktaws,”

The guide’s insecurity about the exact location of “where the Trail of Tears/ Started” in the lines above, like the Crow horseman who is whitened out by the clouds in the previous passage, points to the problem of forgetting and to nature’s tendency to cover up the traces of human history. Where one might hope to see a landscape affected by human suffering, the poem presents a pleasant, idyllic scene to the observer, which recalls conventions of the pastoral tradition before breaking them with images of violence and death. No matter what a cursory reading of the second verse might suggest, nature is not “telling” the secret histories of those Native American tribes that were displaced in the aftermath of the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Instead, it is the poet who wills himself to hear what he needs to hear in order to be able to write about the destiny of displaced tribes. The “clear-running lines” are the speaker’s and— by extension—those of Walcott’s poetry, not the river’s; and what will be shelved are not the river’s waters, but the poet’s books of verse which can imagine those stories that nature does not tell. While much of Walcott’s Caribbean poetry opts for singing the praise of the islands’ natural beauty when faced with what George B. Handley has described as nature’s opaque and deep history. Walcott’s texts focusing on North America work hard to conjure up histories of colonization and displacement and are ultimately much less forgiving about the poet’s failings, more suspicious about his motivations to continue writing, and more doubtful about his authority to do so.

Like his unsettling juxtaposition of genocide and divorce, the descriptions of the Dakota plains in the first passage quoted seem strangely out of scale. Natural phenomena as unfathomable as the geographical formations left behind by glacial movements are figured as scratches on Plexiglas and angelic ski trails,

which in turn are compared to a plane's contrails. Again, I would suggest, these lop-sided comparisons do more than deconstruct or mock what might otherwise be perceived as the sublimity of "Colorado's/ Palomino Mountains." In fact, one can argue that it is precisely the awkwardness of Walcott's language that highlights the awe-inspiring vastness of natural history and the beauty of the landscapes before the speaker's eyes. Unlike the speaker of Walcott's Caribbean nature poems, who has confidence in his right and ability to name and describe the world before him and to fill the gaps of history using his poetic imagination, the narrator of Omeros is more self-conscious about his attempts at witnessing, for example, when he "mistakes mountains for lakes." What this passage is about and ironizes at the same time is the belief that literature—be it prose or poetry—could ever do full justice to the multiple competing histories of a place and thus to a place's complex layering. This, however, is not to say that the poet should remain silent when faced with an ultimately impossible task. On the contrary, in keeping with the understanding that the construction of places as real-and-imagined sites of social and cultural production works by accumulation, there is value in adding a perspective like Walcott's— that is, one that struggles to include marginalized histories and draws attention to the multilayered and processual nature of place-identity

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

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In this chapter light will be shed on those patterns taken from the three novels in question for the purpose of exploring the major themes relating to the issue in question. The study seeks to pinpoint the question of urbanization as a phenomenon which was raised in literature for the first time in Hardy's novels more conspicuously.

3.1 Hardy's Birth and Upbringing

This part is much important as it reflects pastoral and agrarian background which formed a greater part of Thomas Hardy life and character, and hence his love for nature. he was born on the second of June in 1840 in the house at Higher Bockhampton which was built for his grandfather 'Thomas the First' in 1801 .. The fortunes of the Hardy's, who had owned extensive properties in Dorset, had declined; yet, among the collateral descendants of the who was famous. This was Admiral Hardy, who had been captain of Nelson's flagship at the battle of Trafalgar, and whose monument on lockdown was something more than a landmark for Thomas he left the Higher Bockhampton lane to follow the track across Kingston eweleaze for Stinsford or Dorchester on numerous occasions from 1849 to 1862 and later. 'The Heath' sloped down to the back of Hardy's birthplace. His paternal grandmother, who lived with his family until her death in 1857, talked of her early days at Higher Bockhampton, when the house was lonely and the 'heath croppers' or ponies were often her only friends. Her reminiscences awakened his interest in the war against Napoleon and in dying local customs, superstitions, and unusual events. At one time the house had been used for hiding smuggled spirits. One bitterly cold day, he and his father noticed a half-frozen fieldfare in the garden. His father threw a stone at it; instead of flying away, the bird fell dead. Thomas picked it up, and found it as light as a feather, nothing but skin and bone. The researcher illustrates that at an early age, Hardy had begun to realize 'the Frost's decree' or the cruelty of

Nature; the incident haunted his imagination for the rest of his life. Hardy's mother was unusually well-read, and loved to recite ballads. It is clear that his interest in stories began very early. He learned to read 'almost before he could walk', and the lady of Kingston Mar ward House, Julia Augusta Martin, claimed to have taught him his letters. His father and grandfather were stone-masons, and their business might have expanded had his father been more ambitious. For almost forty years Hardy had been leading members of the village choir, which provided its own string music and played in the gallery of Stinsford Church.

3.2 Effect of Hardy's Mother on his Personality

Hardy learned to play the violin, and loved music and dance before he went to school. His early ambition was to become a parson, and his mother did not neglect his education. *In 1848* Hardy became a pupil at the new school which Mrs. Martin had established at Lower Bockhampton; he is said to have been so weak physically that he was never allowed to walk there. His father did repairs on the Kingston Maurward estate, and owned a small farm called Talbot hays on the other side of the Frame valley. 'About this time' Hardy's mother 'gave him Dryden's *Virgil*, Johnson's *Rasselas*, and *Paul and Virginia*. He also found in a closet *A History of the Wars* periodical dealing with the war with Napoleon, which his grandfather had subscribed to at the time, having been himself a volunteer.' About this time Hardy made his first train journey when he accompanied his mother on a visit to an aunt in Hertfordshire. (The railway linking Dorchester with Southampton and London had been opened in 1847.) *In 1849* Hardy was transferred to a school in Dorchester, principally because the headmaster was an excellent teacher of Latin. The walk to and from the new school helped to make him strong. Mrs. Martin was aggrieved at not being consulted over this move; she was childless, and had shown 'Tommy' a great deal of affection, which he reciprocated. About the same time, whether before or after is not known, Thomas's father lost his work on the manor estate. The two events may have been related. Some time later, Thomas was taken by a young

woman to witness the harvest-supper and dance in Kingston Maurward barn. The harvesters included Scotch Greys from Dorchester, but he longed, above all, to see 'the landowner's wife, to whom he had grown more secretly attached than he cared to own'. The reconciliation with the lady, whom he was not to meet again until he went to London in 1862, remained vividly in his memory in association with the red-uniformed soldiers, the dancing, and the singing of old ballads by the farm-women. Other memorable boyhood impressions were provided by the performance of Christmas mummers, the spectacle of village-dancing round the maypole, and the sight of a delinquent in the stocks at Puddle town. *in 1852* Hardy began learning Latin at school, played the fiddle at local weddings and dances, taught in the Sunday School, and acquired a taste for the romances of Dumas *pere* and Harrison Ainsworth. He talked to local survivors of Waterloo, and acted as amanuensis for village girls who wished to write to their sweethearts in India. His attachment to Louisa Harding was never forgotten.

3.3 Hardy's Schooling

In 1856 Hardy left school and was articled to John Hicks, a Dorchester architect and church-restorer, for whom his father had worked as a builder. The offices were in South Street, next door to the school kept by William Barnes, the Dorset poet. Hardy's study of the Latin classics continued. Much of his reading took place between five and eight in the morning, when he left home for the office. He began to study Greek, and discussed his 'construing' with Hicks; when a knotty point in grammar arose between him and a fellow-pupil at Hicks's, he often sought the advice of the great scholar William Barnes. On 9 August he stood close to the gallows outside Dorchester County Goal to witness the execution of Martha Brown for the murder of her husband at Birds Moorgate, near Broad Windsor. Two or three years later he remembered, when he was about to sit down to breakfast, that another execution was due, and rushed out with a telescope to an eminent part of the heath from which he could see the

gaol two or three miles off. He had just lifted the telescope to his eye, when the white figure of the murderer dropped; the sensation was such that he seemed to be alone on the heath with the hanged man. These two executions were the only ones he witnessed; they were unforgettable, and contributed to the story and final scene of *Tess of the d' Urbervilles*. In 1858 he was now much stronger physically, and could maintain his studies in the early morning, his architectural employment during the day, and 'dance-fiddling' many an evening, without ill effects. He began writing poems at this time, among them 'Dom cilium', the earliest of his poems to be preserved. In his Greek he was assisted by Horace Moule, the son of a distinguished minister at Fordington, the large parish adjoining Dorchester. Moule was eight years Hardy's senior, and a fine Greek scholar; he had been to Queens' College, Cambridge, after three years at Trinity College, Oxford. The two became friendly; Moule lent Hardy books, discussed classical literature with him, and advised him to give up the study of Greek plays if he wished to become an architect. Moule himself was just beginning practice as an author and reviewer, at a time when scientific thought and critical research were making their early undermining impacts on the foundations of established beliefs. Hardy was 'among the earliest acclaimers of *The Origin of Species* 'In (1859), and was much impressed by *Essays and Reviews* (1860) by 'The Seven against Christ', as its authors were called. 1862-7 In April 1862 he went to London to pursue 'the art and science of architecture on more advanced lines'. (At this time his sister Mary was at Salisbury Training College, preparing to qualify as a teacher. Later she became a headmistress in Dorchester; her younger sister Katherine was to teach in the same school.) Hardy was soon engaged by Arthur Blomfield, an eminent restorer and designer of churches. His work was not confined to the office or to London; he travelled about the country 'very considerably' and worked for a time at the Radcliffe Infirmary Chapel, Oxford. In London, he danced at famous ballrooms, attended operas and productions of Shakespeare's plays, and researched at the South Kensington

Museum in preparation for an essay, 'On the Application of Colored Bricks and Terra Cotta to Modern Architecture', which was awarded the Royal Institute of British Architects prize. He also won the Sir William Tite Prize, which was offered by the Architectural Association. For a term or two he attended classes in French under Professor Stievenard at King's College. In 1865, to amuse his fellow-pupils at Blomfield's, he wrote 'How I Built Myself a House'; it was published in *Chambers's Journal*. He had the opportunity of going to Cambridge, but gave up the idea since he could no longer conscientiously prepare for Holy Orders. Hardy's reading of Spencer, Huxley, and John Stuart Mill had made him an independent thinker, and the complete overthrow of his faith may be seen in some of the poems which he wrote before he left London in 1867. He read poetry extensively, made a close study of the *Golden Treasury* and the works of Shelley and Browning, and was unusually impressed by Scott, preferring his poetry to his novels, and coming to the conclusion that *Marmion* was 'the most Homeric poem in the English language'. Swinburne's *Atlanta in Calydon* and the first volume of *Poems and Ballads* appeared in 1865 and 1866. When Swinburne died in 1910, Hardy recalled walking down a terraced street one summer morning and reading with 'a quick glad surprise' the perfervid eloquence of this great rebel against convention and God. He often lunched at a coffee shop in Hungerford Market which Dickens frequented. For many months he spent twenty minutes after lunch every day the National Gallery was open, 'studying the paintings of the masters, confining his attention to a single master on each visit, and forbidding his eyes to stray to any other'. He read incessantly every evening, often from six to twelve. The result of this ceaseless round of activities was a serious decline in his health, and advice from Bloomfield that he should return to the country to recover. Like his father, Hardy lacked the ambition to be a careerist; he was beginning to feel that he would prefer the country altogether to London. He was critical of much he observed in society: 'The defects of a class are more perceptible to a class immediately below it than

to itself,' he wrote. He was a shrewd and satirical observer, and claimed to know 'every street and alley west of St Paul's like a born Londoner, which he was often supposed to be'. In July 1867 the opportunity to work near home came when Mrs. Hicks wrote asking him if he could recommend someone to assist with church-restoration. Hardy volunteered to go himself, soon recovered his health at home, and once more resumed his walks to and from Dorchester.

3.4 Hardy's First Novel

Almost immediately, he felt the urge to write, and embarked on his first novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady*. He lost little time, for the first draft was completed by January 1868. The novel contained 'original verses', probably some of the unpublished poems he had written in London. Tryphena Sparks, Hardy's sixteen-year-old cousin, lived three miles away at Puddle town. How often they met and whether they fell in love are questions which cannot be answered with any degree of assurance. When she died in 1890, Hardy regarded her as his- 'lost prize', but he entertained similar retrospective sentiments towards other women. In any estimate of their relationship, the wisdom of hindsight should not be discounted. There is no evidence to prove a passionate engagement or a separation which was a major disaster in Hardy's life. The poems which he had written in London show that, if his animadversions on Providence proceeded from personal disappointment or suffering, such experiences belong to an earlier period. Hardy never penned a stronger or more striking indictment of 'Crass Casualty' than in the poem 'Hap', which was written in 1866. It is likely that such poems were the outcome of speculations at a time when Hardy was influenced by contemporary scientific philosophy and the poetry of Swinburne. *The Poor Man and the Lady* was submitted for publication in the summer of 1868. Hardy's talents were recognized, particularly in the rural scenes, and he was given much consideration and advice, but the book was never published. The more important scenes were set in London, but Hardy's tone was too Radical and satirical for publication. Ultimately he was advised to write a novel

with a more complicated plot. In the meantime Hicks had died, and his business had been taken over by the architect Crick may of Weymouth. Here Hardy worked for several months. He was very active; bathing at seven in the morning and rowing in the bay almost every evening in the summer; in the winter he joined a quadrille class. He wrote several poems and began *Desperate Remedies*, a compact novel of the thriller type, with a complicated plot in the Wilkie Collins manner. In 1870 He returned to Higher Bockhampton in February, and within a week was asked by Crick may to visit St Juliot in Cornwall to make plans of the church, which was to be rebuilt. He set out on Monday, 7 March, and stayed at St Juliot rectory, where he was received by Miss Emma Lavinia Gifford, the rector's sister-in-law. He found time to join in excursions to Bo castle, Tintagel, and Benny Cliff. By Saturday he was back in Weymouth, at the end of the most critical week in his life. He and Miss Gifford were of the same age, and were already in love with each other. At Weymouth Hardy worked on the church-restoration plans for St Juliot. In April he heard that *Desperate Remedies* had been rejected by publishers who disapproved of some of the incidents. Another firm expressed interest, and in May Hardy went to London, where he worked for a while at Bromfield's and then with another well-known 'Gothic architect', Raphael Brandon. Horace Moule was in London, and the two friends met frequently. In August Hardy left for a stay of two or three weeks at St Juliot. During the autumn Miss Gifford re-copied chapters of *Desperate Remedies*; the concluding chapters were written, and the novel was accepted. When it appeared in March 1871, its reception by the reviewers was mixed. One review was so damning that when Hardy read it 'on his way to Bockhampton' he wished he were dead. He was in Cornwall again in May. During the summer he wrote most of *Under the Greenwood Tree*. A misunderstanding of a letter from the publishers to whom he had sent it made him decide to concentrate on architecture for a career. Miss Gifford encouraged him to write, and in October, when he was on his fourth visit to St Juliot, he began making notes for *A Pair of*

Blue Eyes In 1872 He returned to London, and assisted the architect T. Roger Smith in making plans for schools. By chance he met the publisher of his first novel, and the result was the appearance of *Under the Greenwood Tree*. It was favorably received. Hardy agreed to write a serial for the same publisher, and began the full-length composition of *A Pair of Blue Eyes* in July. In August he was in Cornwall again; he and Emma journeyed to Kirkland, near Bodmin, to stay with her father. They were dismayed to find that he disapproved of the match and spoke of Hardy in the most opprobrious terms. Late in September, Hardy decided to leave London to finish his novel at home. In 1873 Early in the year he made 'a flying visit' to St Juliot. In the spring he was in London, where he was joined by his brother Henry for a few days in June. Afterwards he spent two days at Cambridge with Horace Moule. It was the last time he saw him. Within a few days he was travelling to Bath to meet Miss Gifford, who was staying there with a friend. On 2 July he travelled home via Dorchester to start *Far from the Madding Crowd*. In September he was shocked to hear of the suicide of Horace Moule at Cambridge; he attended his funeral at Fordington. On the last day of the year, when he was returning from Cornwall, he was astonished to find that the first installment of his new novel had been given pride of place in *The Cornhill Magazine*. * In 1874 By July 1874 *Far from the Madding Crowd* was finished. Hardy had found it a great advantage to be at home among the people he wrote about. The success of the novel seemed sufficient assurance for the future, for in September Hardy and Miss Gifford were married. We can assume that Mr. Gifford was not reconciled to the marriage; it did not take place in Cornwall but at St Peter's, Paddington; Emma's uncle, afterwards Archdeacon of London, officiated at the ceremony. After a short * Hardy did not recall all his visits to St Juliot. He came 'two or three times a year. Continental tour, the married couple took rooms in Surbiton. Leslie Stephen asked Hardy for another serial, and Hardy, remembering that *Far from the Madding Crowd* had been ascribed to George Eliot by one critic, and

resolved to show that he did not need to imitate anyone, began *The Hand of Ethelbert a*. The repeated change of themes and backgrounds for his novels may have arisen from the need for a new subject to challenge his powers, but at this time it was simply a means of discovering the kind of fiction most in demand. He was married, had given up what might have been a profitable career, and could not afford to neglect popularity. Hardy's experimental novel was finished at Swan age, which, with its vicinity, provided the setting for the closing chapters. In March 1876 Hardy moved to lodgings at Yeovil. At the end of May they set out for Holland and the Rhine Valley. At midsummer they entered the first house they had to themselves. It stood on the outskirts of Sturminster Newton, overlooking the River Stour in the Vale of Blackmon. Here they spent their happiest days. Looking back at the end of their stay at 'Riverside Villa', Hardy noted in March 1878 'End of the Sturminster Newton idyll' and, later, 'Our happiest time'. His principal literary achievement during this period was *The Return of the Native*. 1878-81 Rightly or wrongly, Hardy had come to the conclusion that it was necessary for a novelist to live in or near London. His next move was to Upper Tooting. In particular he wished to work on the historical background for a novel set in 1804-5, when the French invasion of the south coast was expected. For this he did research in the British Museum and visited south Dorset. The result was *The Trumpet-Major*, which appeared in serial form in 1880. Hardy was becoming famous; he dined at clubs, and met distinguished people, including Tennyson and Browning. He had joined the Savile Club, where he made the acquaintance of Edmund Gosse, a writer and critic who was to become a lifelong friend. He had begun , an ingenious modernization of what was essentially a Gothic plot. In the suffer, he and his wife made a tour of Normandy. After visiting Dorset and Cambridge, they returned to London in October. Almost immediately it was found that Hardy was suffering from an internal hemorrhage. He had to lie in bed for months, but insisted on finishing his novel, partly to fulfill his contract, but also from anxiety

lest he should die and his wife be left poorly provided for. The remainder of the novel was dictated. He did not go outside until April 1881. In May he and his wife looked for a house in Dorset, and eventually found one at Windborne Minster. *In 1881* In August they visited Scotland. On his return he set to work on his next novel, *Two on a Tower*, the setting for which was a few miles west of Windborne. The Hardy's found time for visiting and excursions, as they had done at Sturminster Newton, and took part in private readings of Shakespeare. He joined the Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club; some of its members are to be found in the setting for the narration of *A Group of Noble Dames*. In the autumn of 1882 the Hardy's visited Paris. *1883*) The plight of the Dorset shire agricultural labourer engaged Hardy's attention at this time, and an article he wrote on the subject was published in July 1883. In May and June he and his wife were in London seeing pictures, plays, and friends. Hardy met Browning again, at Lord Houghton's and Mrs. Procter's, attended the dinner to mark the departure of the actor Irving for America, and met the American novelist W. D. Howells at the Savile Club.

3.5 The Mayor of Casrebridge

He was in London for a few months nearly every year, and became known to many distinguished people. In June the Hardy's went to live in Dorchester. The main reason for this move was no doubt Hardy's wish to superintend the building of his house Max Gate on the Wareham Road. and ' he wrote "*The Mayor of Caster bridge*" for weekly serial publication. In June 1884 Hardy moved into Max Gate. R. L. Stevenson was almost the first visitor. *The Woodlanders* was finished by February 1887, and soon afterwards Hardy began their journey to Italy, where they visited Genoa, Florence, Rome, Venice, and Milan. They arrived in London in April, and Hardy met Lowell, Browning, and Matthew Arnold. By August they were back in Dorchester. *In 1888-92* Next spring they were in London again, and in June visited Paris. They returned home in July, and it is clear from Hardy's outing of 30 September that he was already

planning *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* in the autumn of 1888. This was set aside or interrupted for the writing of short stories. Among them was a series, forming the majority of *A Group of Noble Dames*, which originated from the study of famous families in his four volumes of the third edition of John Hutchins's *History and Antiquities of Dorset*. Amputating and modifying *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* in preparation for a serial publication designed not to offend magazine-readers took up a great deal of his time. It was a process he was to repeat with *Jude the Obscure*. He performed the operation with cynical amusement, but the attempt to cater for readers who could not face the issues of life gradually sapped his enthusiasm for writing fiction. More and more he looked forward to a work on a subject which had engaged his attention for many years, and in which he could express his views without pandering to popular tastes. His plans were slowly evolving, but it was not until he had given up the writing of novels that he had time to turn to his major work, *The Dynasts*. 'The highest flights of the pen are mostly the excursions and revelations of souls unreconciled to life,' he wrote towards the end of 1891. The writing of a series of short rustic stories, now known as 'A Few Crusted Characters', came no doubt as a relief after *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Several other short stories, which appeared eventually in *Life's Little Ironies*, were undertaken in 1891, and another diversion, *The Well-Beloved*, was written in the interval between *Tess* and *Jude the Obscure*. In September, the Hardy's enjoyed a memorable visit to the Scott country. Hardy was in London a great deal, but he was back in Dorset in the summer of 1892, when his father died. In October he visited Fawley in Berkshire; he was preparing for *Jude the Obscure*. In 1893 Hardy was in London again in the spring, and for the first time occupied a whole house, bringing up their servants from Dorchester. In May they travelled to Dublin, at the invitation of Mrs. Henniker, an authoress whom Hardy advised for several years and with whom he collaborated in writing a short story, 'The Shadow of the Real'. There is reason to think, from some of his poems, that Hardy was attracted by her; he

found her 'a charming *intuitive* woman'. His own domestic affairs were, to say the least, a strain. He owed much to his wife. She had encouraged him and assisted him in his writings, but was obsessed with her social superiority and at times possessed with the idea that she was a writer of genius. Occasionally her eccentricities reached a point which it was difficult not to label 'insanity'. *Jude the Obscure* aggravated dissension and she did everything to prevent its publication. Encouraged by 'Obscene drama' and the recollection of J. S. Mill's counsels on integrity and independence of thought, Hardy had refused to compromise. 'Never retract. Never explain. Get it done and let them howl.' These were the words addressed to Jowett, one of 'The Seven against Christ', by a very practical friend, he noted, adding significantly: 'on the 1st November [1895] *Jude the Obscure* was published.' This was the full text in volume form. Domestic disapproval and public criticism were mainly responsible for the depression voiced in the three poems, 'In Tenebris'. He felt as he had done when his first published novel had been mauled; he wished he had never been born. In addition to the various public and domestic strains which he endured, Hardy had the task of revising his novels and writing new prefaces for a uniform edition. It is surprising that he was able to accomplish so much. He recovered. As on previous occasions, he attended concerts with his wife at the Imperial Institute; in August they were at Malvern, Worcester, and Stratford; in September they visited Belgium. Hardy was making final plans to start *The Dynasts*, and spent 2 October walking about the field of Waterloo. 1897 after their usual London visit, Hardy went to Switzerland. He was at Lausanne, in Gibbon's old garden, towards midnight on 27 June, the 110th anniversary to the minute of the conclusion of *The Decline and Fall*. At home he went over his old poems and wrote others in preparation for his first volume of poetry, *Wessex Poems*, which appeared with Hardy's own illustrations in 1898. He wrote poems for his own pleasure. He could easily have been an affluent author had he debased himself by writing best-sellers. As a professional writer, he wanted to be popular; but his

genius rebelled against self-immolation. At one time he had seriously thought that he would have to write 'society novels', and had prepared numerous notes and sketches from his social engagements in town and country in readiness for such an emergency. All these were burnt, but we can judge them by notes in his *Life* and a scene or two in *The Well-Beloved*. 1899-1901 The next volume of poems which Hardy prepared, *Poems of the Past and the Present*, is remarkable for several poems on the universe, Nature (the great Mother) and the First Cause. Ideas or impressions in them may be found in the later novels, but they are stepping-stones towards *The Dynasts*. Although he had been preparing it for many years, this work involved Hardy in immense and protracted historical research. In 1902 He began the composition of *The Dynasts* during the second half of the year. (It appeared in three volumes, successively in 1904, 1906, and 1908.) 1904 His mother died in April. 1905 Hardy received the honorary degree of LL.D. at the University of Aberdeen. In June he visited Swinburne, who 'spoke with amusement of a paragraph he had seen in a Scottish paper: "Swinburne planets, Hardy waters, and Satan gives the increase.'" They laughed and condoled with each other on being the two most abused of living authors. 1907 On 8 February Mrs. Hardy went to London to walk in a suffragist procession. In June Hardy was guests at King Edward's garden party at Windsor Castle. 1908 Hardy completed his work as editor of a selection from the poems of William Barnes. 1909 He was invited by the University of Virginia to attend the centenary celebrations of the birth of Edgar Allan Poe. This was not the only invitation Hardy received from the United States; as usual, he declined. At the same time, he became a governor of Dorchester Grammar School (endowed by one of his collateral ancestors in 1579), a position he held until 1925. He succeeded George Meredith as President of the Society of Authors, and his third volume of poetry, *Time's Laughingstocks*, was published at the end of the year. In 1910 Hardy received the Order of Merit in June. In November he was accorded the freedom of Dorchester. 1912 In the early part of the year he was

busy making his final revision of the Wessex novels; as a *story*, *The Woodlanders* was his favourite. He received the Gold Medal of the Royal Society of Literature. Suddenly, on 27 November, his wife died. In 1913 Hardy's grief was great. He was conscious of his neglect and of her loyalty. Numerous poems bear witness to his 'expiation'; they express feelings which had been pent up, and prove that, though Hardy continued to write poems on miscellaneous subjects, he rarely had one to call forth his highest powers after the completion of *The Dynasts*. In 'Poems of 1912-13', which appeared in *Satires of Circumstance* (1914), the true voice of feeling is heard. Many more poems inspired by *veteris vestigial flammae* and regrets were to follow. On 6 March, 1913, 'almost to a day, forty-three years after his first journey to Cornwall', he started on a penitential pilgrimage to St Juliot, afterwards visiting his wife's birthplace at Plymouth. In June he received the honorary degree of Litt.D. at Cambridge. Twelve stories which had appeared in periodicals were collected for publication in the Wessex edition under the title of *A Changed Man*. In 1914 he married Miss Florence Dugdale, who had been at Max Gate since 1912, organizing the household and protecting the aged author from the intrusions of numerous visitors. After the outbreak of the First World War, Hardy joined a band of leading writers who pledged themselves to write for the Allied Cause; his 'Poems of War and Patriotism' were included in *Moments of Vision* (1917). The war 'gave the *coup de grace* to any conception he may have nourished of a fundamental ultimate Wisdom at the back of things'. He said that he would not have ended *The Dynasts* on an optimistic note had he foreseen what was to happen. In 1915 Hardy's sister Mary died in November at Talbot hays.

In 1920 He received the honorary degree of D.Litt. at Oxford. In 1922 *Late Lyrics and Earlier* was published with 'an energetic preface', in which he defended his views and rebutted the charge of pessimism. He and his first wife had been great cyclists - at the age of eighty-two, Hardy could cycle to visit his brother Henry and sister Katherine at Talbot hays, the house which had been

built on the site of their father's farm after their mother's death. *In 1923* The first draft of *The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall* was completed in April; and the Prince of Wales was received at Max Gate on the occasion of his visit to Dorchester to open a drill-hall for the Dorset Territorials. *In 1924* For the first time since his childhood, Hardy visited the old barn at Kingston Maurward where he had heard the village girls singing old ballads. *1925* 'A deputation from Bristol University arrived at Max Gate to confer on Hardy the honorary degree of Doctor of Literature.' *Human Shows* was published in November. *In 1926* Hardy visited his birthplace for the last time. *In 1927* He laid the foundation-stone of the new Dorchester Grammar School buildings. On the fifteenth anniversary of his wife's death, he worked 'almost all the day, revising poems'. His strength was failing rapidly at this time. He had insisted on examining a Roman pavement at Fordington before its removal to the County Museum. A cold wind blew, and soon afterwards he fell ill. The weather was bitterly cold after Christmas.

In 1928 On 10 January he seemed to rally. In the evening he asked that 'Rabbi Ben Ezra' should be read aloud to him. 'While reading it his wife glanced at his face to see whether he were tired ... and she was struck by the look of wistful intentness with which Hardy was listening. He indicated that he wished to hear the poem to the end.' As it was growing dusk the following afternoon, he asked her to read the verse from 'The RuMiyat of Omar Khayyam' beginning 'Oh, Thou, who Man of Baser Earth'. She read: Oh, Thou, who Man of Baser Earth didst make, And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake: For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man is blackened- Man's forgiveness give- and take!' He indicated that he wished no more to be read.' In the evening he had sharp heart attack. The doctor was called. Hardy remained conscious until a few minutes before the end. Shortly after nine he died. His ashes were buried in Westminster Abbey; the pall-bearers included the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, Sir James Barrie, John Galsworthy, Sir Edmund Gosse, Professor A. E. Housman,

Rudyard Kipling, and Bernard Shaw. At the same hour, 'the heart of this lover of rural Wessex was buried in the grave of his first wife among the Hardy tombs under the great yew-tree' near the entrance to Stanford churchyard. His last volume of poems, *Winter Words*, was published the same year in, October. The researcher illustrates that Hardy's first novel "The poor man and the lady" was written in the second half of 1867, after his return to Dorset from London. The first draft was completed in January 1868; the revised copy was finished by the early part of the following June. The most important scenes of the novel were laid in London, where Hardy had lived from 1862 to 1867 while working for the architect Arthur Bloomfield. The hero, Will Strong, was an architect. Satirical representation of the hierarchy and London society suggested dangerous radical tendencies; 'the vulgarity of the middle class, modern Christianity, church-restoration, and political and domestic morals in general' were underlined; and the book, like Hardy's last novels, was obviously written with 'a passion for reforming the world'. Whereas Thackeray's satire meant 'fun', Alexander Macmillan wrote, Hardy's meant 'mischief'. Looking back, Hardy expressed the view that the satire had been 'pushed too far', and that it had resulted in an inventiveness in the action which defied probability. John Morley, Macmillan's reader, noted 'queer cleverness and hard sarcasm', but thought 'the opening pictures of the Christmas Eve in the tranter's house' were 'really of good quality'. The opening Christmas Eve scenes at the tranter's were easily accommodated to the love-story of *Under the Greenwood Tree*. Modified to form a self-contained story; the main theme in very simple and economical outline was published in 1878 as 'An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress'. Here we have a very close approximation to the 'affected simplicity of Defoe's' style which Hardy ascribed to the original story.

3.6 Hardy's Satire and Cynicism

Many scenes were shed, but the country and London settings were retained. Some of the class resentment, cynicism, and social satire remain. More material

found its way into *Desperate Remedies*. The same quotations from Shelley, Browning, and Dryden's translation of Virgil are found here as in 'An Indiscretion', and even some of Hardy's sentences. The opening paragraph of 'An Indiscretion', describing the congregation as it sings and sways in church, is found, with slight modification, in *Desperate Remedies*. The class resentment of a poor man of genius and sensitivity is expressed once again. Some of the London vignettes, especially the more satirical, may have been recollected from the first novel, as well as the Knap water setting. The same social sentiments and satire are to be found to some degree in scenes and comments in later novels, e.g. *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (the scene in Rotten Row which Alexander Macmillan praised was almost certainly adapted for chap. xiv) and *The Hand of Ethelbert*. A link with one episode is preserved in the poem, 'A Poor Man and a Lady' (HS); the scene is a Mayfair church in London. The novel also contained scenes in famous London ballrooms, such as Almack's, the Argyle, and Cremorne; and these are recalled in the poem 'Reminiscences of a Dancing Man' (*Times Laughingstocks*). The remark of Knight on novel-writing . 'It requires a judicious omission of your real thoughts to make a novel popular', must have been written with the recent history of *The Poor Man and the Lady* in mind. It has a proleptic significance when we consider the career of the author of 'Candour in English Fiction' with particular reference to the publication of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. One criticism of *The Poor Man and the Lady* had important consequences. In view of its episodic construction, George Meredith, reader for Chapman & Hall, advised Hardy to write a novel with a more complicated plot. The result was *Desperate Remedies*. The researcher illustrates that Hardy, s novel "DESPERATE REMEDIES" Hardy went much further than Meredith had intended, and decided to write a sensational novel with a highly complicated mystery plot in the style of Wilkie Collins. *The Moonstone*, which was published in 1868, was an exemplar, but *The Woman in White* (1860) probably had a greater influence on the story (*The wood Landers*). Beach, *The*

Technique of Thomas Hardy). This venture in a kind of fiction Hardy 'had never contemplated writing' was attended with deep misgiving, as the passage which he marked in his copy of Hamlet on 15 December 1870 indicates: 'Thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart: but it is no matter!' (Life, 83). He had worked on *Desperate Remedies* at Weymouth when he was not engaged on Crickmay's church-restoration projects. Early in February 1870 he returned to Higher Bockhampton to concentrate on the novel, and he had almost completed the first draft when he made his first visit to Cornwall. Ultimately, the novel was accepted by Tinsley Brothers, the publishers of *The Moonstone*. It was published anonymously in March 1871. After two not unfavorable reviews, it suffered a slashing attack in *The Spectator*. Hardy's disappointment was keen; he wished he had never been born. His major offence lay in 'daring to suppose it possible that an unmarried woman owning an estate could have an illegitimate child'. The novel was described as 'a desperate remedy for an emaciated purse'. Years later, when his reputation as a novelist and his future were not at stake, Hardy could dismiss *Desperate Remedies* as a crude melodrama after 'the Miss Braddon school' and 'quite below the level of *The Poor Man and the Lady*'. He could afford to indulge in such self-depreciation, but it does not square with his bitterness at the harsh treatment the novel received in 1871. Although the plot depends on events that occasionally suggest cheap sensationalism and improbability, it is carefully articulated and presents tensions and mounting mystery with no mean skill; its tightly constructed plot is enriched with a laudable variety of effects, from the poetic and tragic to the vernacular and humorous. The writing is amazingly disciplined and rarely dull. Today the interest is enhanced by revelations of the power which Hardy developed in later novels, in poetic overtones, tragic insights, and humorous dialogue. The extent of transfer from *The Poor Man and the Lady* cannot be estimated. Large-scale transcriptions are not suspected. The Knap water setting is the Tollamore setting of 'An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress', and it is most likely that a number

of passages were adapted for inclusion in some of the London and rural scenes. Sentences and quotations which occur in 'An Indiscretion' are found again in this novel, and at least one passage, which contains one of these sentences, bears sharply on the handicaps confronting the poor man of genius in a class-ridden society. Certain tragic scenes are of special interest because they contain ideas and impressions which were adopted or developed in much later novels. In the concluding paragraphs of xi.i 6 will be found two passages which were transferred almost verbatim to *The Return of the Native*: garden symbolism, which, divested of its Gothic associations, is the forerunner of a scene at Talbothays farm in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*; and the presentation of the tragic heroine overborne by circumstance 'as one in a boat without oars, drifting with closed eyes down a river - she knew not whither'. Though incidental, the image is impressive, doubly so because it recurs more tragically in *Tess*. It is the summation of a whole scene in George Eliot's *Romola*. There are further links with *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. The heroine in each novel sacrifices herself in marriage, solemnized or de facto, for the sake of her family. *Desperate Remedies* anticipates *Tess* in one other respect. John Morley advised Alexander Macmillan not to 'touch' the story because it originated in the violation of a young lady. His letter of advice (Charles Morgan, *The House of Macmillan*,) suggests that the most objectionable scene was subsequently removed, and that Hardy took steps to make the point de depart of the story as unobtrusive as possible. Morley also objected to the scene 'between Miss Aldclyffe and her new maid in bed'. Lesbianism was probably totally alien to Hardy's intuitive conception of a situation in which the passionate feelings of a woman denied the husband she had loved are transferred to his daughter, whom she regards pitifully as her own. Hardy regarded the abnormality of the scene as the natural outcome of the situation; it was not an attempt at the sensational, and certainly not intended as an affront to Victorian susceptibilities. In a few scenes, particularly,, Hardy's first experiments in counterpoint or the fusion of emotion

and situation with external surroundings may be noted. Gothic elements are present, but the technique gives a foretaste of ampler harmonies and poetic overtones in *The Return of the Native* and *Tess of the d' Urbervilles*, where parallelism of natural background accentuates the human drama and underlines the indifference of Nature to human suffering. In the early novels from *Desperate Remedies* to *Far from the Madding Crowd* the influence of George Eliot may be suspected. Comic rustics in the same tradition as those who meet in 'The Rainbow' in *Silas Marner* comment on leading characters and events. Of the first of these, Mr Crickett is the most noteworthy. They were to become more Shakespearian. Literary quotations and references to painters show that Hardy assumed from the start that a writer was expected to be cultured. Sometimes they are an encumbrance, and suggest that the writer is diverted from natural expression by the desire to impress. In general, they are integral to conceptions rather than decorative or associative. The characteristics of *Desperate Remedies* are mixed. The true Hardy elements are combined with sensationalism and Gothic effects. One thing is certain: complications in plot were never likely to present unmanageable problems to the author of this book. In this respect, *Desperate Remedies* marks an important step in Hardy's apprenticeship as a novelist. Weymouth and Hardy's experiences as a poet provided material for some of the earlier scenes; Kingston Maurward House, the old decaying manor-house nearby, and the not far distant railway line to London presented ready possibilities for a contemporary murder-mystery story (the main action lasts from 1863 to 1867); and a traditional Wessex tale-of which Hardy had already written a humorous version in dialect in 'The Bride-Night Fire' (*Wessex Poems*) -may have sparked off the crucial episode of the story, the fire at the Three Tranters. (The melodramatic possibilities of a fire at an inn could have been suggested by *Lady Audley's Secret*, the first novel from the prolific pen of Miss Braddon; it appeared in 1862, and made a fortune for her and her publishers.) In other respects the Wessex background, like that of 'An

Indiscretion', is sketchy and general rather than topographical. The Wessex place-names were altered in the 1896 edition in order to bring *Desperate Remedies* in line with Hardy's subsequent fiction. In Hardy's novel (*UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE*) The researcher illustrates that Hardy responded barometrically to criticism of his first published novel. He had not forgotten John Morley's approval of 'the opening pictures of the Christmas Eve in the Tranter's house' in *The Poor Man and the Lady*, or the following passage in the *Spectator* review of *Desperate Remedies*: 'there is an unusual and very happy facility in catching and fixing phases of peasant life - in producing for us, not the manners and language only but the tone of thought ... and simple humour of consequential village worthies, and gaping village rustics. So that we are irresistibly reminded of the paintings of Wilkie and still more perhaps of those of Teniers, etc. The scenes allotted to these humble actors are few and slight but they indicate powers that might, and ought to be extended largely in this direction.' He concluded that he must avoid complications of plot and any hint of moral obliquity in his next novel. A light 'pastoral story', which allowed scope for 'rustic characters and scenery', seemed 'the safest venture'. Among the Christmas Eve 'pictures' at the Tranter's which he decided to adapt, there was one in particular which could be transferred to the new novel with very few modifications. Around this he created and reconstructed a series of scenes which provided 'a good background' to the love-story. With the later, pastoral scenes, they formed, as it were, 'A Rural Painting of the Dutch School'. The choir story and background were so important that Hardy wished the novel to be known as *The Mellstock Quire*; it was because 'titles from poetry were in fashion' that he was persuaded to call it *Under the green wood Tree* (Charles Morgan, *The House of Macmillan*,. The subject was one Hardy had been intimate with from childhood, and to which he returned several times in his novels, short stories, and poems. No doubt he had heard many stories of the old choir from his parents and grandmother, for the Hardy family had been the mainstay of the Stinsford

string choir for almost the first forty years of the nineteenth century. Hardy had studied the family music notebooks, and though, as he tells us, 'there was, in fact, no family portrait in the tale', the Tranter's house is, recognizably the Hardy's' at Higher Bockhampton, and old William Dewy, Reuben Dewy, Dick Dewy, and Michael Mail occupied the same seats and played the same instruments as Thomas Hardy senior, Thomas Hardy junior, James Hardy, and James Dart in 'Mellstock' church gallery. It was Hardy's cousin Teresa, the daughter of James Hardy, who played the harmonium at Stinsford after the revolution in parochial church music which provided the background accompaniment to the early love story of Dick Dewy and Fancy Day. Hardy's interest in rural church affairs had been revived when his sister Mary became a church organist; 'Tell me about the organ and how the Sundays go off-I am uncommonly interested,' he wrote to her from London in 1863. The detective of autobiography in fiction may trace a resemblance to Tryphena Sparks, another of Hardy's cousins, in the description of Fancy Day ,and perhaps also in the waywardness of her affections. One might surmise from Hardy's 1896 preface that the period of the story is about 1840. This seems to be borne out in 'The Fiddler of the Reels' ,in which the strange course of events in the lives of Caroline Aspent and Mop Olla moor begins not later than 1847. Here we read that Ollamoors 'date was a little later than that of the old Mellstock quire-band which comprised the Dewys, Mail, and the rest'. A remark in the novel seems to indicate that the story could not have begun before 1845; one cannot be certain, therefore, whether Hardy was aware that there were no Queen's Scholars before 1846 .Recent critics have hastened to discover the foreshadowing of tragic overtones in this humorous idyll. There are no deeply ominous notes. The disturbance caused by an owl as it kills a bird in the adjoining wood is the prelude to Geoffrey Day's refusal to accept Dick Dewy as his daughter's suitor, just as her consequent distress is reflected in rain and mist and the writhing of trees in the wind; but no one attaches seriousness even to this incidental

reminder of Nature's cruelty in a scene where Shiner and Dick vie risibly for favour, and the hero's overtures are made over the rail of a piggery. Clouds quickly pass, and the tone of the novel brooks no heartaches. Dick's jealousies are amusing, and Fancy Day's 'temptation' jars only momentarily. In its context, it is one of life's little ironies, and they are not always presented tragically in Hardy's fiction. It is never allowed to disturb the hero's happiness. The scene between Dick and his father at Mellstock Cross discloses the lover in his most serious mood; the tranter's comments reflect what 'the common world .says', and 'the world's a very sensible feller on things in general'. Its views are not disconsolate or tragic. Appropriately, this comic romance ends on a delicious equipoise of comic irony. Serious conjectures about the matrimonial future of the lovers (unlike those relating to Grace Melbury and Fitzpiers in *The Woodlanders*) would be alien to the spirit of *Under the Greenwood*. The reader's sympathies are most likely to be linked with the passing of the old choir, but even such sentiments are adventitious. Hardy's detached view was that the 'realities . . . were material for another kind of story for this little group of church musicians than is found in the chapters here penned so lightly, even so farcically and flippantly at times'. The tug-of-war between the choir and Mr Maybold is amusing and somewhat Dickensian. In a story which skillfully combines light romance with the declining fortunes of the choir, it is obvious that the role of the latter is not a subordinate one. The members of the Mel stock choir are not presented equally, but among them are lesser, static, perennial figures, which are undoubtedly the forerunners of the comic rustics in the chorus of commentators and gossips to be found in *Far from the Madding Crowd* or *The Return of the Native*. They owe something to the observation of a countryman who could regard local characters with keen humorous detachment after a period of absence in London, but much more to creative genius inspired by Shakespearian and Dickensian influences. Their quaint angularity is Hardy's most idiosyncratic achievement in *Under the Greenwood Tree*. In saying that

'the attempt has been to draw the characters humorously, without caricature', Hardy implied a sympathetic treatment. Hardy's observations of nature as well as of character show an original distinctiveness and precision; his pervasive humour and detachment combine with a widespread use of choice dialogue and reminiscence in dialect to give this minor work a high and special place among the Wessex novels. John Morley thought the opening scenes lacked 'sufficient sparkle and humor' for 'such minute and prolonged description' (Morgan,), and their reduction was recommended. Hardy was discouraged, asked for the return of his manuscript, and decided to give up novel-writing. But for the encouragement of Emma Lavinia Gifford, and a chance encounter with Mr Tinsley, who asked him for another, Hardy would have made architecture his career. characterization. In later novels, Hardy created greater single characters, but in none did he create as many leading characters who are imaginatively realized as in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. In *Bathsheba*, *Gabriel Oak*, *Boldwood*, and *Troy*, we have a remarkable diversity. Of these the solitary *Boldwood* is the least convincing, but his powerful feelings when unleashed have a dramatic appeal. When the narrative 'gallops', the impressiveness of the characters is diminished, but for the greater part of the story their hold on the reader is such that the idiosyncrasies of the rustics tend to be overlooked. The contrast between the sensational events of the story and the uneventful lives of the rustics-not all of whom meet at Warren's Malthouse, or form part of the 'chorus'-provides the general irony of the novel and its title. Modern changes (the valentine episode indicates that the period was 1869-73) have not affected their lives; the shearers 'reclined against each other as at suppers in the early ages of the world'. For them, the news that Dicky Hill's wooden cider-house has been pulled down, and Tompkin's old cider-apple tree has been rooted up, is indicative of 'stirring times'. In this novel Hardy used 'Wessex' for the first time to signify the general topographical background. Thenceforward he adhered to a scheme of pseudonyms for places which were only 'partly real'. Often they are composite. *Bathsheba's* farm and *Boldwood's*, for example, are much closer to the church and malt house than their originals.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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4-1 Manifestations of ecological consciousness In Far from the Madding Crowd:

The researcher illustrates that in a world with deep ecological and environmental crises, novels of such great authors as Thomas Hardy remind readers of rural, idyllic life where man lived in harmony and accord with his environment. Hardy's interest in Romanticism, his support of Darwin's theories, and his concern and involvement in the sympathetic relationship between man and nature, man and animal, and man with man are the manifestations of his ecological consciousness. In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, the researcher clarifies that apart from its love story; the larger portion of the novel concerns the description of nature and rural customs. Hardy's eloquent and elegant emphasis on the values inherent in nature and his Wessex draws a distinction between a pastoral world of Weatherbury and the urban society of Bath. Characters like Gabriel Oak along with others are living in a local ecosystem in which nature plays a major part in their happiness. Upon reflecting on such a harmonious relationship between man and nature in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, readers would be ecologically informed of the values Hardy inspired in them and therefore better contribute to their ecological thinking in the hope of respecting and preserving nature.

4-2 Far from the madding Crowd:

The researcher aims to analyze Thomas Hardy's novel, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, from the perspective of eco-criticism and study where Hardy's ecological consciousness originates from and how it is represented and interwoven in the characters, setting and plot of the novel. It also focuses on such questions as how Gabriel Oak can be the

voice of harmony in nature and what does the portrayal of this character tell us about today's ecological crises? Ecocriticism, a newly found theoretical framework, explores the ways in which how the environment is illustrated in literature and, by so doing, examines and proposes possible solutions concerning our contemporary environmental situation. In an era where a long established rustic order is giving way to the giants of technology and industrial capitalism, there remains no more appealing vision than that of England's pastoral and green land. In his Wessex, a part real and a part dream country which is the setting for most of his works, Hardy vividly and skillfully describes his vision and longs for the rustic nature of England. He lays stress to the intrinsic values of nature where men establish a harmonious relationship with their environments. Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), one of the well-known Victorian realistic writers, was born in Dorset, England, and found himself confronted with poverty and life's cruelties. He started his literary career with poetry but gained fame as a novelist. Hardy has always been praised for his descriptive, local language and his depiction and regard of natural surroundings he artfully employed in his works, especially in his major novels. His portrayal of class struggles, love, marriage, friendship, the problem of time, and the question of human existence are themes implied from his novels and mostly dealt with when critics discuss his works. Previous studies have undertaken the task analyzing Hardy's oeuvres in light of eco-criticism and mainly focused on *The Return of the Native* and *the Woodlanders*, among his other novels or they illustrated the idea of ecological holism in the relationship between two of his novels. For instance, eco-critics in *The Return of the Native* observed that man is in conflict with nature and each character reacts differently toward it. They, further, examined the ways in which nature portrayed and humanized in the novel in a way

that how its inherent values contribute to ecological thinking. In a different vein, this research aims to carry out a close analysis of *Far from the Madding Crowd* by itself on the basis of eco-critical principles. Before delving into the main discussion, a brief history and application of eco-criticism school of thought along with Hardy's Wessex and ecological consciousness are provided for better understanding and proving our claim. In a world with modern sophisticated technologies where the advancement of industrial, agricultural and factory machinery have changed the face and atmosphere of earth, the need for an ideology or movement to support and preserve nature is of high importance. To better understand the traces of this temerity that human beings have to exploit and mistreat their natural environments, the sources of ecological crises should be taken into account. M. John Britto (2012) outlines the sources of ecological crises into four groups. The first group is based on the notion of classical Greek Humanism considering man to be a rational animal International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences Submitted and therefore superior to other species. The second group goes back to the Descartes philosophy and Cartesian dualism of soul and body. In this dualism, unlike humans, animals lack soul and therefore this deficiency makes them inferior to humans. The third group showing the superiority of human beings over other species is the concept of the Great Chain of Being which creates a hierarchy of importance starting with God at the top and reaching to animals and inanimate objects at the lowest point. Moreover, human beings in the middle of this hierarchy are superior to animals and natural, inanimate world. The fourth group is the anthropocentric view that regards man as the central element of the world [1, p.721-722]. These ideas have compelled human beings to be superior and egotistic with little care to the preservation of nature or the rights of other species. Green studies,

environmentalism, and eco-criticism are all related schools that, more or less, protect the environment from men's exploitations and struggle to make people aware of the ecological crises and create a harmonious relationship between nature and human society. Grey Garrard (2004) in his book *Ecocriticism* states that:

The notion of eco-criticism has proceeded from, and fed back into, related belief systems derived from Eastern religions, such as Taoism and Buddhism, from heterodox figures in Christianity such as St Francis of Assisi (1182–1286) and Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955), and from modern reconstructions of American Indian, pre-Christian Wiccan, shamanistic and other 'primal' religions [2, p. 22].

Having had such a rooted history, the term eco-criticism is first coined by William Rueckert in 1978 and defined as "the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature" [3, 1996, p. 107]. Furthermore, Glotfelty (1996), in his introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader*, defined eco-criticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" [3, p. XVIII]. Ecocriticism has a close affinity with the science of Ecology. Based on the Oxford Learner's Dictionary Ecology is "the relation of plants and living creatures to each other and to their environment" [4]. In other words, ecology explains the interconnectedness of human beings and natural environment. Likewise, critics show great interests between the relationship of the men and their environments and the ways this relationship illustrate in literature. First defined by Joseph W. Meeker (1997), the term literary ecology refers to "the study of biological themes and relationships which appear in literary works. It is simultaneously an attempt to discover what roles have been played by literature in the ecology of the human species" [5, p. 9].

Human beings depend on nature for such basic needs as air, food, and water as much as nature depends on them. Hence, this symbiotic relationship between man and nature, along with everything else in it, flourishes and secures when man identifies the environmental issues and strives to amend them for the sake of nature. In a world of environmental crises, the only solution is to make people consciously aware of ecological predicaments. In other words, the higher people's level of environmental awareness becomes, the less ecological crises occur. In analyzing a piece of literary work, eco-critics delve into the ways literature treats nature and are in search of answers to such questions as how nature is represented in literature regarding the physical setting of the work, how literature affects man's relationship to natural environment or are the values inherent in that work of art consistent with ecological thoughts? Richard Kerridge (2001) claims that "eco-criticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis" [6, as cited in Garrard, 2004, p. 4]. Consequently, the attempt, here, is to peruse *Far from the Madding Crowd* and dissect such elements of nature that Hardy consciously selected in writing this novel and see, as mentioned by Kerridge, how he can help environmental crises.

The term Wessex was first taken to refer to the Old Saxon Kingdom, located in the south of England, after the Norman Conquest. Nevertheless, for Hardy, Wessex is an imaginary place based on the real places which he observed and knew well. In other words, Hardy created his own Wessex names for the actual names of the places. For example Weatherbury, the name of the village in *Far from the Madding Crowd* is inspired by Puddle town, the real town Hardy knew [9, 2007, p.53]. Regarding Hardy's Wessex, Richard Nemesvari (2004) emphasizes that "Hardy's eventual position as the grand old man of English literature

generated a powerful sense of nostalgia for the agrarian, pre-industrial world of Wessex that was increasingly seen as the focus of his writings; and, as that world retreated even further into the past, its attraction increased” [10, p. 41]. As mentioned by Nemesvari, Hardy’s “pre-industrial world of Wessex” is a return to past and that shows Hardy’s disapproval and criticism of society and industry which awfully changed the face of nature. By creating Wessex, Hardy takes shelter in the bosom of nature and rural countries. While he is not ignorant of his society, Hardy’s topographical approach in his writing reinforces his reputation as a regional writer who is lost in the middle of dilemma and unreliability of modern world. Cuddon (1977) defines a regional writer as “one who concentrates much attention on a particular area and uses it and the people who inhabit it as the basis for his or her stories. Such a locale is likely to be rural or provincial” [11, p.737]. Thus, since Hardy’s attention is on the imaginary Wessex countries along with their people, language, and customs, he is regarded as a regional writer. In her collected essays, *The Common Reader*, Virginia Woolf (1953) describes Hardy as follows:

“He already proves himself a minute and skilled observer of Nature; the rain, he knows, falls differently as it falls upon roots or arable; he knows that the wind sounds differently as it passes through the branches of different trees. But he is aware in a larger sense of Nature as a force; he feels in it a spirit that can sympathize or mock or remain the indifferent spectator of human fortunes” [12, p. 246].

As Woolf puts it, Hardy is an “observer” who feels sympathy with nature and sees it as a “force”, accordingly, to be ecologically conscious is to be aware of the environment and show concern for it or in Christopher (2005) words, it is “to experience Earth as a living system” [13, p. 33]. What is absorbing about Hardy is that he bridges the gap

between Victorian Era and the early 20th century while many of his novels and poems are heavily influenced by the Romanticism especially “Wordsworth and tradition” [14, 1986, p. 1]. Hence, Hardy’s interest in Romanticism; the 18th-century movement which was partly a reaction to the industrial revolution in favor of nature and natural sciences, is one reason for his ecological consciousness. There are also other elements such as animal welfare, biocentrism, and egocentrism which show the consciousness of ecology [15, 2015, p.582]. Animal welfare, as the name suggests, concerns with the protection and rights of animals. Biocentrism “extends inherent value to all living things, including plants as well as animals” [16, 2003. p. XIX] and finally egocentrism rejects the division between human and nonhuman nature and ethically claims for the equality of their intrinsic values. In a related vein, the second reason concerning Hardy’s ecological consciousness is biocentrism and egocentrism or his concern about the natural world as is evident in his naturalistic writing style. Hardy (1985) also confesses in his biography that “as a young man he had been among the earliest acclaimers of the Origin of Species” [17, p. 158]. Therefore, that makes Hardy an admirer of Darwin and his theories, another reason for his sharp ecological mind.

4-3 Gray’s poem, Elegy and characters:

Hardy took the title, Far from the Madding Crowd, from Thomas Gray’s poem, Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard published in 1751. The related stanza starts in this way:

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife, Their sober wishes never learned to stray; Along the cool sequestered vale of life They kept the noiseless tenor of their way [18, 2015, p. 111].

Gray’s poem is a comfort in reflecting on the lives of the unnoticed rustics buried in the country churchyard. Similarly, by alluding to Gray’s poem, Hardy evokes the rustic culture that by his time had been

endangered by industrialization. Hardy called *Far from the Madding Crowd* a “pastoral tale” and according to Geoffrey Harvey (2003) “the elements of pastoral are rooted with compelling realism in the rituals of the farming calendar, such as sheep shearing and harvesting, and in the social events that structure and give meaning to the life of the agricultural community” [7, p. 61]. Since the attempt, here, is to pinpoint the traces of Hardy’s ecological thoughts in the plot of the novel, it is redundant to have a detailed summary of the novel. In a brief account, the plot of the novel revolves around four main characters, Gabriel Oak, Farmer Boldwood, Sergeant Troy, and Bathsheba Everdene. The men’s quest over winning Bathsheba’s heart is the main concern of the novel. In this love square, Troy wins Bathsheba’s love for a short time, then dies in the hands of Boldwood and Boldwood spends his remaining life in jail. The two remaining characters, Bathsheba and Gabriel, have the “most private, secret, plainest wedding that it is possible to have” [8, 2012, p. 467]. The novel is set in the village of Weatherbury, the rural England and one of the Hardy’s Wessex countries. Morgan (2007) explains that “Hardy’s rural representation is of England’s golden age — so called for its preindustrial state of carefree happiness and harmonious interaction of man and nature” [9, p. 53]. In chapter two Hardy (2012) describes Norcombe Hill as: One of the spots which suggest to a passer-by that he is in the presence of a shape approaching the indestructible as nearly as any to be found on earth. It was a featureless convexity of chalk and soil — an ordinary specimen of those smoothly-outlined protuberances of the globe which may remain undisturbed on some great day of confusion... [8, p.22].

According to Garrard “wilderness has an almost sacramental value: it holds out the promise of a renewed, authentic relation of humanity and

the earth, a post-Christian covenant, found in a space of purity, founded in an attitude of reverence and humility” [2, p.59]. Hardy’s description of the landscape is in line with the concept of Garrard’s wilderness, an undisturbed wild environment where Gabriel Oak proposes and later marries Bathsheba. This serenity and “sacramental value” of wilderness preserve up to the point where Gabriel’s flock of sheep fall down the precipice and meet their death. With that in mind, Bertens (2007) notes that wilderness “is often represented as a place with a special significance, a place of healing and redemption, or evil and danger where the individual’s moral resolve is severely tested” [19, p.201] following this definition Norcombe Hill, as a wilderness, is more attuned with Bertens’ view in which Hardy skillfully describes and puts Gabriel Oak to the test with himself. For Bate (2000) , Hardy “values a world—for him vanishing, for us long vanished—in which people live in rhythm with nature” [20, p. 3].

4-4 Hardy’s ecological ideas of Norcombe Hill:

This rhythm is quite felt when Hardy express his ecological ideas on the representation of Norcombe Hill saying “The instinctive act of humankind was to stand and listen, and learn how the trees on the right and the trees on the left wailed or chanted to each other in the regular antiphonies of a cathedral choir” [8, 2012, p. 23]. Moreover, Bennett (2001) claims “if eco-criticism has taught us anything, it has taught us to view ‘settings’ not just as metaphors but as physical spaces that inform, shape, and are shaped by cultural productions” [21, p. 197]. The names that Hardy has chosen for the title, characters, as well as places in the novel, from an ecological perspective, makes Hardy an advocate and lover of nature and the natural world. For instance, the title of the novel, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, literally, is a call for returning to the bosom of nature, an escape from the madding crowd to the idyllic

countryside, a description of life in pastoral mode, and a depiction of human's happiness in line with nature. Furthermore, the names of the characters like Mr. Oak, Boldwood, Poor grass and Mrs. Hurst as well as the names of the places such as Weather bury, the name of the village, and Greenhill Fair, among others, are related to nature and reveals Hardy's concern with nature. In the novel, Gabriel Oak, the protagonist, and Sergeant Troy, the antagonist, are the embodiments of the two sides of life; the rural and the urban. In the beginning of the novel Oak is a farmer, and then become a shepherd and bailiff. Oak is the only character in the novel whose actions, experiences, and his lifestyle are so much -interwoven in his environment that he is considered as a traditional man and this traditionalistic behavior, as Hardy shows in the 19th century, is a call for returning to the peace once man had with nature.

4-5 The relationship between man and nature:

“Oak's character has no hard boundaries but is always in flux, always a product of relations with whatever surrounds him” [6, 2001, p. 130]. His exceptional skill in shearing, his fair, humane treatment of the animals along with his knowledge of the weather makes him the lover, supporter, and symbol of nature. Oak is so much endowed with nature that he mistakes an artificial light for a “star low down behind the outskirts of the plantation” [8, 2012, p. 27]. In chapter thirty-six after Bathsheba and Troy publicly celebrated their marriage and the harvest and invited all to dance, drink and carouse at their house, Gabriel steps outside and sees signs of an upcoming storm:

Gabriel proceeded towards his home. In approaching the door, his toe kicked something which felt and sounded soft, leathery, and distended, like a boxing glove. It was a large toad humbly travelling across the path. Oak took it up, thinking it might be better to kill the creature to

save it from pain; but finding it uninjured; he placed it again among the grass. He knew what this direct message from the Great Mother meant. And soon came another... Oak sat down meditating for nearly an hour. During this time two black spiders, of the kind common in thatched houses, promenaded the ceiling, ultimately dropping to the floor. This reminded him that if there was one class of manifestation on this matter that he thoroughly understood, it was the instincts of sheep [8, 2012, p. 289-290].

The first thing comes to mind upon reading this paragraph is Oak's strange and deep knowledge of animals; that how a traveling toad can be a sign of bad weather or how promenading spiders remind him of the sheep. The second thing is why Oak pays attention to such minute details of his surroundings and care about them? The logical answer would be that these things are all a part of Oak's instinct, in other words, nature is perceived in his personality. Oak is so much resonated with nature that he can predict slight impending changes in the weather. He is the one that creates such a harmonious relationship with animals and his environment; therefore, he is a part of nature. Throughout the novel, Oak is the symbol of peace and harmony. From an ecological perspective human beings are to create a symbiotic relation with nature so that it benefits all sides, that is to say, man is a member but not a ruler, his existence depends on all parts of ecosystem, the same thing Oak does toward animals, humans and nature. On the other hand, there is Sergeant Troy who has no knowledge of farming and his surroundings. He exploits the rural environment to provide him with income. He is only "feeling, considering, and caring for what was before his eyes" [8, 2012, p. 202] and his role in the novel is that of violator of ecosystem either in the sense of creating discord between Boldwood and Bathsheba which caused his own death or between Oak

as a representative of nature and himself as a voice of civilization. According to Geoffrey Harvey (2003) “one of the Troy’s functions in the narrative is to upset the ordered pattern of rural life” [7, p. 62]. From another viewpoint, as Michael Squires notes “the novel's tension between city and country is exemplified most pointedly in Bathsheba” [22, p.310]. Although she is an educated and proud woman who inherited Weather bury Upper Farm, she is still “a simple country nature, fed on old-fashioned principles” [8, 2012, p. 348], from an eco-critical point of view, while Bathsheba has characteristics pertaining to civilization and city, she is “a fair product of Nature in the feminine kind” [8, p. 19]. Her dual, capricious nature is in accord with the city of Bath, where she married Troy, and the rural county of Weather bury, where she inherited. When the narrator vividly describes that “Liddy, like a little brook, though shallow, was always rippling” [8, p.119] he compares Liddy to a natural, inanimate object. By using the explicit simile between human and nature the narrator shares the characteristics of Liddy with “a little brook” or when Boldwood engrosses in the letter Bathsheba impulsively has sent him, the narrator shows the degrees of Boldwood’s astonishment and confusion with the phase of the moon: “The moon shone to-night, and its light was not of a customary kind. His [Boldwood’s] window admitted only a reflection of its rays...” [8, p. 126]. Rosemarie Morgan, in this regard, states that Hardy mirrors “the inner world of his characters in external forms in nature” [9, p. 38].

Another example of this kind is when Troy gets the workmen drunk, the summer storm strikes and ruins the crops. Hardy’s use of personification and imagery throughout the novel, again, makes the relationship between man and nature more vivid and to the point. For instance:

The night had a sinister aspect. A heated breeze from the south slowly fanned the summits of lofty objects, and in the sky dashes of buoyant

cloud were sailing in course at right angles to that of another stratum, neither of them in the direction of the breeze below (286)... It was a fine morning, and the sun lighted up to a scarlet glow the crimson jacket she [Bathsheba] wore, and painted a soft luster upon her bright face and dark hair [8, p. 18].

The clouds sailing like a ship or the sun painting “a soft luster” upon Bathsheba’s face as well as the sensory imageries make the descriptions of the non-human objects evocative and help the reader better understand, react, and sympathize with those objects. As was stated with regard to the idea of wilderness, despite the relation of man and nature, there are two sides of nature itself in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, the first one is peaceful, calm and serene and the second is harsh, vicious and cruel like the coming of the storm or the scene where Oak’s ewes fall down out of a cliff. These two sides complement each other as do the two good and bad sides of human beings. A perfect example of relationship between human beings and animals takes place when Fanny Robin weakly stumbles in the night then falls down and loses her consciousness:

From the stripe of shadow on the opposite side of the bridge a portion of shade seemed to detach itself and move into isolation upon the pale white of the road. It glided noiselessly towards the recumbent woman. She became conscious of something touching her hand; it was softness and it was warmth. She opened her eyes, and the substance touched her face. A dog was licking her cheek...The animal, who was as homeless as she, respectfully withdrew a step or two when the woman moved, and, seeing that she did not repulse him, he licked her hand again [8, 2012, p. 317].

4-6 Hardy's ecological consciousness:

This connection between Fanny and the dog reinforces the claim concerning Hardy's ecological consciousness and that how Hardy draws our attention toward the sympathy and loyalty of animals as if they are human. In chapter twenty-two, *The Great Barn and the Sheep-Shearers*, Hardy refers to the country as a place protected by God and the town as a representative of devil when he says "God was palpably present in the country, and the devil had gone with the world to town" [8, p.174]. Hardy's purpose in putting so much emphasis on natural world and human life as well as placing characters with such contradictory features beside each other is to give each its identity and significance. His overriding concern is to put human life and nature at the same level, each with its own characteristics which works in concord and unity. Rather than describing, Hardy accentuates the intrinsic values and attributes inherent in real rural life and nature. As the critic, Raymond Forsyth (1976), says "we find Hardy being praised, not for re-creating in durable form an idealized existence in the countryside. But rather for interpreting nature, the countryman, country dialects and country ways to the townsman who knew so little of these things" [23, p. 24]. Hardy creates such landscapes that unobserved and obscure objects stand out and the purpose is to remind the reader of the neglected nonhuman views and inspire him or her toward the environmental literacy. The values that ecocritics set for Hardy is that "he shows the possibility of a nature writing not always in search of stability, not simply hostile to change and incursion" [6, 2001, p. 138], in other words, Hardy does not separate nature and man and the relationship between the two is always fluid and shifting. Unlike his contemporary writers who had chosen a natural setting for their novels through which human actions took place, Hardy elevates the role of nature to the level equal to human beings. As

is the case with eco-criticism, by illustrating the relationship between man and nature and setting his characters in line and sometimes to the test with their environments, Hardy urged the readers to attain a need to identify the values ingrained in nature and deal with the environmental problems and it is the job of eco-critics to show, evidently, how these values like language, meaning, imagination etc. are transmitted in literature in better understanding our environment and reminding of our duty toward nature. The researcher illustrates that in *Far From the Madding Crowd* writer is more fully aware of the multiplicity of ways that dress informs, shapes, patterns our lives than Thomas Hardy, and none has a more profound variety of insights into the relationships amongst mind, body, and dress. It is impossible in so short a space to justify these contentions completely, so rather than give a sort of universal but necessarily superficial held-guide to Hardy's uses for dress, I have chosen to explore how he works in a single novel. *Far From the Madding Crowd* is only representative in that, as with every other of his novels, it is possible to read it through dress. It seemed the most appropriate novel to choose for this chapter because it is one of his more familiar texts, and also because it is in his earlier novels that Hardy was most direct and generous with theoretic generalizations about dress. The essence of his conception is that women's bodies extend into their dress, and that in being put on their clothes become an integral part of their nervous system, as they do not for men. Readers of his rust novel, *Desperate Remedies*, will be particularly aware of this, where, for example, we hear of "delicate antennae, or feelers," bristling on every frill of a dress, but there are other fascinating examples in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. So, when the narrator of *Far from the Madding Crowd* pronounces that "A woman's dress is a part of her countenance and any disorder in the one is of the same nature with a malformation or wound in the

other” (p. 77), he continues to educate us in aspects of an established theory. Through the ambiguity inherent in “countenance” he also indicates economically the essential double nature of the power of clothing, in its effect on the observer and on the self – a torn skirt is a malformation of the identity a woman presents to the world, but to her it comes with the physical pain of a slash to her face. The same bodily quality of dress is evident when Bathsheba first enters the Corn market in Caster bridge: The numerous evidences of her power to attract were only thrown into greater relief by a marked exception. Women seem to have eyes in their ribbons for such matters as these. Bathsheba, without looking within a right angle of him, was conscious of a black sheep among the flock. (p. 95)

Hardy might have written the more conventional “eyes in their backs,” but instead there is again the powerful, here almost surreal, indication that a woman’s dress is part of her sense-organization. What are the consequences in *Far From the Madding Crowd* of this conception? Well, consider one of the more significant incidents in Bathsheba’s life: Hardy required his heroine to experience a powerful and instantaneous sexual attraction to a man; there were hundreds of possibilities for a first encounter with such passionate implications, but he chose that the skirt of the woman’s dress should become involved with a projection from the man’s clothing. He has taught us to recognize at once that when the rowel of Frank Troy’s spur becomes caught in the gimp decoration on Bathsheba’s dress, not only has fabric become entangled but her sensibility also – gored, raked, twisted, implicated. As the metal teeth take hold on the cord Bathsheba is physically and psychically destabilized by the force of the check to her progress, by the shock to her senses through the material. Instinctively her body moves to recover her physical equilibrium, but as it does so it receives another shock: “In

recovering she struck against warm clothes and buttons” (p. 170). It is characteristic that Hardy represents Frank by the clothes he is wearing, but also that, in the most economical manner possible, through the adjective “warm,” he makes us aware of the body within the clothes. The verb, too, “struck against,” is precise: more violent than any casual contact in passing, such as touching, brushing, or grazing; it is a ship in a fog colliding with another, or foundering on a rock. And yet the rock is warm, though it has those small and perhaps chilly metal projections; we are forced to register the sensation as physically as Bathsheba does. It is a further irony that in recovering her physical balance she crashes into the body that will destabilize her emotional balance for years. The unknown man is also surprised to find himself “hitched” to a woman somehow (pun presumably intended), and the entanglement of their clothes is presented as an image of their future together: “The unfastening was not such a trying affair. The rowel of the spur had so wound itself among the gimp cords in those few moments that separation was likely to be a matter of time” (p. 171). As Bathsheba is anxious to go, the soldier first proposes cutting the skirt (or the relationship) at once, but we know that it’s not just the material or the relationship he would thus sever – the knife would inflict a deep wound to Bathsheba’s sensibility. It is a testament to her urgency that she begs him to do it. But then he suggests (driven by his own sexual instinct to prolong the connection) that she be patient; and under pretense of unraveling the material connection, complicates it further, while at the same time twining himself into her mind by flirting with her. As a consequence she tries again to extricate herself: “and the gathers of her dress began to give way like Lilliputian musketry” (p. 172); the military simile works on several levels, enhancing her association with the soldier, but also indicating the sharp pain inflicted on Bathsheba by the

damage to her dress. Despite this, again “Bathsheba was revolving in her mind whether by a bold and desperate rush she could free herself at the risk of leaving her skirt bodily behind her” (p. 173) – abandoning the skirt of her dress would be like leaving part of her body in the hands of the soldier with the twinkling eye and the strong sexuality. No wonder the narrator continues: “The thought was too dreadful.” And in describing the dress (not its appearance but its status) he augments the bodily imagery: “The dress – which she had put on to appear stately at the supper – was the head and front of her wardrobe.” Since the psychic price of “bold and desperate” action would be dearer than the material destruction of a dress, she stoops to untwist the cords herself. Everything in the scene turns on dress, even the coup de theater at its heart, the moment when light shines on the darkness that has obscured the initial impact: The man to whom she was hooked was brilliant in brass and scarlet. He was a soldier. His sudden appearance was to darkness what the sound of a trumpet is to silence. Gloom, the genius loci at all times hitherto, was now totally overthrown, less by the lantern light than by what the lantern lighted. The contrast of this revelation with her anticipations of some sinister figure in somber garb was so great that it had upon her the effect of a fairy transformation. (p. 171)

The red and gold radiance of Troy’s uniform causes yet another destabilization in Bathsheba’s psyche. It remains imprinted on her consciousness after she is freed, when she runs indoors, to ask Liddy about the man who has called her beautiful: “ ‘is any soldier staying in the village – Sergeant somebody – rather gentlemanly for a sergeant, and good looking: a red coat with blue facings?’ ” (p. 174). And Hardy is careful to ensure that on every subsequent occasion Frank appears, until after the Harvest Home, he is wearing his military red. It might hardly seem worth pointing out that red is traditionally the color of

sexual passion – the connection between Troy’s habitual dress and the passion he inspires in Bathsheba is too obvious – were it not that Hardy has created a larger pattern through illuminated red (and reddish) dress, of which this revelation of Troy’s uniform is the heart. The pattern begins in the first chapter of the novel; the first time we (and Gabriel) see Bathsheba she too is dressed in red intensive by an effect of light: “the sun lighted up to a scarlet glow the crimson jacket she wore, and painted a soft luster upon her bright face and dark hair” (p. 10). A little later in her stay at Norcombe she is the center of another theatrical moment. It is night; Gabriel is lying on a bank into which a hut is built, and he looks down through a chink in the roof at the illuminated scene within. Inside there is a girl about whom he can tell little: “She wore no bonnet or hat, but had enveloped herself in a large cloak, which was carelessly flung over her head as a covering” (p. 18). “Oak . . . became more curious to observe her features, but this prospect being denied him by the hooding effect of the cloak, and by his aerial position, he felt himself drawing upon his fancy for their details” (p. 19). As if on cue, the girl at that moment flings off her cloak “and forth tumbled ropes of black hair over a red jacket. Oak knew her instantly. . . .” (p. 20); and that ends the chapter. Neither Frank nor Bathsheba intends the effect they produce upon the observer – Troy opens the lantern because he wants to see Bathsheba, Bathsheba is unaware that there is anyone watching – but none the less they inspire a red emotion that endures as long as its object does.

The pattern extends and is modified to include Gabriel’s dress also: he slips off the back of a wagon on its way to Weather bury, and sees a fire. As he approaches, His weary face now began to be painted over with a rich orange glow, and the whole front of his smock frock and gaiters was covered with a dancing shadow pattern of thorn twigs – the light

reaching him through a leafless intervening hedge – and the metallic curve of his sheep-crook shone silver-bright in the same abounding rays. (p. 48) His smock is white, the glow the fire casts on it is orange not red, and it is sickeningly shadowed with black; but still, this is Bathsheba's farm, and though there is no one but the narrator to observe him, the effect of light is striking. In only a brief time he will be before his lost beloved again; but Hardy is also careful to note that in this specimen the true red that inspires the most passionate sexual desire is in Gabriel now somewhat damped down to orange. The same effect may be observed when Frank Troy greets Gabriel Oak and Jan Coggan from an upper window of Bathsheba's farmhouse on the morning after he has taken up residence there:

“Why – they may not be married!” suggested Coggan. “Perhaps she's not there.” Gabriel shook his head. The soldier turned a little towards the east, and the sun kindled his scarlet jacket to an orange glow. (p. 247)

This “orange glow” is altogether less brilliant than the effect created by Bathsheba's lantern in the dark, and Hardy is preparing us for Frank's cynical assessment of passion later in the novel: “ ‘All romances end at marriage’ ” (p. 281). The last element in the design comes soon afterwards when, during the cataclysmic thunderstorm, Bathsheba comes to assist Gabriel in saving the ricks. Her new husband is asleep in the barn, drunk – he has rejected the idea that a storm is coming or that the farm's wealth will thereby be lost, because it interferes with his pleasure of the moment. The juxtaposition thus of the two men she has run after presents Bathsheba with a striking contrast. There comes a tremendous bolt of lightning:

Gabriel was almost blinded, and he could feel Bathsheba's warm arm tremble in his hand – a sensation novel and thrilling enough . . . Oak

had hardly time to gather up these impressions into a thought, and to see how strangely the red feather of her hat shone in this light . . . (p. 261)

This intensely illuminated feather is surprising, even eccentric, and has been deliberately placed in connection with Gabriel's consciousness of Bathsheba's body to leave a small reminder for the reader that he is not just her faithful guardian; the phrasing too – "Oak had hardly time to gather up these impressions into a thought" – remembers his response to waking in his lambing hut with his head in Bathsheba's lap (see note 1). And this is where the pattern, the passion, ends.

Outside the pattern lies William Boldwood, whose clothes never reach towards passionate illumination, even when they might. When he receives Bathsheba's valentine, it is the insistent red seal on the envelope with its message "marry me" that transaxles him. The following morning, still disturbed, he is up at sunrise leaning on a gate looking east. Hardy describes the scene: "the only half of the sun yet visible burnt ray less, like a red and fameless fi re shining over a white hearthstone" (p. 104). But the radiance doesn't touch the farmer with its color, and there is in the opposite sky even a similarly negative anticipation of Troy's gleaming buttons: "Over the west hung the wasting moon, now dull and greenish-yellow, like tarnished brass." It is not that Boldwood has not the potential for passion within him; it is that he has no power to inspire such intense feeling in others, in Bathsheba – just as the emotion Gabriel can stir is more moderate, less burning, than that which Frank provokes, in Fanny as in Bathsheba. This pattern of illuminated red dress is perhaps the most sustained that Hardy weaves with dress in the novel, but a return for a moment to the fi re in Bathsheba's rick-yard will provide an example of how he works on a smaller scale. Gabriel directs the rescue effort, then climbs up on one of the ricks that has just caught alight to beat out the dames. Once the fi re

is contained he inquires for the farmer, hoping the place needs a shepherd: “ ‘That’s she back there upon the pony,’ said Maryann; ‘wi’ her face a covered up in that black cloth with holes in it’ ” (p. 51). As the woman farmer’s face is veiled in a “black cloth with holes in it,” so Gabriel’s dress approximates to the same condition, and his face is veiled in blackness. He approaches her, “his features smudged, grimy, and undiscoverable from the smoke and heat, his smockfrock burnt into holes and dripping with water, the ash stem of his sheep-crook charred six inches shorter” (p. 52). He raises his hat to her, and in a parallel response she “lifted the wool veil tied round her face, and looked all astonishment. Gabriel and his cold-hearted darling Bathsheba Everdene were face to face.” The situation is ostensibly one in which we are made conscious of Bathsheba’s superiority – we’ve just been told anecdotally how rich she is, and there she sits above Gabriel elegant on her horse, while he is humble beneath her, singed and filthy from the fire. But the emphasis on the holes in the cloth each wears and the shared action with the hat and veil run as a counterpoint suggesting that beneath the substantial surface distinction there is a subterranean harmony, which may or may not emerge before the end of the story. It is, indeed, towards the conclusion of the novel that the most concentrated patterning in relation to dress occurs. This is chapter 52, entitled “Converging Courses,” in which Bathsheba, Frank, and Boldwood are preparing themselves for the Christmas party at Little Weatherbury Farm. The chapter is a montage of three intercut narratives of dressing, and there is very little of significance in the sequence that is not communicated through attention to dress, mediated in part through the confidant to whom each protagonist looks for advice, and who acts as a kind of opinionated mirror, providing the two-way exchange of dress – the desire of the wearer to mean and the interpretive response of the

observer. A pervasive uneasiness characterizes the chapter, and the first section describing the infectivity of the festivities planned – the miser - scène, to continue the cinematic perception – sets the mood. There is not enough space here to follow in detail the intricate dance of dress Hardy choreographs. What we experience is Bathsheba in front of her mirror simultaneously reluctant and excited, in a plain black silk dress, but with hair that won't lie down. She tells Liddy to “ ‘finish me off.’ ” Boldwood, for the first time in his life more fastidious than his tailor over the cut of his coat, feels agitated excitement unalloyed, at its clearest when he asks Gabriel (of all people) if there is a new knot in fashion for him to tie at his neck; then we see him rapt in contemplation of the diamond ring with which he intends to bind Bathsheba. Troy too is agitated, bent upon a theatrical revelation of himself at Boldwood's, to which end he dresses so as to disguise himself, using his confidant the dishonest bailiff Penny ways as a mirror to test the effectiveness of his costume. So there is Boldwood, in new, festive, and perfectly fitting clothes, wrapped in visions of a shining future of his own fabrication, waiting for the woman who, he intends, will be the material in which he will realize the visions; there is Bathsheba, traveling towards him in plain black that goes beyond the convention of mourning to represent her fears, but with a contradictory air of excitement in her countenance – something, at least, is going to happen to break the monotony of her days; and there is Frank also traveling, more slowly, towards him, disguised in dull grey, ready to be the corpse at the feast. The next chapter provides the resolution, and just to emphasize that there are small as well as large patterns of dress throughout the novel, we might consider three striking images here. The first is of Bathsheba sitting on a chair, weeping, with her face buried in the handkerchief that she holds in one hand, while the other, with a new ring on one finger, is somewhere

above her head, captured by Boldwood. The second is of Bathsheba sitting on the floor beside the body of her husband, his head pillowed in her lap, while with one hand she holds her handkerchief to his breast and covers the wound there, and with the other she tightly clasps one of his. The third is of Boldwood who, having shot Frank, fastens his handkerchief to the trigger of his gun, places his foot on the other end, and is in the act of turning the second barrel upon himself. The narrator says of Bathsheba that she had been “fairly beaten into non-resistance” by Boldwood (p. 388), that he has forced her into the pattern of his vision of the future. The irony is fierce that has her attempt futilely to preserve her husband’s life with the handkerchief still damp from the tears shed over his final abandonment; and is further twisted by the deliberate placement of a second handkerchief on the trigger of the weapon that has in reality released Bathsheba from her marriage, and simultaneously ripped apart the fabric of his vision of a brilliant future with her. Gabriel’s sadness is prescient.³ In fact, though Frank Troy had been attracted to Bathsheba’s body, he was never able to see that her dress was part of herself ; this is true of neither Gabriel nor Boldwood. When Gabriel begins to love Bathsheba he imagines her beside the hearth of her aunt’s house “in her outdoor dress; for the clothes she had worn on the hill were by association equally with her person included in the compass of his affection” (p. 30). On the Saturday after Boldwood receives Bathsheba’s valentine, he was in Casterbridge market-house as usual, when the disturber of his dreams entered and became visible to him. Adam had awakened from his deep sleep, and behold! there was Eve. The farmer took courage, and for the first time really looked at her. . . . He saw her black hair, her correct facial curves and profile, and the roundness of her chin and throat. He saw then the side of her eyelids,

eyes, and lashes, and the shape of her ear. Next he noticed her figure, her skirt, and the very soles of her shoes. (p. 122)

Both the flesh and the dress constitute her individuality and her beauty for him, as for Gabriel – this is so even for the man on whom £20-worth of new clothes has been wasted by a girl who has previously tried to attract his sleeping attention. Adam's experience did not involve clothes, and by invoking Adam's amazement, the narrator also brings simultaneously into play, for the reader if not for Boldwood, the sense of Bathsheba's shaping body within her dress. Or consider the sequel to Bathsheba's swoon on hearing that Frank has drowned: Boldwood "lifted her bodily off the ground, and smoothed down the folds of her dress as a child might have taken a storm-beaten bird and arranged its ruffled plumes, and bore her along the pavement to the King's Arms Inn" (p. 339). If more evidence is needed of Boldwood's instinctive understanding of the relationship between dress and identity, at the end of the novel, when Boldwood is in prison, his locked closet is gone through:

There were several sets of lady's dresses in the piece, of sundry expensive materials; silks and satins, poplins and velvets, all of colours which from Bathsheba's style of wear might have been judged to be her favourites. There were two muffs, sable and ermine. . . . They were all carefully packed in paper, and each package was labelled "Bathsheba Boldwood," a date being subjoined six years in advance in every instance. (p. 397)

The narrator, anxious to provide a justification for the stay of execution thought appropriate for a family magazine, asserts that these are "somewhat pathetic evidences of a mind crazed with care and love"; but what they really show is that the mind responded with love and insight to the individuality of the woman he loved, and who herself loved dress.

These are potential dresses, awaiting the shaping hand of the dressmaker and the animating body of his beloved – they are ideals, dreams. There is, however, in this novel a particular desolation to dress without a body to fill it. Most ordinary is the pile of Frank’s clothes found on the beach, the circumstantial evidence that he has drowned. When they are brought back to Bathsheba the narrator comments that it “was so evident to her in the midst of her agitation that Troy had undressed in the full conviction of dressing again almost immediately that the notion that anything but death could have prevented him was a perverse one to entertain” (p. 341). I suppose the reader is to infer that the bundle includes his underlined, and no one could imagine that he would (even in the midst of his agitation) have walked off naked. We learn long before any character in the novel that he has been picked up by members of a ship’s crew in a small boat, who cover his naked body with “what little clothing they could spare among them.” (In the manuscript and in the Oxford World’s Classics edition of the novel the crew agrees to row back to the beach on which Troy left his clothes – but they have already been taken as evidence of his drowning.) But he has lost for the time being his outward identity – he is a *mélange* of miscellaneous dress – and instead of making an attempt to restore that self, he is content to adopt another, suggested by his temporary gear, and signs up for a transatlantic voyage. Shedding the outer layer of self frees the body and the mind to fill other selves. A more poignant disappearance of the body from dress is metaphorical. When Fanny finally arrives at Casterbridge workhouse she collapses, and the gatekeeper “discerned the panting heap of clothes” (pp. 278–9). Fanny is disembodied here, even to the degree that it is the heap of clothes that is panting. She has, for the moment, no identity, no self, no existence. The same is true of Bathsheba after preparing Frank’s body for the grave: “as if at that

instant to prove that her fortitude had been more of will than of spontaneity she silently sank down between them and was a shapeless heap of drapery on the floor” (p. 395). In her case we witness the process; her body is gradually abstracted from her dress as she slides to the floor. Hardy thus for both women shows the extremities to which they have been driven, extremities that their bodies can no longer sustain. The absences I have drawn attention to so far have been temporary, but there is one – an almost thrown-away description – that if examined at all closely is frighteningly permanent. In giving sketches of some of the workfolk on Bathsheba’s farm the narrator says of Matthew Moon that he was “a singular framework of clothes with nothing of any consequence inside them, which advanced with the toes in no definite direction forwards, but turned in or out as they chanced to swing” (p. 82). This is the self as dress – the framework moves, not the man; and the toes may as well be of boots as feet. It is true that there is something inside the shape, but there is no hint that it is human – it seems more likely that it is sawdust; there is certainly no hint of will guiding the movement, and the voice that speaks its name must be ventriloquism – it is described as “the rustle of wind among dead leaves.” It comes as a shock that this Gothic horror can perform a week’s work worth ten shillings and two pence halfpenny. The description of Moon is the more disturbing in that it is female dress in mid-Victorian England that normally provides a framework to structure the body, an observation made in a striking way by a most unlikely reporter. Gabriel’s youthful under-shepherd Cainy Ball has been to Bath on holiday and seen Frank and Bathsheba: “she wore a beautiful gold-colour silk gown, trimmed with black lace, that would have stood alone ’without legs inside if required” (pp. 232–3). Cainy’s picture begins conventionally enough, but ends in the grotesque – it is the “if required”

that works to cut Bathsheba off at the hips in our imagination; but also, by the juxtaposition, he superimposes disembodied on bodied dress. Hardy finds dress a source of flexible and powerful images in the representation of character and emotion, but he's also thoroughly aware of dress as a social force.

Here I'd like to consider three strands: the question of uniforms (defined very broadly), habits, and customs in the wearing of hats, and the wielding of staffs of various kinds. Troy's is the only officially sanctioned uniform in the novel, but throughout his fiction Hardy is interested in exploring ideas about the proper way to do things, and this includes the proper way to dress in a given social circumstance. The mourning that Bathsheba wears on her uncle's death, and then reluctantly puts on again after Frank goes missing, and does not remit thereafter, is the most generally accepted instance of this in the novel; it is almost inevitable that her wearing of black towards the end of the novel coincides with a new somberness in her demeanor, staidness in her behavior. But Hardy identifies other, less universally recognized, approaches to uniform: among the first things that we learn about Gabriel is that "on working days he was a young man of sound judgment, easy motions, proper dress":

He wore a low crowned felt hat, spread out at the base by tight jamming upon the head for security in high winds, and a coat like Doctor Johnson's, his lower extremities being encased in ordinary leather leggings, and boots emphatically large, affording to each foot a roomy apartment so constructed that any wearer might stand in a river all day long and know nothing of damp – their maker being a conscientious man who endeavored to compensate for any weakness in his cut by unstinted dimension and solidity. (p. 7)

These clothes are proper to his station as a modest sheep-farmer; there is no implication that all such men will dress exactly like this, but rather that there is an understood but also undefined range of dress that is appropriate to one in his social circumstances. Utility rather than fashion is proper – and in making boots for such a man the bootmaker is right to privilege solidity over elegance. When Gabriel loses his farm and tries for a position as bailiff on someone else’s farm, these clothes are no longer proper, they misinform, they’re too good: others searching for a place ask him if he has one to offer, call him “sir.” Ultimately, finding himself unemployable as a bailiff, he’s reduced to purchasing the shepherd’s uniform, smockfrock, and crook – thus announcing his diminished qualifications to all and sundry. Hardy also shows us Gabriel dressing for a different social situation. He’s preparing to go to ask Bathsheba to marry him:

He thoroughly cleaned his silver watch-chain with whiting, put new lacing-straps to his boots, looked to the brass eyelet holes, went to the inmost heart of the plantation for a new walking-stick and trimmed it vigorously on his way back, took a new handkerchief from the bottom of his clothes-box, put on the light waistcoat patterned all over with sprigs of an elegant flower uniting the beauties of both rose and lily without the defects of either, and used all the hair-oil he possessed upon his usually dry, sandy, and inextricably curly hair till he had deepened it to a splendidly novel colour between that of guano and Roman cement, making it stick to his head like mace round a nutmeg, or wet seaweed round a boulder after the ebb. (pp. 30–1)

Gabriel’s preparations seem marked – the details of watch-chain, eyelet-holes and handkerchief, the expedition for a new walking-stick, and above all the arduous work undertaken to force his hair to conform to the respectable fashion for elegant males of 1874, suggest something

quite out of the ordinary. If Hardy has in mind the mock-heroic, the arming of the hero about to go into battle, then his choice of objects for comparison – the one bird-shit and the other mortar – though perhaps exact in their way, significantly enhance the effect; and we may suspect irony, in a text of Ruskinian, post-pre-Raphaelite times, in any “elegant flower uniting the beauties of both rose and lily without the defects of either.” The effect of the description, of its tone in particular, is to make Gabriel seem at least a little foolish to the reader; the question, though, is whether he would have presented a foolish appearance to his chosen observer, Bathsheba. The hair must have been rather striking to anyone who had seen it in its uncoiled state, but otherwise surely he would simply have looked smarter than usual – he would have announced his special purpose before he spoke, had such an opportunity occurred. When Gabriel needed to turn shepherd again at the hiring-fair in Casterbridge, he had a crook made for him by a blacksmith, who threw a staff into the bargain; but he also wanted a smock frock to cover the no longer proper clothes he inhabits. He “went to a ready-made clothes shop, the owner of which had a large rural connection. As the crook had absorbed most of Gabriel’s money he attempted, and carried out, an exchange of his overcoat for a shepherd’s regulation smockfrock” (p. 44). The crook and smockfrock were a shepherd’s uniform at any time in the nineteenth century before 1873 in the south of England – in Wessex. What makes this passage particularly interesting is that Gabriel gets his smockfrock from a ready-made clothes shop. Lying behind this bare detail is the as yet under-researched history of the machine production of smockfrocks in England. Rachel Worth, in her study of rural workingclass dress, points out that by the 1860s Gurteen in Haverhill in Suffolk were massproducing smockfrocks on powered looms and sewing-machines, though the patterned smocking was still

outwork (Worth 2002: 109). What are the chances that a man in Dorchester in Gabriel's position would have acquired a smockfrock made in Suffolk? The question cannot be answered without more research. But the possibility throws an interesting light on one of the better-known generalizations in *Far From the Madding Crowd*:

In comparison with cities, Weatherbury was immutable. . . . nothing less than a century set a mark on its face or tone. Five decades hardly modified the cut of a gaiter, the embroidery of a smockfrock, by the breadth of a hair. . . . In these Wessex nooks the busy outsider's ancient times are only old; his old times are still new; his present is futurity. (p. 151)

It may be that smockfrocks made in Weatherbury did still follow a traditional pattern, but when Hardy points out that the clothes shop in Casterbridge had "a large rural connection," one implication is that some of the Weatherbury workfolk will there

have purchased what amounts to alien dress, and will in this respect at least be thoroughly in tune with the present. This celebrated passage is further placed into context by a consideration of dress in the novel as a whole. It is evident that Hardy's claim for the timelessness of Wessex dress can only apply to those without sufficient surplus income to be interested in the fashions of London or Paris. As soon as Troy leaves off his uniform he's dressed in a "farmer's marketing suit of unusually fashionable cut" (p. 269); when Gabriel is made bailiff of both Bathsheba's and Boldwood's farms, he's accused by Susan Tall of "coming it quite the dand" (p. 343) and hardly knowing the name of smockfrock. There is a fundamental uneasiness in the novel between claims of timeless pastoralism and evidence of mid-Victorian cultural modernity which dress illuminates. Bathsheba certainly keeps up; take,

for instance, the clothes she wears to ride in. Gabriel first sees her while she is part of the rural poor:

The girl, who wore no riding-habit, looked around for a moment as if to assure herself that all humanity was out of view, then dexterously dropped backwards flat upon the pony's back, her head over its tail, her feet against its shoulders, and her eyes to the sky. (p. 21)

Her dress adds to the implicit eroticism of her unconventional position; fashionable mid-Victorian riding habits differed primarily from day-dresses by being particularly long in the skirt and of heavy material, draping over the foot so that there would be little chance of an ankle emerging. Lying back on the horse in her ordinary dress would inevitably be revealing of fringes of petticoat. (For an account of Victorian riding-habits, see Matthews 2002.) After she inherits her uncle's farm, in this respect as in others, she eagerly adopts the habits of the fashionable world. We see her at the sheep dip contrasted with her work-folk: "Shepherd Oak, Jan Coggan, Moon, Poorgrass, Cain Ball and several others were assembled here all dripping wet to the very roots of their hair – and Bathsheba was standing by in a new riding-habit – the most elegant she had ever worn" (p. 131). Boldwood comes up, and as she leaves he follows, to ask her for the first time to marry him. It is then striking that, during a second high point in the ovine year, the sheep shearing, again she leaves with Boldwood dressed in a riding-habit – and this time, like the glove she was straining to put on when her sheep strayed, it is so close-fitting as to be almost a second skin: "she reappeared in her new riding habit of myrtle green which fitted her to the waist as a rind fits its fruit" (p. 154).⁵ It is a commonplace of Victorian dress that both men and women wore headgear out of doors as a matter of course. The particular interest of *Far From the Madding Crowd* in this respect is that Hardy shows just how essential a hat was

considered, even in remote rural areas. As we have seen, the first description of Gabriel begins with his hat. When he observes Bathsheba looking at herself in her mirror at the tollgate, the narrator implies surprise that she did so not to “adjust her hat” (p. 10); and it is this very hat, perhaps, that is the means of introducing the two. The wind blows it off as she is on her way with her aunt at night to tend to a sick cow, and the next day Gabriel finds the lost hat and takes possession of it, returning with it to his lambing-hut, where (for the third time) he begins to look from a place of concealment at the bare-headed girl (approaching on the back of a pony). As she comes towards his hut he is about to emerge and return the hat, when he is stopped in his tracks by the unconventional flexibility she suddenly shows. He has to take the next opportunity of accosting her with the hat:

She came, the wood-handled pail in one hand, hanging against her knee. The left arm was extended as a balance, enough of it being shown bare to make Oak wish that the event had happened in the summer when the whole would have been revealed. (p. 22)

His opening gambit is direct to the point of brusqueness: “ ‘I found a hat,’ said Oak” (p. 23). To which she responds: “ ‘I wanted my hat this morning. . . . I had to ride to Tewnell Mill’ ” (p. 24). And we understand that her riding bare-headed is as unconventional, and might have been as stimulating to Gabriel, as her riding with a male saddle. There are other indications of the omnipresence of headgear – Jan Coggan wears his hat while harvesting oats in the height of the summer heat; when Liddy finds Bathsheba after she has run from Frank and Fanny’s body into the night, the first thing she brings is a hat. It is a measure of her distress that she leaves without one, for even when going to Casterbridge to give himself up after shooting Frank, Boldwood remembers to put on his hat. And remember that Fanny deliberately left

the farm to go to Frank without a hat in order to persuade that she was going nowhere. Hats are also indicators of status; Boldwood rides up to the door of Bathsheba's house, and Liddy looks out an upper window: " 'What impert'ence,' said Liddy in a low voice. 'To ride up the footpath like that. Why didn't he stop at the gate. Lord! 'Tis a gentleman! I see the top of his hat' " (pp. 76–7). His tall hat, presumably – the sort that Gabriel wears on Sunday once he has become bailiff on Bathsheba's farm and partner in Boldwood's, and that forces Susan Tall to "stand dormant with wonder" (p. 343). Hats are receptacles – Billy Small bury carries a handkerchief in his – and they can be vehicles of insight into the wearer's very nature:

He saw the square figure sitting erect upon the horse, the head turned to neither side, the elbows steady by the hips, the brim of the hat level and undisturbed in its onward glide, until the keen edges of Boldwood's shape sank by degrees over the hill. To one who knew the man and his story there was something more striking in this immobility than in a collapse. (p. 249)

And then there is the broad-brimmed hat Bathsheba puts on to protect herself when she starts out to hive bees that have just swarmed. The occasion comes soon after she has encountered Frank Troy, and it raises issues that go beyond the conventional hat wearing – it involves cross-dressing of a sort, though not as dramatically as, say, Sue Bridehead putting on Jude Fawley's Sunday clothes. There are small transgressions of gender norms throughout the incident. The bees have flown to the top of a tall apple tree and there they "defy all invaders" who do not "come armed with ladders, veils, and staves to take them" (p. 189). Everyone else is out saving the hay, so Bathsheba decides to try to take on this mock-military exercise by herself. In preparation she had dressed the hive with herbs and honey, fetched a ladder, brush, and crook, made

herself impregnable with armour of leather gloves, straw hat, and large gauze veil – once green but now faded to snuff colour – and ascended a dozen rungs of the ladder. (p. 189)

In continuing the military metaphor, and in giving Bathsheba both a brush and a crook, Hardy is making it clear that she is taking on a traditionally male role, and so when Frank Troy turns up and offers to hive the bees in her stead he is, we might think, simply attempting to restore the conventional balance of things. When in a similarly conventionally feminine dress-response, “Bathsheba flung down the brush, crook and empty hive, pulled the skirt of her gown tightly round her ankles in a tremendous flurry, and, as well as she could, slid down the ladder” (pp. 188–9), this estimate seems to be confirmed, especially when she responds to his offer thus: “ ‘What and will you shake them in for me?’ she asked, in what, for a defiant girl, was a faltering way, though, for a timid girl it would have seemed a brave way enough” (p. 190). The narrator tries rather feebly to save some of Bathsheba’s strength and independence here, but the sequel disturbs expectations again. Frank first “flung down his crop and put his foot on the ladder to ascend” (p. 190); but Bathsheba tells him: “ ‘you must have on the veil and gloves, or you’ll be stung fearfully!’ ” And though earlier the hat and veil have been described as armor, now they are decisively feminized, as Bathsheba dresses him in them:

So a whimsical fate ordered that her hat should be taken off, veil and all attached, and placed upon his head, Troy tossing his own into a gooseberry bush. Then the veil had to be tied at its lower edge round his collar, and the gloves put on him. (p. 190)

The passive voice, the hat being “her” hat, the tying of the veil around his neck – it is as if he is a lady being dressed by her maid. And the temporary emasculation of Troy restores Bathsheba’s usual state of

mind: “she could not avoid laughing outright.” When he descends, having achieved the goal unscathed, he asks her: “ ‘Would you be good enough to untie me and let me out? I am nearly stifled inside this silk cage.’ ” One might say that this is the only time she has Frank caged in the course of their relationship, unless marriage itself is a cage for him. On the other hand perhaps he is begging her to restore his masculinity – and she obligingly does so, not only by untying the veil, but by taking up something mentioned earlier: “ ‘holding up this hive,’ ” he has said, “ ‘makes one’s arm ache worse than a week of sword-exercise.’ ” As the two negotiate over his performing the display, Bathsheba says: “ ‘Not with a walkingstick – I don’t care to see that. It must be a real sword’ ” (p. 191). The flashing blade in the hollow amid the ferns is the high point of what might be called stick-phallicism in the novel. It is a feature of *Far From the Madding Crowd* that male characters carry and sometimes use rods and staffs of all kinds. Some of them, like the pitchfork, the sheep-crook, the implement that relieves sheep of their killing gas, the implement that assists them through the sheep-dip, the rick-stick, are farming equipment, but others are in more general use: walking-sticks, canes, crops, whips; and then, of course, there is a sword, a cudgel, and a gun. One or two examples are particularly interesting. To begin with there is a passage that generalizes in an amusing way on the prevalence of sticks. Just before Bathsheba’s first entry, Hardy describes the Casterbridge Corn Exchange. It was thronged with hot men who talked among each other in twos and threes . . . The greater number carried in their hands ground-ash saplings, using them partly as walkingsticks and partly for poking up pigs, sheep, neighbours with their backs turned, and restful things in general . . . (p. 93) The reserved Boldwood, it seems, might be one of the few who did not carry such a stick, but later in the novel Poorgrass relates the progress of a

conversation with the farmer, in the course of which “ ‘Mr. Boldwood turned round . . . and left off spitting a thistle with the end of his stick’ ” (p. 288) (a gesture akin to Frank’s sword exercise, or Gabriel’s puncturing the side of the bloated sheep) – so perhaps not. But Gabriel is rarely without some functional supporting implement or other, some tool for dealing with sheep, or covering a rick; and when he doesn’t have the right tool he improvises:

Oak seized the cut ends of the sheaves, as if he were going to engage in the operation of “reed-drawing,” and digging in his feet and occasionally sticking in the stem of his sheep crook he clambered up the beetling face. He at once sat astride the very apex, and began with his crook to beat off the fiery fragments which had lodged thereon . . . (p. 50)

The one time when he is identified as carrying an ordinary, perhaps redundant, stick is when he goes courting Bathsheba, when (as we have seen) he “went to the inmost heart of the plantation for a new walking-stick and trimmed it vigorously on his way back” – but we hear no more of it. Frank, however, is never without one, and he flourishes it – he twirls a crop, flicks a whip, wields a hay-fork, flashes a sword, and almost the last words he speaks to Pennyways before leaving Casterbridge in disguise for Boldwood’s Christmas party are: “ ‘Well what is there besides? A stick – I must have a walking-stick’ ” (p. 379). The phallic symbolism is clear enough; Frank is all display, flashing his sexuality about; Gabriel is driven into preoccupation with his work, and only carries what he can use in it; while you have to search through the novel to find instances of Boldwood wielding a stick at all, the most striking (potentially striking) of which is the cudgel he carries during his attempt to persuade Frank to marry Fanny, then Bathsheba – a weapon he doesn’t use, even when provoked to physical violence. There is a

clear correlation here with the sexual potential of each of the men as a mate for Bathsheba – so clear, indeed, that it is a matter of surprise that Frank does not have his sword buckled by his side when his spur catches in Bathsheba's skirt. It is utterly appropriate that Boldwood kills Frank with the discharge at close quarters from the barrel of a shotgun. A different interpretation of these staves scattered around the male parts of the text might focus on the idea that they are material props for psychic uncertainty – that Frank is so determined to carry something as evidence of his potency because he is fundamentally unsure about his sexuality. Such a view could draw for support upon the beekeeping scene, might consider that his uniform is an official rather than a customary one, that there is something mechanical, unwilled, automatic about his red dress – as if the passion he inspires he only feels on the surface; and might wonder why he wears this conspicuous scarlet uniform all the time, even when on leave. The novel comes to a close with Gabriel and Bathsheba holding each other and each another similar accessory:

Ten minutes later a large and a smaller umbrella might have been seen moving from the same door and through the mist along the road to the church. . . . An observer must have been very close indeed to discover that the forms under the umbrellas were those of Oak and Bathsheba, arm in arm for the first time in their lives – Oak in a great coat extending to his knees, and Bathsheba in a cloak that reached her clogs. (p. 413)

4-7 Gabriel and Bathsheba:

The umbrellas are like all of Gabriel's staffs, functional, demanded by the weather. So too are the anonymously concealing clothes, but they are also demanded by the narrator's account of the muted passion of their coming together at last. We have no idea what they wear in the

way of wedding attire, but Gabriel has asked Bathsheba to do her hair as she used to do it at Norcombe when he first met her, and so the narrative comes full circle, and “she seemed in his eyes remarkably like the girl of that fascinating dream.”

Earlier in the novel Bathsheba has stood (or rather sat) in Frank’s place, flirting with Gabriel, whose life she has probably just saved. There is a similar intimacy between the two, indicated through clothing: Gabriel wakes from near-suffocation to find his head on the lap of Bathsheba’s dress, her fingers unbuttoning his collar. The narrator enters his mind: “He was endeavoring to catch and appreciate the sensation of being thus with her – his head upon her dress – before the event passed on into the heap of bygone things” (p. 26).² Even Bathsheba’s raven hair is (by inference) capable of taking on the brilliance of the rising sun, and shining it out at Gabriel. He has just returned the hat she lost, and she makes polite conversation, “swinging back her hair, which was black in the shaded hollows of its mass; but it being now an hour past sunrise the rays touched its prominent curves with a colour of their own” (pp. 23–4).³ There is another detail in this sequence of events worth noting. After being psychologically beaten into submission by Boldwood, Bathsheba “cloaked the effects” of the scene on her face, and “in a few moments came downstairs with her hat and cloak on, ready to go” (p. 388). It’s rare that Hardy writes with such apparent awkwardness as to use the same word both metaphorically and realistically in the same sentence, and he does so to draw our particular attention to the double covering-up that Bathsheba achieves; Frank is about to fling off his covering and precipitate the action that will render vain all Bathsheba’s efforts at cloaking. As far as Dr Johnson’s coat is concerned, it was told of him by Sir John Hawkins in his *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1787), 45–50, that he was “dressed in a loose horseman’s coat,

and such a great bushy uncombed wig as he constantly wore.” When Hardy first describes Bathsheba, he shows himself in the same way aware of fundamental differences in urban and rural perceptions of dress:

From the contours of her figure in its upper part, she must have had a beautiful neck and shoulders, but since her infancy nobody had ever seen them. Had she been put into a low dress, she would have run and thrust her head into a bush. Yet she was not a shy girl by any means; it was merely her instinct to draw the line dividing the seen from the unseen higher than they do it in towns. (p. 23)

The only question is whether Hardy is here in fact noting a distinction in class as well as in place – whether, when she inherited her uncle’s farm, she became more accustomed to wear urban fashions, whether, for instance, the black silk dress she wore to Boldwood’s Christmas party bared her shoulders. It seems likely. 6 The Victorian fascination with hair as a memorial of the beloved and the dead is something Hardy also works with in this, as in many other, novels.

4-8 Return of the Native:

The researcher illustrates that the task of ecocriticism, is to formulate a conceptual foundation for the study of interconnections between literature and the environment. Literature can be perceived as an aesthetically and culturally instructed part of the environment, since it directly addresses the questions of human constructions, such as meaning, value, language, and imagination, which can, then, be linked to the problem of ecological consciousness that humans need to attain. Within this framework, eco-critics are mainly concerned with how literature transmits certain values contributing to ecological thinking. Environmental crisis is a question that cannot be overlooked in literary studies. Consciousness raising in environmental thinking, and the ethical

and aesthetic dilemmas posed by the global ecological crisis, force literary scholars to recognize the important role literature and criticism play in understanding man's position in the ecosphere. Literature can be usefully examined as having some bearing on man and his practical relation to the natural world. Novels of Thomas Hardy dealing with London in the age of Industrial Revolution served as an agency of awareness. They can be publicized to help advance the cause of natural environment. In the *Return of the Native*, Clym Yeobright comes back to his native environment leaving the glamorous city life of Paris. In his essay, "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism," William Rueckert defines ecocriticism as "the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature, because ecology (as a science, as a discipline, as the basis for human vision) has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the world" (1996:107). In this context the possible relations between literature and nature are examined in terms of ecological concepts. Ecocriticism, then, attempts to find a common ground between the human and the nonhuman to show how they can coexist in various ways, because the environmental issues have become an integral part of our existence. This is one problem that ecocriticism addresses in its attempt to find a more environmentally conscious position in literary studies. Ecology is found in classic literature of all sorts. Although ecocriticism can- and indeed should- explore the ways in which literature and ecology interact, it should not do so at the expense of a naive reduction of literary texts into mere transcriptions of the physical world, and by politicization of literature itself. It is important to note that literature should not be used as a pretext for examining the ecological issues. In other words, the task of putting literature in question in order to save nature implies a reductionist approach. Since poststructuralist theory "has sharpened the

focus on textual and intertextual issues” (Strehle 1992:2), the eco critical reader cannot go back into perceiving literary texts as transparent mediums that unproblematically reflect phenomenal reality. . The Return of the Native is the typical representation of this kind. Hardy's ecological consciousness is embodied in his view on Nature from the description of the landscape in The Return of the Native. If we employ a new critical approach eco-criticism to interpret the novel, then it is particularly appropriate to an examination of literature in the context of globally environmental predicament and arouse the modern people's consciousness. Through this analysis, the conflicts between man and man, man and nature, and man and society became terrible by the invasion of the industrial civilization which reflects Hardy's consideration of the relationship among nature, life and society. Besides, it provides us with useful enlightenment on how to handle the relationship between man and nature, at the same time arouse the reader's ecological consciousness. In a world much burdened with the wide spread ecological crisis the emergence of ecocriticism had signalled a new and promising hermeneutical horizon in our interpretations and understandings of the natural world and literature. Since 1990s the issue of ecocriticism is given a theoretical ground and there is an interest in expanding the purview of ecocritical practice by widening the canon of texts for ecocritical investigation. Examining the possible relations between literature and nature , and linking ecological contexts with literary criticism produced a variety of scholarly work. Some critics have rightly emphasised the importance of promoting a biocentric worldview through ecocriticism which is an emerging methodology announcing for a cultural change. Unlike new historicist , postcolonial and cultural studies ,which have evolved from a theoretically informed rethinking of the discipline that has produced

new scholarship new programmers and departments , and new courses , ecological criticism finds itself in a different evolution at this point in time. In 1878, when *The Return of the Native* was first published, ambiguity was hardly understood to be the cornerstone of the novelistic edifice. Hardy focuses on the relation between Man and Nature and here Egdon Heath, is introduced as the first “character” in the book.

4-9 Characters of the novel *Return of the Native*:

The heath proves physically and psychologically important throughout the novel: characters are defined by their relation to the heath, and the weather patterns of the heath even reflect the inner dramas of the characters. Indeed, it almost seems as if the characters are formed by the heath itself: Diggory Venn, red from head to toe, is an actual embodiment of the muddy earth; Eustacia Vye seems to spring directly from the heath, a part of Rain barrow itself, when she is first introduced; Wildeve’s name might just as well refer to the wind-whipped heath itself. But, importantly, the heath manages to defy definition. It is, in chapter one, “a place perfectly accordant with man’s nature.” For Clym, the heath is beautiful; for Eustacia, it is hateful. The plot of the novel hinges around just this kind of difference in perception. Hardy shows how Clym Yeobright left the dazzle of city life of Paris and gladly undertook the challenge of teaching the Heath people as a school master. Many are busy with Hardy’s philosophical views and tragic predestination themes. But in this novel, Egdon Heath gives the total story a new ecocritical dimension. Clym and Diggory Venn finally remain to work for the amelioration of the Heath while Wildeve and Eustacia Vye who hate the Heath are dead. By creating distance from Nature and nourishing hate for Nature true happiness is not possible. This message is prevalent in *The Return of the Native*. We have seen in *The Christmas Carol* too the sufferings of the childhood of Dickens are

at the root of all cravings for human values expressed in the novels of Dickens. In *Christmas Carol* these benevolent qualities are related to Nature and the focus on the harmony between man and nature is very clear. Hardy shows the tragic consequences of the disruption of such bonds between Man and Nature in his *The Return of the Native*. In Hardy's fiction, nature functions as a mysterious force. Sometimes it seems to help human beings, at others it seems to turn against them. Virginia Woolf (Wright1961:173) says, Hardy "feels in it a spirit that can sympathize or mock or remain the indifferent spectator of human fortunes." While talking about 'The Return of the Native,' John W. Cunliffe (1969:219) says, "It presents [Hardy's] conception of Nature as a mysterious force, alien and often apparently hostile to man, without sympathy for his desires and ambitions, and without pity for his weaknesses." This study concerns itself with discussing the mysterious force of Nature in Hardy's novel; 'The Return of the Native' where Man seems to be in conflict with Nature which becomes a form of fate having cruel, indifferent and sympathetic moods. Also, this study shows how the characters react differently towards nature, and the immense influence of nature on the relationships and circumstances of the characters and how nature is humanized. The destructive mood of nature is represented in Egdon heath which is formidably antagonistic to human beings. John Holloway (1962:266) observes that Hardy's characters are "governed by and subdued to their environment." The inhabitants of Egdon heath, according to Lance Butler (1978:33), "react individually with one another and directly with (it)." Nature shows her dark side and her hostility to Eustacia Vye. Eustacia who was born in the busy port town of Budmouth and transplanted to live in the Heath with her grandfather, despises it, and searches for a way to escape. To Eustacia, Egdon Heath is an enemy especially in the scene of the storm

where the heavy rain seems to wish to destroy her. While walking towards Rainbarrow, at the end of the novel, she stumbles “over twisted furze-roots, tufts of rushes, or oozing lumps of fleshy fungi, which at this season lay scattered about the heath like the rotten liver and lungs of some colossal animal” (Hardy1978:420). Eustacia’s stumbling is because the rain hides completely the light of the moon and stars. Walter Allen (1954:251) says, “[Hardy] is intent to show that the stars in their courses fight against the aspiring, the man or woman who would rise above the common lot through greatness of spirit, of ambition, or passion.” And when Eustacia pauses, brooding, at the top of the Rain barrow the world around her and her mind is equal in their turbulence. Clym Yeobright, the “Native” of the novel’s title, who worked as a diamond merchant in Paris, but comes home when he realizes that his ambition is not towards material wealth, is pursued by Eustacia, and eventually marries her, but their marriage turns sour when her desire to move to Paris opposes his plan to stay on the Heath and teach school. Clym is defeated by the Heath in the same way as Eustacia. It causes him to lose all his ambition for wealth and social advancement when he returns to it from abroad. Hillis Miller (1970:91-2) says, Clym “reaches a point of wise indifference in which he can be happy in the monotonous and conscious action of furze-cutting.” Nature’s cruelty appears when Clym is about to meet death in book five. Though he is not against nature, he feels unrest in it since it is indifferent. Rosemarie Morgan (1988:64) says, “Despite his affection for the heathlands that are barely visible to his increasingly failing sight, the placid Clym is patently incompatible with the Titanic force and grandeur of Egdon’s Atlantean presence. Or ... he is of no more account (to it) than an insect...a mere parasite of the heath.” Nature is also cruel to Mrs. Yeobright, a proper, class-conscious, proud woman and Clym’s mother. She is left alone on

the heath after her futile visit to the unhappy couple, Clym and Eustacia. Egdon Heath represents the blind forces of nature. It becomes the symbol of modern man's hopelessness. It prepares the reader for the tragedy that is to come when Hardy (1978:55) describes it as "a lonely face suggesting tragical possibilities." Clym's understanding of the heath enables him to see the grimness of the general human situation and makes him realize man's insignificance in comparison to Nature. Ernest Baker (1938:36) comments "The chief character ... is embodied this time in Egdon Heath, the dark, immemorial environment whose influences control obscurely the lives and destinies of those who dwell contentedly amid its gorsy wilderness or feel themselves cruelly out of their element. Egdon Heath symbolizes the whole cosmic order, in which man is but an insignificant particle." Referring to the role played by Egdon Heath, Walter Allen (1954:249) observes, "The heath is not just so much scenic backcloth to the action, it is ... an extended image of the nature of which man is part, in which he is caught, which conditions his very being, and which cares nothing for him. His life in relation to it is as ephemeral as the bonfires the peasants make of the heath furze .The researcher illustrates that Unfortunately there is no space here to consider the issue.aWild Regions of Obscurity": Most modern readers will inevitably come to any particular novel by Thomas Hardy with an awareness of the context of the whole of his long career as a nineteenth-century novelist and a twentieth-century poet. However, in 1877–8, the period when he was composing and publishing *The Return of the Native*, Hardy was not yet the well-established and esteemed writer he was to become, and had not embarked on the consistent creation of the imagined Wessex now inseparable from his name. Despite the early success of *Far From the Madding Crowd*, he had still to create a willing and expectant audience. *The Return of the*

Native is a novel on which Thomas Hardy rested much hope of success, both as a professional man of letters and as a literary artist with a justified claim to be taken seriously. He took time to prepare himself for this next stage of his assault on fame, reading widely in contemporary science and philosophy, gathering and studying admired models of prose style, reflecting on his reading of classical writers, and generally taking extensive notes. Artistic ambition is perfectly apparent in the novel's generic aspirations and high cultural models (both Greek and Shakespearian tragedy, classical legend, biblical allegory), close to the surface as they are. And it is a novel of which he seems to have remained particularly fond. Nevertheless, the novel was in its own time close to a failure, both commercially and critically. The response of contemporary editors and reviewers to this long considered and authorially cherished work was not the first occasion on which Hardy had experienced a painful clash between his own artistic vision and the horizon of readily expectation forming around him, and it would certainly not be the last. Early and late in his career as a novelist, he encountered objections to the supposedly dangerous – or at least questionable – moral tone some saw in his works. As those novels came to be more and more centrally preoccupied with questions of sexuality and marriage – or perhaps, as Jules David Law puts it, with using “the sexual crises in women's life-histories” as the focus and vehicle of an exploration of “an interpretation of social relations” (Law 1998: 224) – the attacks on him on moral grounds came to be more and more virulent. Hardy's characteristic response to them would be twofold: he would comply (albeit bitterly) with the letter of the requirements of such censorship, and at the same time unmistakably (though hardly joyously) flout their spirit. This perceived moral issue unquestionably shapes some of the responses of the first readers of *The Return of the Native*. The

novel was rejected for serial publication in Hardy's first choice of periodical, for example, on these grounds; the editor of the Cornhill, Leslie Stephen, detected on the basis of only a short section of an early draft the germ of something "dangerous" in the triangulations of desire and relationship forming around Eustacia, Wildeve, and Thomasin (Dalziel 1996: 85). Similarly, after the novel's first publication in the then dominant three-volume format, early reviewers were widely troubled by the unsympathetic nature of the main characters: "we . . . can scarcely get up a satisfactory interest in people whose history and habits are so entirely different to our own," complained the Times reviewer, while the New York journal *The Eclectic* was more forthright than some, but by no means alone, in finding Eustacia Vye to be a "selfish cruel, unprincipled, and despicable woman" (Pinck 1969: 297 and 302 respectively). But alongside such morally based objections, there is a further element in these earliest reviews that opens up some important questions about the distinctive qualities of this novel. That is to say, there is to be found in these reviews, interspersed with praise for Hardy's descriptions of the natural world and of Egdon in particular, a marked unease with aspects of the novel's writing. The Academy reviewer speaks of "affectation" of style and "arbitrary and accidental" tragic plotting, and is widely echoed by fellow reviewers in the British periodicals, who complain variously of "mannerisms" and "clumsy style," "quaintness of expression" and "eccentricities of language," "eccentric forms of expression" and "strained and far-fetched" figurative language, or an "air of affectation" in the writing (Pinck 1969). Reviewers in the American journals were no more impressed, objecting to the "obscurity" of the title or its "far-fetched and infelicitous" nature, to "padding" in the plot, and generally to unusual vocabulary and affected writing (Pinck 1969: 299–304). In other words, irrespective of

the perceived moral tone of the work, there is a sense of discomfort, even shock, at the plotting, imagery, and style of the writing. To a high degree, this sense of unfamiliarity is due to normative expectations about the nature of English provincial realism, with its predominant conventions of complex and coherent characterization, plotting driven by causality and motivation, and objective narration: these are expectations which *The Return of the Native* rather ostentatiously declines to fulfill. Interestingly, more recent critics too have sometimes manifested their unease with aspects of Hardy's writing, often identifying a kind of doubleness that seems on occasion to subordinate sequential narrative to some other quality. Judith Mitchell, for example, describes the "Queen of Night" chapter of *The Return of the Native* as "a halt in the narrative" for a moment of "rhapsody" (Mitchell 1994: 177), and John Hughes comments tartly of Hardy's first published novel, *Desperate Remedies*, that "he does not know when it is time to stop looking and turn back to the official business of narrative" (Hughes 2004: 231). In a more positive vein, Michael Irwin notes in Hardy's work more generally a tension between "story" and something else that he variously identifies as "vision" (Irwin 1999: 147) and as "melody" (Irwin 1998: 134), an analogue of landscape painting or of opera, remarking that "most lovers of Hardy read him for the 'arias,' those potent, memorable scenes Which in many cases may seem extraneous to the narrative proper" (Irwin 1998: 134). Critics may differ over whether these elements in Hardy look back towards sensation fiction and melodrama or forward to the characteristic disruptive gaps and juxtapositions of modernist narrative. The point on which all such critical readings are agreed, surely, is that there resides within Hardy's realism a significant presence of something more like a texture or a rhythm than a narrative impulsion. In fact, *The Return of the Native*

presents its readers with a distinctive fictional universe of an unusual and (it would certainly appear from the early reviewers' comments) an unsettling kind. To begin with, it is a universe of sudden shifts of perspective, in which Clym's dimmed eyesight limits his world to "a circuit of a few feet from his person" (p. 247) and his society to insects and baby rabbits, or his mother switches her vision within the space of a few lines from the colony of ants at her feet – "To look down upon them was like observing a city street from the top of a tower" (p. 282) – to a heron taking flight "away from all contact with the earthly ball to which she was pinioned" (p. 282). It is a world of unexpected continuities between the animate and the inanimate: so, the night "sang dirges with clenched teeth" (p. 85) and "the bluffs had broken silence, the bushes had broken silence, the heather bells had broken silence; at last, so did the woman; and her articulation was but as another phrase of the same discourse as theirs" (p. 57). It is a world in which the presence of witches or Mephistophelian visitants seems as plausible as the presence of retired sea captains or innkeepers, and in which a young woman mistakes a returning suitor for "the ghost of yourself" (p. 374). The invisible, the bodiless, the dead, seem to have as much effectively as the living: the sound of a gate latch in the wind is "as if the invisible shapes of the dead were passing in on their way to visit him" (p. 350), and Clym moves through the world as a "Lazarus" (p. 367), as "the mere corpse of a lover" (p. 383). Personated abstractions act as antagonists of the characters: Adversities "set upon" Clym (p. 241), Eustacia "goes out to battle against Depression" (p. 251), and as Clym passes across the heath, "the past seized upon him with its shadowy hand, and held him there to listen to its tale" (p. 373). Characters, even when intimately known to one another, can pass unnoticed or become oddly unrecognizable. In the episode in which Mrs. Yeobright walks to visit

her son's home, fails to be admitted, and walks back to die on the exposed heath, there are three moments of such non-recognition: first, Mrs. Yeobright sees her own son as "nothing more than a moving handpost to show her the way" (p. 271) until she recognizes his walk as like that of her dead husband; then, as she lies collapsed on the heath, Clym returns the favor by "not for a moment" (p. 280) thinking her his mother until recognition is inevitable; while, as Eustacia roams with her sometime lover Wildeve, she comes upon the scene and "did not recognise Mrs. Yeobright in the reclining figure nor Clym as one of the standers by till she came close" (p. 295). It is, again, a world in which it seems no secrets can be kept, no human actions can go unobserved (except, crucially, the death of Eustacia and Wildeve, to which it will be necessary to return): observers conceal themselves beneath turves, fall back into shadows, peer through windows, spy through telescopes, listen through chimneys. When no human eye is there, animals, birds, even insects, bear witness, as the heathcropping ponies, glow-worms, and moths preside over the midnight gambling of Cattle, Wildeve, and Venn. The heath itself has eyes: a pond like "the white of an eye without its pupil" (p. 183), a "knot of stunted hollies, which in the general darkness of the scene stood as the pupil in a black eye" (p. 265). And such actual observers, animate or inanimate, are profusely supplemented by hypothetical eyes and conditional interpretations posited by the narrative voice (always a favorite narrative device of Hardy's, here employed with near-obsessive frequency): "a keen observer might have been inclined to think. . . ." (p. 80), "the natural query of an observer would have been. . . ." (p. 14), "had a looker-on been posted in the immediate vicinity of the barrow, he would have learned. . . ." (p. 18). The Return of the Native has been described by Peter Casagrande as at once "cultural drama" and "psychodrama" (Casagrande 1982: 116). It is

an accurate description in that the novel presents its reader with a fictional world in which what might be called the daylight plot of familiar social interaction – earning a living and borrowing money, courting and marrying, cutting hair and drinking ale – is shadowed by something altogether stranger, something more at ease in those “wild regions of obscurity which are vaguely felt to be compassing us about in midnight dreams of flight and disaster” (p. 11) said at the opening of the novel to be associated with Egdon. Alongside the familiar sequentiality of social plot runs a psychically motivated universe of repetitions and returns, of doubles and dualisms, of dream and vision, of compulsion and obsession. Eustacia dreams an encounter with a knight in shining armor who falls apart before her eyes, and then meets Clym while herself disguised as a knight. Susan Nunsuch wreaks a displaced violence upon Eustacia, “warping and kneading, cutting and twisting, dismembering and re-joining” (p. 347) the wax to form an effigy that she casts into the fire even as Eustacia embarks on her final disastrous venture across the heath. As Mrs. Yeobright looks hopefully through the window of her son’s house, he stirs in his sleep and murmurs “mother” without awakening from his dream of her. Diggory Venn vanishes and then reappears as his own double, the white ghost of his red self. Charley will do anything at all for a few minutes of holding Eustacia’s hand, Venn stores the glove of his beloved in his breast, Clym treats every household item of his mother’s as a holy relic of the “sublime saint” (p. 395) who is the centre of his “religion” (p. 335). That so many of the novel’s key scenes are set at night only further emphasizes this sense that the events of the novel follow as much the unconscious logic of the dream as the intricate interconnections of motivation and intent. Through some cultural prescience or by chance, the uncanny dimension has been deepened and strengthened for more recent readers by the

elaboration of Freudian concepts. That Hardy and Freud should both have identified Oedipus as the vehicle of an exploration of a son's relationship to his mother is perhaps not astonishing, given the content of the Sophoclean original. In any event, explicit allusions to Oedipus were added by Hardy only in the course of his revisions for the edition of 1895, by which time the emergence of psychoanalytic discourse was more clearly in the air. Yet, though Hardy could hardly have anticipated the emergence of the concept of the "return of the repressed," he has captured something of its cultural resonance in the title he chose for his novel. It puzzled some reviewers, probably accustomed to more typical Victorian titles invoking individual biography (*Jane Eyre*, *David Copperfield*) or community (*Middlemarch*, *Villette*). Hardy's title evokes at once a more abstract and a more general significance. He is a writer who has often been associated with an excessive foregrounding of plot, with over-reliance on coincidence and a degree of shapely interconnectedness that many have misread as authorial mimicry of a universe presumed to be ruled by malign fate. Yet his plotting reveals acutely how the accidental and contingent can be used to mark the seam between chance and design, between the individual and the general. What might have been simply the story of Clym Yeobright's homecoming is overlaid with something closer to myth, the parallel tracking of specific event and cultural archetype. And indeed, the fictional world so densely packed with figuration, symbol, and allusion that it significantly blurs the margin between event and metaphor. The novel invokes the natural world of Egdon and its notably permeable boundaries with human society with striking vividness and particularity, but at the same time binds it so inextricably into the notation of event and dialogue that it is not always easy to distinguish between the language of what really happens and the language of figuration. "My life

creeps like a snail,” says Clym Yeobright (p. 312), and in the next chapter, as he walks toward a fateful confrontation with his wife, it is so early that no one else is stirring and “all the life visible was in the shape of a solitary thrush cracking a snail upon the door stone for his breakfast” (p. 317). The proximity of metaphor followed so closely by event forms a moment of ambiguous status: clearly saturated with meaning, but not unequivocally a symbol of Clym’s life, about to be destroyed before our eyes and his own. As easily as such natural description, human actions in the plot can also perch on this narrow border between the literal and the figurative. Venn, one of the novel’s principal survivors, is also the character who makes the most vigorous attempts to save the drowning couple from the water. The narration of his lifesaving efforts brings the two dimensions so closely together that metaphor and incident appear to merge: “As soon as he began to be in deep water,” we are told, “he flung himself across the hatch, and thus supported was able to keep himself a float as long as he chose” (p. 362). The evocation of the consciousness of a character from within is on occasion handled in the same way. Eustacia Vye’s particular role in the mumming episode seems to have multiple determinations, including, for example, her exotic status in the closed community of Egdon and the consistent narrative linkage of her with antiquity and defeat. Insofar as the narration depicts the role as her own choice, it is described in these terms: “This gradual sinking to the earth was, in fact, one reason why Eustacia had thought that the part of the Turkish Knight . . . would suit her best. A direct fall from upright to horizontal . . . was not an elegant or decorous feat for a girl. But it was easy to die like a Turk, by dogged decline” (p. 135). Here, the literal notation of the power of decorum in the life of a woman is overlaid with the culturally prominent metaphorical significance of the “fallen” woman, and at the same time

with the novel's own elaborate figurative and symbolic chain of significance relating to the vertical and the horizontal, rising and falling. Such emblematic moments – and there are many of them – are linked in turn to more extended episodes of an allegorical or symbolic kind, with the reader's attention sometimes drawn quite overtly by commentary, reflection, or even lighting effect toward their dual significance as literal event and as figure. Eustacia's passive surrender to the bramble that snags her dress, for example, is noted as "a clue to her abstraction" (p. 59), while the meaningfulness of Mrs. Yeobright's moments of insight into the insignificance of the large and the significance of the microscopically small as she crosses the heath is flagged by the passing comment that she is "a woman not disinclined to philosophise" (p. 270). Dramatic lighting gives the impression of incidents meaningfully isolated against a background of the indistinct, as in the luridly lit scene of the midnight gambling (p. 228), and in Eustacia's momentary irradiation by firelight: "As Eustacia crossed the firebeams she appeared for an instant as distinct as a figure in a phantasmagoria – a creature of light surrounded by an area of darkness: the moment passed, and she was absorbed in night again" (p. 342). Most telling of all, in this connection, is the sequence in which Eustacia and Wildeve drown. Both the nature of Eustacia's death and the ambiguity with which it is recounted are illuminated by recalling that water in rapid motion – floods, rushing torrents, open sea – has a strong presence in nineteenth-century English fiction as a metaphor and a plot device for resolving the impasse of the unsatisfied woman whose desire for love is metonymic of a wider desire that the world should be otherwise. Like such other water-associated heroines as Charlotte Brontë's Lucy Snowe or George Eliot's Maggie Tulliver, Hardy's Eustacia is a figure whose desires are greater than her environment can encompass. With a varying blend of

sympathy and irony, the narrator points up repeatedly just this opposition between the passionate life she perhaps might have lived and “her Hades,” Egdon (p. 69), where “coldest and meanest kisses were at famine prices” and no “mouth matching hers” is to be found (p. 71). She talks continually of her desire for escape to somewhere beyond Egdon, and yet the actual opportunities that present themselves – Budmouth as a lady’s companion, Wisconsin with Wildeve – no more match her hopes of a larger life fit for the “splendid woman” (p. 346) she seeks to be than does Egdon itself. At the same time, the novel from the outset stresses her inseparability from the heath, from which she seems to emerge at her first appearance and into which she seems to merge once more when last depicted alive. A language of chafing, of imprisonment, and of resentment characterizes Eustacia’s accounts of her physical and her social environment alike. Almost from the first, she sees Egdon Heath itself as her enemy, an embodiment of the forces that conspire to keep her in place, and at times the narrative voice appears to endorse this view: “the wings of her soul were broken by the cruel instructiveness of all about her” (p. 346). However, it is with equal insistence that the narrative voice draws attention to her congruence with Egdon’s moods and ways, even as she embarks on her final attempt to leave it: “the tearfulness of the outer scene was repeated upon her face” (p. 346). Dialectic between escape and resignation is central to Eustacia’s dilemma: “an impulse to leave the spot, a desire to stay, struggled within her” (p. 332). In a novel in which everyone is constantly under the eye of their neighbors, Eustacia is the focus of particular community attention to the propriety of her behavior. As the final search for her begins, her grandfather fears for her life: “I only hope it is no worse than an elopement,” he suggests. Clym’s response is telling: “Worse? What’s worse than the worst a wife can do?” (p. 352).

A more or less malicious network of local gossip and spying, comment and interpretation, sets the boundaries for the repeated pattern of desire and resignation, fantasied escape and (self-) imprisonment, that forms her story. So it is fitting that the episode in which the boundaries are finally overcome is unseen, even by the narrator or the cast of disembodied hypothetical narrators on which he so regularly draws. All we have to go on is a sound: “the fall of a body into the stream adjoining,” with some irony described as “unmistakable” (p. 360). With visual observation for once forsaken, this sound does not permit us to choose finally between a number of possible options: that she has taken control of her life at last by committing suicide, that the heath reclaims her one last time as she seeks to flee with a man she has finally chosen as her lover, that she is doomed by the encompassing social malignity imaged in Susan Nunsuch’s wax models and backward recitation of the Lord’s Prayer. The novel affords textual evidence to support any of these interpretations, but the most interesting point here is that the novel maintains the plausibility of all of these mutually contradictory versions to the end of the episode rather than employing a “truth-voice” in the narration to endorse any one of them. The undecidability of the moment gives Hardy’s drowned heroine a deep resonance, as at once a victim of her society, a heroine who at last takes control of her life, and a consoling image of transcendence of frustrating social circumstance. This sense that event is not privileged over metaphor, that the logic of the dream shadows the concatenations of causality, is what gives *The Return of the Native* its quality of almost hallucinatory vividness. Further reinforcing it is an unusual aspect of its narrative technique: an insistence on separating out into a kind of slow motion sequences the processes of seeing and interpreting what is seen. At the opening of the human action of the novel, for example, is the scene in which Captain

Drew (perhaps more recognizable under the name given to him in later revisions, Captain Vye) meets the reddleman on the road, and discovers that in his van is Thomasin, returning from her failed attempt at a wedding. It is not recounted in these direct terms, however. Instead, we have this: “Along the road walked an old man. . . . One would have said that he had been, in his day, a naval officer of some order or other.” As he looks ahead, he sees “a moving spot, which appeared to be a vehicle. . . . When he drew nearer, he perceived it to be a spring van.” Leading it is a strikingly red figure: “The old man knew the meaning of this,” we are told, as he recognizes the reddleman (p. 13). And so it goes: this process of seeing, reflecting on what it means, identifying, is repeated over and over again. Sometimes it is attributed to the consciousness of a particular character, as in the passage just discussed; at other times, it comes directly in the voice of the narrator. One of the most extreme examples is to be found in the gradual discovery of Eustacia Vye that immediately follows this earlier passage. The resting Diggory Venn looks at the heath and at its highest point, the barrow. Then he notices that “its summit . . . was surmounted by something higher.” That “something higher” is “like a spike from a helmet,” in turn identified as “a form” which the hypothetical observer might suppose to be “a sort of last man,” imaginary survivor of the Celtic forebears. The “form” in turn becomes a “figure,” compared in its relationship to the hills with the “lantern” without which a dome is nothing (p. 17). The “figure” becomes recognizable as a “person,” and finally the person reveals a sex: “the movement had been sufficient to show more clearly the characteristics of the figure: it was a woman’s” (p. 18). Only three chapters later do more specific features of “The Figure against the Sky” (p. 55) become apparent, in a further lengthy place of progressive discernment? At first, she is no more than a “closely-wrapped female

figure,” then “all that could be learnt of her just now” is her height and lady-like quality while her stance poses a question – “whether she had adopted that aspect because of the chilly gusts . . . did not at first appear” – and her stillness is “just as obscure” (p. 55). As she lifts her hand, we learn that she holds a telescope, and only when she throws back the kerchief that covers her head does her profile become visible, with a glimpse of “matchless lips” and cheek in the firelight (p. 58). Finally, before the action resumes, her “buoyant bound up the bank” show that she is young (p. 60). The reader is led here through a process of progressive bringing into focus of Eustacia, as if not merely present as a spectator but engaged in active interpretation. The sequence, in the course of which Eustacia evolves from a spike on a helmet to a beautiful young woman, is only an unusually lengthy example of a narrative technique prevalent in the novel. Time and again, a perception is reported first while the moment of its understanding – or, almost as often, misunderstanding – is deferred. So the disjunction of vision and interpretation gives particular importance to the very fully developed strain of imagery of sight and blindness in the novel. As well as the constant reference to the onlooking eyes of actual or imagined spectators, the novel offers a symbolic schema of vision in relation to its central characters. Eustacia and Mrs. Yeobright share a kind of long-range vision of which Eustacia’s telescope is only the most concrete example. Just as she knows “by prevision what most women learn only by experience” (p. 71), so too Mrs. Yeobright “had a singular insight into life, considering that she had never mixed with it” (p. 188). The narrator generalizes this observation on the basis of gender: it is usually women, we are told, who “can watch a world which they never saw . . . We call it intuition” (p. 188). Just as clearly, Venn’s “eye . . . keen as that of a bird of prey” (p. 14) is central to his ability to sum up a

situation and to the slightly predatory nature of the tactics that allow him to emerge unscathed from potential disaster. Again, the dimming of Clym Yeobright's sight following his exposure to the "blinding halo" of love (p. 199) also marks the contraction of his social vision, from his original aims of the intellectual and spiritual betterment of the Egdon community to his placid engagement with the "microscopic" world of "creeping and winged things" in his immediate physical vicinity (p. 247). At the same time, the narrative gives unusually explicit prominence to the processes by which characters reach their interpretation of what they see or hear. They continually ask themselves or one another the significance of what is before them: " 'Isn't there meaning in it?' she said, stealthily" (p. 316); " 'What does it all mean?' " (p. 286); " 'what's the meaning of this disgraceful performance?' " (p. 43). The effort of interpretation is often conveyed through linguistic metaphors, and a good deal of attempted reading goes on (interestingly, in a society in which the value of literacy is contested in conversations among the heath inhabitants). Clym Yeobright's face, for example, is interesting not "as a picture, but . . . as a page" (p. 167), his features attractive "as shapes intrinsically simple become interesting in writing" (p. 168). And as Mrs. Yeobright walks away from the closed door of her son's home, she encounters the child Johnny Nunsuch, whose attempts to understand the situation are conveyed both through a decidedly non-naturalistic passage of dialogue and through the metaphor of frustrated literacy: "He gazed into her face in a vague, wondering manner, like that of one examining some strange old manuscript, the key to whose characters is undiscoverable" (p. 281). Notably exempted from this complex conjunction of conjectural interpretation, figurative representation and deferred understanding is the figure of Thomasin Yeobright, who increasingly becomes the narrative and moral centre of

The Return of the Native. The introduction into the novel of Thomasin, once identified by Hardy (in a letter of guidance to the illustrator of the serial version) as “the good heroine” (Dalziel 1996: 96), stands in marked contrast to the obscured and protracted unveiling of Eustacia. “‘Let me see her at once,’ said Mrs Yeobright” (p. 41), and the reader shares in her immediate exposure. She is from the first exactly what she appears to be, to the point of metaphorical transparency: “An ingenuous, transparent life was disclosed: it was as if the flow of her existence could be seen passing within” (p. 41). With such transparency goes a matching perspicacity: “She understood the scene in a moment” (p. 41). While others labor to read what they see, Thomasin’s power of interpretation appears spontaneous and immediate: “‘It means just what it seems to mean,’ ” she tells her aunt (p. 43). She even appears to have the ability to arrest the unceasing generation of metaphor that envelops other central characters: “All similes and allegories concerning her began and ended with birds” (p. 209). Importantly, her world is not peopled with the abstractions, metaphors, and symbols that otherwise threaten to engulf Egdon society: To her there were not, as to Eustacia, demons in the air, and malice in every bush and bough. The drops which lashed her face were not scorpions, but prosy rain; Egdon in the mass was no monster whatever, but impersonal open ground. Her fears of the place were rational, her dislikes of its worst moods reasonable. At this time it was in her view a windy, wet place, in which a person might experience much discomfort, lose the path without care, and possibly catch cold. (p. 355) Adopting the figurative scheme of the novel, it could be said that Thomasin is distinguished in the novel by her capacity to see only what is before her eyes. Thomasin’s exceptionality in itself highlights the novel’s insistence on the processes of understanding and interpretation. That element is reinforced by the distinctive character of

the narrative voice, unusually positioned as it is in relation to the story it tells. It is evident that we are not in the presence of an embodied narrator with a role in the action of the novel, on the model of first-person narration, and yet there are moments of what can only be called intimacy that suggest a parallel kind of narrative inwardness, as in the phrase “our Eustacia – for she was not altogether unlovable” (p. 73). Yet nor do we find the distanced and objective tone that characterizes the omniscient narrative mode typical of Victorian realism. Indeed, is notable for its explicit disavowal of omniscience. Part of what is sometimes considered the awkwardness of the writing derives from the indirectness of its narration. Rather than simply reporting the events of the narrative in the indicative, the narration continually interposes a chink of doubt: things “seem” or “appear” to be the case, hypothetical observers interpret in conditional tenses, and the phrase “it was as if” recurs with notable frequency. The withholding of omniscient narration so particularly marked in the episode of the deaths of Eustacia and Wildeve also characterizes the conclusion to their story:

The story of the deaths of Eustacia and Wildeve was told throughout Egdon, and far beyond, for many weeks and months. All the known incidents of their love were enlarged, distorted, touched up, and modified, till the original reality bore but a slight resemblance to the counterfeit presentation by surrounding tongues. (p. 371)

Nor is this the only instance in the novel of self-conscious reference to what might be called the generation of community narrative from individual experience. Earlier, in a more humorous version of the same effect, Clym Yeobright is identified as the focus of a similar process. As one “whose fame had spread to an awkward extent” – that is, “at least two miles round” – at an early age, he has become as much the hero of a story as a friend and neighbor: “if he were making a fortune and a name,

so much the better for him; if he were making a tragical figure in the world, so much the better for a narrative” (p. 168). This explicit enunciation of the possibility of a gap between what happens and what is understood inevitably invites some reflection on the narrator’s own practices. While this hesitant and conjectural mode of narration is unusual, it is of course by no means unique. That it is close to the core of Hardy’s conception of his novel is apparent in its persistence in later, revised editions of *The Return of the Native*, to which he added first a preface (in 1895) and later a note (added in 1912). Both of these occur in what would normally be considered an authorial rather than a narrative voice; that is, they are commonly regarded as Hardy’s direct address to his reader. The preface refers to the period “at which the following events are assumed to have occurred” (p. 429): “assumed,” in this context, comes as a surprise, where one might perhaps have expected “set” or some synonym reflecting an authorial decision. An intentional blurring of the boundaries between real and imagined histories is an essential element in the whole imagined edifice of the Hardyan Wessex, just as the real geography of nineteenth-century England both underlies and gives the lie to the map of Wessex with which the later editions of his novels are prefaced. Still, “assumed” once again implies a narrative mode lying somewhere between conjecture and legend. More remarkable still is the footnote to *The Return of the Native* which Hardy added in 1912 halfway through Book Sixth, “After courses.” Here, he offers his reader a shadowy choice of endings: “the original conception of the story did not design a marriage between Thomasin and Venn. He was to have retained his isolated and weird character to the last. . . . Thomasin remaining a widow” (p. 427). It certainly appears to have been the case that Hardy’s original intention in writing the novel was that it should have five books, modeled on the

five acts of classical tragedy. Book the Sixth in its entirety might well have been a more or less weary recognition of the likely demand from publishers and perhaps readers for a happy ending like that he had given them in *Far From the Madding Crowd*. However, his habit of continually revising his texts for each new edition afforded him many opportunities simply to rewrite the novel as (he says) he wished it to be, according to the more “austere artistic code” (p. 427) that was to have led to the bleaker ending. That he chose not to do so surely means that the note has now to be read as part of the text of these later editions of the novel, rather than as a commentary upon it. In any case, that Hardy should have added it to the existing version of the text as an alternative, rather than rewriting his ending, is of a piece with the narrative techniques of the novel from its earliest version. So it is that the conjectural mode of narration, and the disavowal of certainty, extends even to the irresolution of an ending: perhaps Venn returned to Egdon society as a paleskinned dairy farmer and married Thomasin, but perhaps he didn’t. It is just as with the earlier deaths: perhaps Eustacia committed suicide, or perhaps she tried to flee with her lover, or perhaps Susan Nunsuch’s Wessex voodoo condemned her to an early death. Does Wildeve leave Thomasin in the hope of eloping with Eustacia? Does he simply wish to help her to escape? Does he also commit suicide, or perhaps die trying to save Eustacia? No authoritative comment is to be found in the text. Such radical indeterminacy of narration points up Hardy’s attentiveness, in *The Return of the Native*, to different sources and forms of knowledge: to local lore and “central town thinkers” (p. 172), to “intuition” (p. 188) and “high doctrine” (p. 109). Traditional snakebite remedies and witchcraft rituals coexist with Clym’s Parisian social theory and the Lady’s History from which Eustacia draws her models of heroism. Prometheus and St. Sebastian,

Mrs. Siddons and Farmer Lynch, the Vale of Tempe and the Garden of Gethsemane, the dodo and the microscope, jostle together in the novel's allusive range. The texture of the writing is just as ecumenical, as Gillian Beer has noted: "His vocabulary rockets across registers, between language close as touch and removed as Latinate legal documents. . . . Between very old dialect words and very upto-date references" (Beer 1996: 44–5). The novel does not adjudicate between these different discourses, or between the chains of causality and modes of explanation that are aligned with them. Nor does it require, or even permit, its reader to do so. Rather, it allows these different versions of the action and its meaning to stand together, unresolved into a single and uniform significance. Egdon Heath has multiple functions in the novel: part backdrop, part protagonist, part metaphor, it delimits the narrative space of the action while projecting it endlessly forward and back in time. "Untameable," "primitive," "inviolable" (pp. 11–12), the heath serves as a palimpsest on which human histories can be written, erased, and rewritten. There is undeniably a mythic quality to *The Return of the Native*, and while it derives in part from the proliferation of references to classical myth, it also emerges from the narrative technique. Those early reviewers who found the novel's title farfetched and its writing obscure were responding above all to a distinctive narrative quality, a quality never quite repeated in Hardy's later fiction: the combination of vivid particularity of observation – the veins in a baby rabbit's ear, Eustacia's mouth lit by the sunlight like the trumpet of a tulip – and the tentative and conditional mode of its narrative voice. Before the reader's eyes, it seems, even the most vibrant of observations modulates into conjecture and gossip, even the most intense and personal of histories melts into legend and fiction. *Melodrama, Vision, and Modernity*.

4-10 The effects of industrialism in a traditional rural culture:

The researcher illustrates What are the relations between the mechanical and the natural in Hardy? For if an earlier generation of Hardy scholars recognized in the machine/nature dyad the emblematic expression of one of his great 'themes'-the depredations of industrialism in a traditional rural culture attuned to the natural rhythms of the land-critics have, by and large, long ceased to discern any such stark dichotomy in his work, tending to dismiss readings which appeal to it as a reductive misapprehension of Hardy's understanding of the shift into modernity. Raymond Williams's revisionist reading of Hardy, formulated in the 1970s, has been particularly instrumental in effecting this alteration in critical perspective. For Williams's Hardy, the modernization of Wessex does not mean the 'crude and sentimental ... rape of the country by the town' (208). Modernization was, rather, brought about by a complex combination of 'internal' as well as 'external' factors: by the vicissitudes of economic and social life in the country as well as the pressures of industrial capitalism. Williams argues that the sophistication of Hardy's social analysis (his careful attention to labour, education, and class mobility in particular) is obscured in any naively technologically determinist emphasis on the machine's part in historical change, or in any 'discussion of Hardy's attachment to country life, which would run together the "timeless" heaths or woods and the men working on them' (203). If Hardy exhibited occasional tendencies towards the latter representation, Williams argues, ultimately he 'is never very comfortable with it', always returning in his novels to the interrelations of the land and its inhabitants to 'mak[e] more precise identifications' (203). The authority of Williams's reading of Hardy has been upheld by the subsequent 'culturalist' turn in literary studies-a development for which Williams's work more generally is, of course, of

key importance. Culturalism, arguably the dominant analytical paradigm in contemporary literary studies, holds that texts are constructed by and help to construct-but also often to subvert-their cultural context. Anti-humanist in character, culturalist criticism is dedicated to ideological demystification, seeking in texts both correspondences with, and resistances to, dominant discourses about class, gender, race, sexuality, and so on: discourses which are culturally and historically contingent, but which assume or insist upon their own self-evidence, their 'naturalness'. The aim of such a criticism is to recognize and point up these contingencies; so that, of course, 'nature' is automatically, permanently under suspicion as a ruse of culture. The entrenched culturalism of Anglophone literary criticism has perhaps precluded much detailed attention to the ways in which, even as they carry out the complex representations which Williams describes, Hardy's texts also often do collapse or at least closely align nature with tradition, and often do posit mechanical modernity as invasive of tradition/nature. Faced with these apparently unsubtle aspects of Hardy's writing, present-day scholarship tends either to pass over them, to locate them as in fact more complicated engagements with cultural phenomena, or to convict Hardy himself of ideological distortion. In what follows I want to suggest that there is some value in reconsidering Hardy's representation of relations between 'the country and the city', and between the associated binarisms of nature and culture, and body and machine, not in order to attempt the restoration of an old-fashioned organicist reading, but as a way into rethinking Hardy's account of, and relation to, modernity, and the significance of these for our postmodern literary and cultural criticism. Close attention to the way in which Hardy's texts simultaneously insist upon and undermine the binarisms I have mentioned, might, I suggest, encourage us to reappraise the critical purchase of by-now somewhat

predictable anti-essentialist and anti-naturalist manoeuvres in readings of Hardy and in literary studies more generally—manoeuvres which, I will contend, are founded on these very binarisms. For a recent example of these manoeuvres, we might turn to an essay by Jules Law on 'political bodies' in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Like a lot of contemporary criticism, this chapter is organized around a recognizable, almost routine, set of anti-essentialist and anti-naturalist assumptions, according to which the efficacy of any political reading and the diagnosis of any given text's 'genuine' political meanings lie in the location of cultural and historical 'construction'. Law argues that in Hardy's fiction the body is 'an iterative mechanism, constantly reproducing prior meanings through ostensible acts of repetition', acts of repetition that 'both pry open and shut down any space for a genuinely political reflection on social arrangements' (Law 1997, 246). In particular, Hardy tends to refer all manner of 'anomalous social arrangements' to 'Nature', a move which 'threatens to collapse the two sides of the nature/culture distinction' (245). For Law such an impulse can only be regressive: 'genuine political reflection' is found solely in Hardy's representations of a body on which social need is inscribed, a body which 'since it bespeaks its own social construction endlessly, ... can ask only for social reconstruction' (268). Nature is excluded from any participation in the urgent negotiations with the social which Law detects in Hardy's novels. While the 'narratorial ethos tends to suggest that human relations are balanced like a house of cards upon the fragile ground of a capricious "Nature" ... , the plots of the novels expose the fact that social relations are constantly being challenged ... by the claims, grievances, or needs of individuals and groups'; and such challenges (naturally) have 'nothing to do with nature' (267). Culturalist critiques like this one insist on the complexity and sophistication of

literary texts, yet they tend to produce remarkably similar accounts of them, accounts that 'can all too adequately be summarized as "kinda hegemonic, kinda subversive"' (Sedgwick and Frank 1995, 500). My concern here is not to repudiate Law's account of Tess, however, but to explore the limits of culturalism and mark out alternatives to it via a reading of Hardy which is indebted to the work of a growing number of theorists who have challenged the culturalist paradigm in recent years. Specifically, I am interested in how readings of Hardy might benefit from the development of a certain anti-anthropocentric orientation in various fields of research situated in what (after anti-humanism and these newer developments) it becomes slightly ironic to call 'the humanities'. This anti-anthropocentric orientation is apparent in the work of several important theorists working in or across the domains of literary studies, cultural studies, science studies, and philosophy; and it can be found in writings which are diverse in aim and often at considerable theoretical variance with one another. But the kind of critical works I have in mind are all animated by a troubling of any or all of the distinctions between nature and culture, bodies and technologies, the human and the non-human, and matter and signification. Of course anti-humanist criticism-as opposed to anti-anthropocentric criticism-also claims to 'deconstruct' at least the first of these oppositions; but, as I have noted, instead of pointing up the mutual inhabitation or enfolding of nature and culture, as one might expect a deconstructive criticism to do, anti-humanism characteristically and resolutely identifies nature as merely a rhetorical effect of culture. However, as some recent critiques of culturalism have pointed out, this critical operation depends upon the very distinction that it refuses. As Vicki Kirby puts it, the way in which worldviews differ in various historical and cultural contexts is assumed by antihumanist criticism to provide 'proof against foundationalist or

essentialist claims that knowledge is finally grounded' (Kirby 1997, 61). But ironically this 'anti-essentialist assertion of groundlessness' depends upon a notion of nature as ground whose 'immutability is never in question' (61). Even as it denies our unmediated access to 'nature', anti-humanist criticism depends upon a notion of nature as the mute and passive surface upon which culture does its representational work. Locating agency and meaning solely on the cultural side of this supposedly impermeable divide, anti-humanism is thus revealed in a convergence with its putative nemesis, humanism: both are ultimately 'anthropologies' which place man-or his surrogates, culture or language-at the centre of their concerns. This chapter investigates how Hardy's work might both contribute and respond to a criticism which has absorbed the kinds of anti-anthropocentric arguments I have briefly outlined. One of my claims is that Hardy's novels invite us to reconsider the assumption that nature-never a unitary entity in Hardy, as Linda Shires has shown (1999, 157)-is a static and inarticulate ground absolutely cut off from a contingent and voluble culture. I concentrate on the representation of the body and the landscape in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, with only implicit reference to other common Hardyean uses of 'nature' (or 'Nature') to suggest, for instance, instinct, or a transcendent ethical order. My reading of Hardy assumes the capacity of literary works radically to rethink conceptual orthodoxies: the peculiar discursive license that literature possesses 'to say everything, to break free of the rules, to displace them and thereby ... even to suspect the traditional difference between nature and institution, nature and conventional law, nature and history' (Derrida and Attridge 1992, 37). Jacques Derrida implies that this potential of literature is generally linked to self-reflexivity, 'a sort of turning back on the literary institution' (42). On this account, a literary text is never so 'literary',

never so fully manifesting the critical possibilities of literature, as when it is flouting or at least troubling the protocols of literature. Similar, if less explicit and less elaborated conceptions of literature inform Hardy criticism today, with its emphasis on his protomodernism or even his proto-postmodernism. Hardy's various outrages against organicist aesthetics-manifested in such key features as the mixing of idioms, generic instability and heterogeneity, incoherent characterization, and the indeterminacy of moral perspective are regarded as correlating with his political provocations. My own reading of Hardy also responds to what Linda Shires has called Hardy's 'radical aesthetic', or what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari designate the 'strangeness' of his novelistic practice; and the affinities of this aesthetic with the radicality and strangeness of anti-anthropocentric critique.~ My argument is tentative and consequently exploratory in both its method and its trajectory. It does not attempt to provide an overview of Hardy's oeuvre, though my claims here are arguably relevant to much of his work. Instead, I parse the significance of a cluster of figurative associations that attend the representation of the body, the landscape, and technology in *Tess*, in order to broach some of the issues brought up by anti-anthropocentric criticism. In *Tess*, as in much late nineteenth-century representation, the fascinations and anxieties provoked by modernity are interlocked with the fascinations and anxieties provoked by woman in a heterosexual economy. As Williams points out, *Tess*, popularly conceived or misremembered as the 'passionate peasant girl seduced from outside' (1973, 210), is in fact marked in important ways as a product of contemporary cultural innovations, for which her 'Sixth Standard training' (Hardy 1998b, 124) serves as synecdoche-directly alluded to as it is in the passage dealing with 'the ache of modernism' to suggest her precise relation to modernity. Here *Tess* relates to Angel her 'horrid

fancies' of 'numbers of to-morrows just all in a line, the first of 'em biggest and clearest, the others getting smaller and smaller as they stand farther away; but they all seem very fierce and cruel and as if they said "I'm coming! Beware o' me! Beware o' me!"' (124). Angel's response is supplied in a substantial passage of reported thought:

He was surprised to find this young woman-who though but a milkmaid had just that touch of rarity about her which might make her the envied of her housemates-shaping such sad imaginings. She was expressing in her own native phrases-assisted a little by her Sixth Standard training feelings which might almost have been called those of the age-the ache of modernism. The perception arrested him less when he reflected that what are called advanced ideas are really in great part but the latest fashion in definition-a more accurate expression, by words in logy and ism, of sensations which men and women have vaguely grasped for centuries. (124)

As Law argues, Angel's diagnosis of the innate and ahistorical determinations of Tess's gloomy *Weltanschauung*-whereby 'advanced ideas' are merely linguistic finessings of perdurable 'sensations'-is contradicted by his subsequent reflection that 'such a daughter of the soil could only have caught up the sentiment by rote' (Hardy 1998b, 126), as well as by the more general logic of the book which explicitly connects Tess's philosophy to her experiences of violation and exploitation (Law 1997, 258--259). Angel's revised notion of Tess as *tabula rasa*, catching up sentiments by rote, however, dovetails with other figurations of her, an important point to which I will return. If Angel, in the first passage quoted above, is wrong about the historical, social and personal specificities of Tess's thoughts, the figurative expression of his observations, whereby her experience of a modern state of mind is connected to 'sensations', is consistent with the rest of the novel. As I

will argue in a moment, the shock of the modern in Tess is frequently described as bodily experience-and as Tess's bodily experience above all. While 'sensations' in this passage might be glossed as intuitions, the passage seems to stress the corporeal resonance of the term (people 'grasp' the sensations); and 'the ache of modernism'-that resonant phrase, which, detached from its original context, has become shorthand in Hardy criticism for his diagnosis of a particular late-Victorian 'structure of feeling'-inscribes modernity as palpable, locating history as what hurts. The connection between the experience of modernity and Tess's physical experience is made clear as we move away from Angel's consciousness. The narrator reminds us that Angel's view of Tess lacks a vital piece of information-the knowledge of her rape. 'Not guessing the cause' of Tess's pessimism, 'there was nothing to remind him that experience is as to intensity, and not as to duration. Tess's passing corporeal blight had been her mental harvest' (Hardy 1998b, 124). Thus Tess's personal history is linked to the 'feelings of the age', exemplifying on a still more localized level the tendency of the Wessex novels to articulate a general historical shift (tradition to modernity) through the imaginative recounting of the changes to rural lifeways. Tess's 'corporeal' violation is the foundation of her worldview, a cause and effect sequence figured through a paradoxical agricultural metaphor in which blight becomes harvest. If Tess thus exemplifies modernity, this metaphor reminds us that she is also persistently associated with nature, and, collaterally, with tradition, with the cyclical cultural processes of Wessex. The hesitations which, according to Williams, generally stymied Hardy's temptation to 'run together the "timeless" heaths and woods and the men working on them' (203) do not apply in the cases of Tess or the other women working in the Wessex landscape; a convention of gender representation-the association of women with the

land-enables the return of this repressed identification of rural culture and nature. In the reaping scene in Chapter 14-to cite the best known and most frequently discussed instance of this aspect of the text, and the one in which gender distinctions are made explicit-the narrator declares: 'A fieldman is a personality afield; a field-woman is a portion of the field; she has somehow lost her own margin, imbibed the essence of her surrounding, and assimilated herself with it' (88). Elsewhere, the tendency to present Tess as 'a figure which is part of the landscape' (280) is evident, for instance, when Tess, travelling to Var Vale, feels 'akin to the landscape' even though she has 'never before visited this part of the country' (102). And after Prince has been inadvertently killed, and Tess waits for help, we are told: 'the lane showed all its white features, and Tess showed hers, still whiter' (33). It is because Tess and 'the lay of the land' are thus persistently crossidentified, that, for many critics, Tess's rape presents metaphorically the effects of industrialization upon rural England (e.g. Bernstein 1993, 162). And this reading is supported by the text's tendency to present the signs of the modern in Wessex (including Alec and his family) as invasive and irruptive, a presentation managed through a tropology of visual incongruity, in which the modern as figure leaps egregiously from the ground of the Wessex countryside-a mode of figuration diametrically opposite in its effects to the harmonizing or blending of figure and ground found in the descriptions of Tess and the landscape.s The conspiCUOUS appearance of the Stoke-d'Urbervilles' country seat introduces this tropology. Their newly built crimson brick country house, a kind of inflated suburban villa ('The Slopes') which is 'built for enjoyment pure and simple' rather than for economically significant agricultural work, rises like 'a red geranium' against 'the soft azure landscape of The Chase-a truly venerable tract of forest land, one of the few remaining woodlands in England of

undoubted primaeval date' (Hardy 1998b, 38). Representations of the machine in the landscape continue and compound this figurative tendency. In Chapter 46 of *Tess*, the 'bright blue hue' of the 'new paint' on the turnip-slicing machine 'seem[s] almost vocal in the otherwise subdued scene' (313) of the wintry landscape. But it is of course the description of the threshing machine and its operator in the following two chapters that presents the most emphatic rendition of modernity as invasive and that also most explicitly points up the social ramifications of new technologies in the Wessex landscape. The machine is introduced to us from the point of view of Tess and her fellow labourers. It is 'as yet barely visible' and 'indistinct' (325), a visual indistinctness that serves as an analogue for the historical incipience of this technology ('as yet ... itinerant in this part of Wessex' [325]). The machine's operator, though, like 'The Slopes' and like the turnip machine, is 'isolat[ed]' in 'manner and colour' from the 'pellucid smokelessness of this region of yellow grain and pale soil'; this servitor of 'fire and smoke' presents a disjunction also with the 'aborigines' of the 'agricultural world' who by contrast 'serve[] vegetation, weather, frost and sun'(325). The engine operator's detached, trance-like state ('his thoughts turned inwards ... hardly perceiving the scenes around him, and caring for them not at all' [325]) figures the alienation of industrialized labour-the imbrication of the human in the mechanical process-in which Tess is also soon, more dramatically, caught up. Standing on the machine to feed wheat into it, she is 'shaken bodily by its spinning': the 'incessant quivering, in which every fibre of her body participated, had thrown her into a stupefied reverie in which her arms worked independently of her consciousness', so that '[s]he hardly knew where she was' (333). Again, Tess's body becomes the focus of the alienating effects of modernity, though the alienation here is more assuredly,

literally physical than the loss of faith exemplified in the 'ache of modernism' passage. But if the text often seems to insist on the presence of the signs of contemporary capitalism as alien invasion, pointing up landscape and modern technology as antinomies, elsewhere the natural and the mechanical are connected to or even incorporated within one another. So, for instance, even when working without machines-engaged in what the text marks as traditional 'handlebar' (3Z6)-the movements of Tess and Marian in the swede fields show a 'mechanical regularity' (285), and Tess's binding by hand in the reaping scene 'proceeds with clock-like monotony' (88). Elsewhere, a sparrow calls in 'a sad, machine-made tone' (136). Reversing but complementing this relation of the mechanical and the organic, the train, representative of '[m]odern life' 'stretches out [a] steam feeler' (186); and the sound of the reaping machine is described as a 'ticking like the love-making of a grasshopper' (87). While the text sometimes seems to insist on the disjunctions between nature and machine, at others it suggests an intimate relation. Mark Seltzer's provocative account of modernity (or what he calls, after Thorstein Veblen and other late nineteenth-century commentators, 'machine culture') provides a context for understanding these conflicting tendencies. Seltzer traces across a wide range of nineteenth- and twentieth-century texts the aesthetics and politics of 'the body-machine complex': the uncertain and shifting line in modernity and postmodernity between the natural and the technological, between life process and machine process (Seltzer 1992, 3). In modern and postmodern culture, Seltzer argues, identity is inseparable 'from a rapport with technologies-particularly technologies of writing, reproduction, and information', a development which, as much as it is a source of fascination, also seems 'insupportable and necessary to hold at bay' (Seltzer 1998,37). In Seltzer's account, the disavowal of the

entanglement of human identity with technology is characteristically manifested as 'a representation of a deepening opposition between humanity and machinery at the very moment of their deepest intimacy' (35). The strongly marked oppositions in Hardy between machine and nature, between modernity and traditional rural life ways, might be understood as such a disavowal; for even as these oppositions are marked, the Hardy text suggests the incorporations and involutions of the opposed categories. The critique of modernity is a decisively modern phenomenon and is imagined in the terms which modernity provides: on one side, an insistence on the separateness of body and machine, nature and culture; on the other, a compulsive or 'automatic' conjoining of them. This double movement is, I have argued, particularly focused on Tess, through her embodiment of both modernity and modernity's others, and through her identification as both a product and victim of modernization. Her relation, as a 'daughter of the soil', to the artificial femininity of urban commodity culture provides another important instance of this doubleness. Late in the novel, while living with Alec in the pleasure city of Sand Bourne, and dressed in the glamorous attire he provides, Tess is transformed: Angel finds her 'bewilderingly otherwise' than he expected to see her, '[h]er great natural beauty ... if not heightened, rendered more obvious by her attire' (378). Fleeing with Angel through the countryside after murdering Alec, Tess cannot show herself at an inn because her clothes and parasol are of a 'cut' and 'shape' 'unknown in the retired spot to which they had now wandered' (387); the transformation positions her as an analogue of Sandbourne itself, an 'exotic' specimen of 'glittering novelty' set down in the 'prehistoric' landscape of Egdon Waste (375-376). Dressed in the fashionable garb of the modern metropolis, Tess is now, like other signs of modernity, marked as a conspicuously alien presence in the countryside to which

she was once 'assimilated'. Elsewhere, however, her relation to metropolitan femininity is less definitive and indicative of the novel's uncertain mapping of distinctions between nature and culture. The important instance here is the transformation effected in her appearance by Angel rather than Alec. Although for Angel, at the time of his proposal, Tess seems to come from 'unconstrained Nature, and not from the abodes of Art' (Hardy 1998b, 87), after they are married, when she wears the diamonds that Angel gives her, she is transformed from 'a simple country girl with no pretensions to recent fashion' (296) into a version of the metropolitan beauty from whom she has been previously distinguished: As everybody knows, fine feathers make fine birds; a peasant girl but very moderately prepossessing to the casual observer in her simple condition and attire, will bloom as an amazing beauty if clothed as a woman of fashion with the aids that Art can render; while the beauty of the midnight crush would often cut but a sorry figure if placed inside the fieldwoman's wrapper upon a monotonous acreage of turnips on a dull day. [Angel] had never till now estimated the artistic excellence of Tess's limbs and features. (296)

If 'Art' improves and enhances Tess's beauty here, it is also, in a revealing slippage, located in the body, in the 'artistic excellence' of Tess's 'limbs and features'. Art is both an addition and inherent: again a putative distinction between nature and culture, between the body and its prostheses is troubled even as it is insisted. The tendency of Tess to trouble the distinction between nature and culture even as it is insisted upon is paralleled in the way the related binarism of matter and representation is configured in and around the text. Consider, for instance, the famous passage at the end of Phase the First in which Tess's body is presented at the moment of her rape as a surface 'written upon' by external forces of social injustice, history, or fate:

Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive; why so often the coarse appropriates the finer thus, many thousand years of analytical philosophy have failed to explain to our sense of order. For a certain line of feminist argument, the figure of 'a coarse pattern' traced on Tess's 'beautiful feminine tissue' corresponds to the narrator's, and indeed Hardy's own, implicitly or unconsciously sadistic attitude towards her, an attitude which underlies and undermines the text's explicit defence of and empathy with Tess. According to such readings, the text's tendency to fasten upon Tess's appearance as an aesthetically pleasing and erotically stimulating spectacle—typically through the introduction of a disembodied, hypothetical 'eye'—entails a violation in which the male suitors, the narrator, Hardy, and the (male?) reader are all implicated. Such an understanding of the novel is supported by appeals to the novel's figurations of violence, including, as Penny Boumelha puts it, 'phallic imagery of pricking, piercing and penetration' (1982, 120), which 'provide structuring images for the violence Tess suffers, but also repeat that violence' (121). In psychoanalytically inflected interpretations of the visualization of woman, like the readings of Tess I have been outlining, woman is the passive object of victimization and violence, denied any meaningful agency or subjectivity. In Laura Mulvey's classic formulation of this dynamic, woman is marked as 'bearer, not maker of meaning' (1989, 15). Diverse metaphorical and narrative elements of Tess indicate correspondences with this conventional representation of femininity. Tess is presented as inert matter (an 'exterior over which the eye might have roved as over a thing scarcely percipient, almost inorganic' [Hardy 1998b, 280]) upon which various agencies of patriarchy do their work. She is a *tabula rasa*, 'blank

as snow' (74) who, in Angel's condescending notion, 'catches up' ideas 'by rote' (126). The fact that she ventriloquizes Angel's religious scepticism to Alec, giving 'Clare's accent and manner with reverential faithfulness' (321) and acting as a medium or mimic of male knowledge, is another key piece of evidence here. And, as many critics have noted, the text's omissions of her narratively significant actions—such as her confession of her 'fall' and the killing of Alec—compound the sense of her passivity. Tess is thus positioned as the object of combined erotic and epistemophilic impulses. Manifesting a classic paradox of gender representation, Tess's blankness does not preclude, but in fact incites, or at least contributes to, her status as an object of fascination. Congruent with such accounts of Tess's victimization by patriarchal interests and desires, the 'meanings' of Tess which I traced in the first part of this chapter could similarly be read as impositions: as a mobile metaphor caught in an androcentric system of meaning, Tess represents a multifaceted 'take' on the momentous cultural and social shifts collected together under the rubric of 'modernity'. But contrasting with interpretations which emphasize Tess's passivity and, indeed, often coexisting with them—is a perception that Tess is in important respects unknowable and autonomous, somehow eluding the grasp of Hardy, her suitors, and her readers.¹⁰ Tess's elusiveness was, of course, experienced by Hardy himself; in a well-known letter, he wrote, 'I have not been able to put on paper all that she is, or was, to me' (Hardy 1978-88, 245). Reconsideration of the passage which closes Phase the First, I want to suggest, may help finesse the intimations of 'agency' which appear in such accounts of Tess. The work of Vicki Kirby on Derridean 'arche-writing' or 'writing in the general sense' is productive for my analysis here. Much deconstructive criticism takes writing in this general, unrestricted sense to mean the wholesale capture and mediation

of extra-discursive reality by human language. By contrast, Kirby argues that a sensitive reading of Derrida's texts discloses that writing in the general sense includes materiality: the materiality of nature as well as the materiality of culture. The implications of such an extended notion of writing are considerable. While systems of Western thought tend to locate culture, mind, and technology on one side of an impermeable divide, and nature, the body, and matter on the other, Derrida's theory encourages us to think of this divide as an enfolding, meaning that the properties conventionally assigned to one side cannot be arrested there. Kirby argues that 'if materiality is a type of "writing" wherein difference is its defining force, then ... objects are entirely permeable to what we describe as culture and the transformational plasticity that identifies the latter must also inhabit the former' (56). The 'tissue of the body' is included in 'the sensible textile of an "arche-writing"' (56); no longer passive matter which is written upon by culture, the body itself is also writing-articulate and mutable. My reading of the passage from Phase the First responds to a curious parallel between it and one of Kirby's 'illustrations' of the complexities of Derridean textuality. My argument, which might seem initially to be based on mere and perhaps rather far-fetched-coincidence, is intended to demonstrate, once more, the affinities and involvements between Hardy's aesthetic practice and current anti-anthropocentric critical practices. The coincidence or parallel I have in mind involves Hardy's figure of an inscription on Tess's body and the historically proximate medical fascination with dermatographism—that is, the practice by late nineteenth-century physicians of inscribing words and designs on the inflamed skin of (generally female) hysterical patients, a practice well documented in the photographic records of Jean Martin Charcot's Salpêtrière Hospital, as well as in other late nineteenth-century medical publications.¹¹ The

inscribed hysterical body, Kirby argues, unsettles orthodox understandings of cause and effect, as well as the usual view of the female body as inexpressive ground upon which meaning is overlaid. The agency or authorship involved in the dermatographic text is indeterminate, as it depends upon the involvement of both patient and doctor: 'Who wrote this text? Where do we locate its beginning, the act through which it is figured, the intention that sees it realized? How is this dumb, intoxicated body able to illustrate its subject pOSition, enact its passivity, and sentence itself?' (58-59). Kirby's account of the hysterical body-simultaneously writing itself and written upon-contextualizes a reading of Derrida's dictum, 'there is no outside of text', as denoting 'an inseparability between representation and substance that rewrites causality': 'It is as if the very tissue of substance, the ground of Being, is this mutable intertext-a "writing" that both circumscribes and exceeds the conventional divisions of nature and culture' (61). It might seem preposterous to suggest that Tess, a mere textual body, has the kind of 'agency' ascribed to the hysterical body by Kirby here. Isn't Tess-isn't literature-pure representation, cultural through and through in a way that actual bodies are not? What critical value is to be gained by drawing out this parallel between the representation of Tess and actual hysterical bodies? Such anticipated dismissals of the potency of Tess-asrepresentation, I want to suggest, foreclose the potency of representation which postmodernist criticism is otherwise routinely pleased to invoke. Arresting agency on the side of the representer and denying it to the represented is characteristic of the culturalist critical operation that Seltzer calls the 'containment thesis'. The containment thesis 'conserves the familiar, and axiomatic, oppositions between the natural and the artifactual, matter and representation, the real and its substitutes', correlates of the basic opposition 'between the life process

and the machine process: between bodies and technologies' (1998, 37). Seltzer argues that this analytic habit 'reduces mimesis or simulation or mediation to a distancing or loss of the real, and reduces the contagious relations between bodies and reproductive technologies to a distanced or voyeuristic representation', a tendency only most readily apparent in theories, such as Mulvey's influential one, 'that programmatically reduce modes of seeing to a form of panoptic or voyeuristic objectification' (37). As Seltzer puts it in a slightly different context, such critical accounts, in their 'repression of the corporealities and materialities of simulation, representation, and image', reinstall and reinforce the 'image/body dualism', which is in fact 'directly under pressure' in modern and postmodern culture (1998, 176, n. 17). For Hardy, the sense of Tess's autonomy was inextricable from his intense investment in her. Noting that Hardy 'obscurely identified himself with [Tess]', J. Hillis Miller comments that the reader 'here encounters an example of that strange phenomenon in which a male author invents a female protagonist and then falls in love with her, so to speak, pities her, suffers with her, takes her to his bosom' (1982a, 119). Attending to the chiasmic identifications of body as text and text as body which inform both the novel proper and its prefaces, Susan David Bernstein has produced perhaps the most detailed and theoretically sophisticated account of Hardy's identification with and cathexis onto Tess. Noting that the *Life* supplies evidence that Hardy 'bore criticism of his writing almost as bodily insults' (1993, 167), Bernstein argues that the metaphors of assault and dismemberment through which Hardy, in the prefaces, recounts the facts of the novel's censorship and its hostile critical reception serve to navigate Hardy's 'identity with his text into a position analogous to Tess's body': these metaphors, that is, 'replicate the violent acts around which the plot [of the novel] is wound, tightening an

association between Hardy and Tess, between the writer's and the woman's bodies' (162). Thus we can understand Tess as not just written, and not just written upon, but also as 'rewriting' her own creator in a scenario consonant with Kirby's Derridean interrogation of causality, according to which 'an image could be said to rewrite the image-maker in a movement of production that disrupts the temporal determination of what comes first' (1997,6). What Seltzer describes as 'the contagious relations between bodies and reproductive technologies'-including the technology of writing-is here demonstrated in Tess's 'infection' of her own author with her own being. In Seltzer's terms, such a phenomenon is congruent with our historically specific situation in modernity and post modernity as regimes of simulation in which relations between 'reality' and 'representation' are so intimate that their differentiation is under question. For Kirby, the two-way traffic between image and image-maker attests to an inseparability of matter and representation that is not historically specifiable but which in fact generates history itself. The conflicting perspectives offered by Seltzer and Kirby, two of the authorities who have presided over the movement of this essay, attest to a tension in my own argument, between a reading of texts that foregrounds their historicity, and a reading of texts for significances that point beyond their historical circumstances-a tension that I hope might be recognized as productive. Literary studies has come to deploy culturalism so habitually that the acuity of its arguments has been somewhat dulled; but a revitalization of critical energies will not, of course, be brought about by a wholesale abandonment of the cultural focus but by an alertness to the foreclosures and limitations of that focus.

4.11 Hardy's Symbolism

It could be argued that the comparison between Tess and the hunted birds is rather obvious and laboured, that Hardy is ramming a message down our throats. Similarly, some readers might suggest that Hardy's symbolism is heavy-handed: he mentions the blood on the plumage of the birds. From the moment Tess's horse is killed in an accident at the beginning of the novel, Hardy constantly returns to this image of blood, in particular the shedding of the blood of the innocent. That is the negative response to this passage. I prefer, however, to take a positive approach, and what I would suggest is that those who criticize Hardy just pick up the ideas and do not pause long enough to consider the extraordinary quality and delicacy of the writing. What strikes me here, and I am sure that this is true throughout the novel, is the concrete and visual force of everything presented. The abstract theme in the novel is how Tess suffers as a consequence of the moral views of the society in which she lives. But Hardy constantly presents a physical sense of Tess as a tangible person physically experiencing assaults and misuse. When Alec and Angel mistreat her, writes less about her thoughts than how their cruelty is revealed in her appearance. In the same way, what, to me, transforms this passage from a simple protest to something vivid and powerful is the way that Hardy sticks with and describes fully the physical suffering of the animals, and their appearance. This is obviously emotionally involving, but it also seems to fit in with the whole tenor of his theme in the novel: we are made to feel that the world of feelings, and instincts, and immediate sense experiences-indeed the whole of natural life-is something that is more immediate, more valuable, and more true than the world of abstract reasoning, and of social philosophies. The text is consistently and insistently concrete and visual in the pictures it presents; this deepens the social protest force of

the work immeasurably, as we not only grasp the points being made, but feel the physical reality of nature and of suffering people. Generally then, what we can reasonably assume to be the case in the novel is that Hardy presents a very physical, strongly visual sense of Tess and nature, and that he will constantly associate Tess with everything natural. Soft, poetic imagery will often be used for Tess and nature, just as hard, prosaic imagery will be used for the social world (in the passage above look at how Hardy describes how the 'prosaic light of the world's active hours had grown strong ... ': in 'prosaic', 'active' and 'strong' the characteristics of the social world are simply but effectively suggested). Rather than elaborate the point in general terms, though, it should prove far more productive simply to look at another passage where nature features prominently. It is again the case that, as nature is always central, just about any passage would do, but I have picked a passage from fairly late in the novel where harvesting is taking place. Traditionally harvesting might seem a joyful time of the year, when mankind and nature are in harmony, but as presented in this scene most of the joy has gone: The old men on the rising straw-rick talked of the past days when they had been accustomed to thresh with flails on the oaken barn-floor; when everything, even to winnowing, was effected by handlebar, which to their thinking, though slow, produced better results. Those, too, on the corn-rick talked a little; but the perspiring ones at the machine, including Tess, could not lighten their duties by the exchange of many words. It was the ceaselessness of the work which tried her so severely, and began to make her wish that she had never come to Flint comb-Ash. [p. 374] The pattern of society and the pattern of nature are again at odds; society has adopted a machine as more efficient and productive, but it seems cruel and life-destroying. It is again the case, however, that what really brings Hardy's idea to life is the physicality of

his description. It is apparent in the way that working on this machine is shown to be physically unpleasant for Tess, so that she is 'perspiring' and severely tried. But it is also there in the way that Hardy consistently presents us with a visual impression of everything. For example, he does not just tell us that things used to be different, but presents us with the picture of the men with flails and 'the oaken barn-floor': we again, therefore, get an impression of an immediate, sensory world. The idea all the time is of a natural shape and order (which was 'slow' and soft-a word such as 'winnowing' suggests its soft quality) which has been supplanted by an imposed, unnatural shape: it is a hard existence- they 'could not lighten their duties' and totally at odds with any natural rhythm of working, as suggested by the idea of 'the ceaselessness of the work' now.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION, SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research is an attempt to study the ecological features and nature symbolism in three of Thomas Hardy's most accomplished novels: *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *The Woodlanders* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*; which are called by literary critics *Novels of Characters and Environment*. The study investigates the issue of environmentalism viewed by the conventional critical literary schools compared to the new vision formed by the school of Ecocriticism as a modern critical approach. It Studies Hardy's major themes in the novels mentioned above, with special emphasis on the causes and effects that derive modern lifestyle to fail to find possible solutions for the current environmental crises.

The importance of this study emerges from the fact that setting of global laws to restrict the continuous violation of environment are proved to be of very limited effect; as it has been said that "Laws are made to be broken". Fortunately, literature can provide the world with new perspectives, which may rekindle our deeper feelings about the powerful bonds we have with the natural world. Ecocriticism, as a new literary school, takes the initiative to clarify the interconnected relationships between nature and culture ; making new cultural bonds between man and environment.

The Analytical – Comparative Critical Method has been applied in this research. The recommendations of the study that it stresses the fact that preservation of our planet cannot simply be enhanced through international conferences and setting of global laws. Rather, that can be achieved through love of nature. Nature writings, including fiction, can well tolerate the responsibility of solving current world environmental problems. Ecocriticism , in this regard, proposes that people should feel and act, not as members , or partners in a particular country, but as members of the planet. Such a notion

should inspire humanity to work together to put an end to the shame of environment degradation.

The researcher illustrates that in a world with deep ecological and environmental crises, novels of such great authors as Thomas Hardy remind readers of rural, idyllic life where man lived in harmony and accord with his environment. Hardy's interest in Romanticism, his support of Darwin's theories, and his concern and involvement in the sympathetic relationship between man and nature, man and animal, and man with man are the manifestations of his ecological consciousness. In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, the researcher clarifies that apart from its love story, the larger portion of the novel concerns the description of nature and rural customs. Hardy's eloquent and elegant emphasis on the values inherent in nature and his Wessex draws a distinction between a pastoral world of Weather and the urban society of Bath. Characters like Gabriel Oak along with others are living in a local ecosystem in which nature plays a major part in their happiness. Upon reflecting on such a harmonious relationship between man and nature in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, readers would be ecologically informed of the values Hardy inspired in them and therefore better contribute to their ecological thinking in the hope of respecting and preserving nature. The researcher aims to analyze Thomas Hardy's novel, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, from the perspective of ecocriticism and study where Hardy's ecological consciousness originates from and how it is represented and interwoven in the characters, setting and plot of the novel. It also focuses on such questions as how Gabriel Oak can be the voice of harmony in nature and what does the portrayal of this character tell us about today's ecological crises? Ecocriticism, a newly found theoretical framework, explores the ways in which how the environment is illustrated in literature and, by so doing, examines and proposes possible solutions concerning our contemporary environmental situation. In an era where a long established rustic order is giving way to the giants of technology and industrial capitalism, there

remains no more appealing vision than that of England's pastoral and green land. In his Wessex, a part real and a part dream country which is the setting for most of his works, Hardy vividly and skillfully describes his vision and longs for the rustic nature of England. He lays stress to the intrinsic values of nature where men establish a harmonious relationship with their environments. Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), one of the well-known Victorian realistic writers, was born in Dorset, England, and found himself confronted with poverty and life's cruelties. He started his literary career with poetry but gained fame as a novelist. Hardy has always been praised for his descriptive, local language and his depiction and regard of natural surroundings he artfully employed in his works, especially in his major novels. His portrayal of class struggles, love, marriage, friendship, the problem of time, and the question of human existence are themes implied from his novels and mostly dealt with when critics discuss his works. Previous studies have undertaken the task analyzing Hardy's oeuvres in light of ecocriticism and mainly focused on *The Return of the Native* and *The Woodlanders*, among his other novels or they illustrated the idea of ecological holism in the relationship between two of his novels. For instance, ecocritics in *The Return of the Native* observed that man is in conflict with nature and each character reacts differently toward it. They, further, examined the ways in which nature portrayed and humanized in the novel in a way that how its inherent values contribute to ecological thinking. In a different vein, this research aims to carry out a close analysis of *Far from the Madding Crowd* by itself on the basis of ecocritical principles. Before delving into the main discussion, a brief history and application of ecocriticism school of thought along with Hardy's Wessex and ecological consciousness are provided for better understanding and proving our claim. In a world with modern sophisticated technologies where the advancement of industrial, agricultural and factory machinery have changed the face and atmosphere of earth, the need for an ideology or movement to support and preserve nature is of high importance. To better understand the traces of this

temerity that human beings have to exploit and mistreat their natural environments, the sources of ecological crises should be taken into account. M. John Britto (2012) outlines the sources of ecological crises into four groups. The first group is based on the notion of classical Greek Humanism considering man to be a rational animal International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences Submitted and therefore superior to other species. The second group goes back to the Descartes philosophy and Cartesian dualism of soul and body. In this dualism, unlike humans, animals lack soul and therefore this deficiency makes them inferior to humans. The third group showing the superiority of human beings over other species is the concept of the Great Chain of Being which creates a hierarchy of importance starting with God at the top and reaching to animals and inanimate objects at the lowest point. Moreover, human beings in the middle of this hierarchy are superior to animals and natural, inanimate world. The fourth group is the anthropocentric view that regards man as the central element of the world [1, p.721-722]. These ideas have compelled human beings to be superior and egotistic with little care to the preservation of nature or the rights of other species. Green studies, environmentalism, and ecocriticism are all related schools that, more or less, protect the environment from men's exploitations and struggle to make people aware of the ecological crises and create a harmonious relationship between nature and human society. Grey Garrard (2004) in his book *Ecocriticism* states that:

The notion of ecocriticism has proceeded from, and fed back into, related belief systems derived from Eastern religions, such as Taoism and Buddhism, from heterodox figures in Christianity such as St Francis of Assisi (1182–1286) and Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955), and from modern reconstructions of American Indian, pre-Christian Wiccan, shamanistic and other 'primal' religions [2, p. 22].

Having had such a rooted history, the term ecocriticism is first coined by William Rueckert in 1978 and defined as "the application of ecology and

ecological concepts to the study of literature” [3, 1996, p. 107]. Furthermore, Glotfelty (1996), in his introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader*, defined ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” [3, p. XVIII]. Ecocriticism has a close affinity with the science of Ecology. Based on the *Oxford Learner’s Dictionary* Ecology is “the relation of plants and living creatures to each other and to their environment” [4]. In other words, ecology explains the interconnectedness of human beings and natural environment. Likewise, critics show great interests between the relationship of the men and their environments and the ways this relationship illustrate in literature. First defined by Joseph W. Meeker (1997), the term literary ecology refers to "the study of biological themes and relationships which appear in literary works. It is simultaneously an attempt to discover what roles have been played by literature in the ecology of the human species" [5, p. 9]. Human beings depend on nature for such basic needs as air, food, and water as much as nature depends on them. Hence, this symbiotic relationship between man and nature, along with everything else in it, flourishes and secures when man identifies the environmental issues and strives to amend them for the sake of nature. In a world of environmental crises, the only solution is to make people consciously aware of ecological predicaments. In other words, the higher people’s level of environmental awareness becomes, the less ecological crises occur. In analyzing a piece of literary work, ecocritics delve into the ways literature treats nature and are in search of answers to such questions as how nature is represented in literature regarding the physical setting of the work, how literature affects man’s relationship to natural environment or are the values inherent in that work of art consistent with ecological thoughts? Richard Kerridge (2001) claims that “ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis” [6, as cited in Garrard, 2004, p. 4]. Consequently, the attempt, here, is to peruse *Far from the Madding Crowd* and dissect such elements of nature that Hardy

consciously selected in writing this novel and see, as mentioned by Kerridge, how he can help environmental crises.

Recommendations

1. More research is needed in the area of ecological writing in literature so long as the world climate is now rapidly deteriorating.
2. Research is also required in the field of urbanization in relation to the writing of other writers as Dickens.
3. Dickens has written a lot about the transformation of ecological features as a result of industrialization.
4. Research is again highly required in the issue of environmentalism viewed by the conventional critical literary schools.
5. One such issue that requires to be pinpointed with special emphasis on the causes and effects that derive modern lifestyle to fail to find possible solutions for the current environmental crises.

Suggestions

The area of ecological criticism is broad enough for investigation by as many researchers as possible. This is a virgin ground in literary criticism so it is suggested that future researchers' attention be drawn to investigate it. Novelists from Latin America have particularly made such great contribution in the field of ecology.

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