

"Natural Forces and Human Fates: Thomas Hardy's Landscape Depictions and Character Relationships in 'Far From the Madding Crowd' and 'Tess of the d'Urbervilles'"

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Abstract

This research explores the examination of physical spaces, in Thomas Hardy's novels *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Far from the Madding Crowd* to understand how time and space interact within works. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* Hardy effectively employs the landscape of Wessex as a chronotope to emphasise Tess's journey. This expansive and timeless setting represents Tess's confinement within her predetermined role, as a woman, restricted by expectations and an oppressive patriarchal system. The rural landscape serves as both a space that symbolises the beauty and limitations of Tess's existence ultimately shaping her decisions and encounters. In *Far From the Madding Crowd* Hardy skillfully contrasts the urban landscapes to delve into the gender dynamics that were prevalent during the era. The rural surroundings, where Bathsheba Everdene resides, depict a world dominated by men and farming, forcing her to navigate against expectations. Hardy sheds light on the impact of setting on characters' identities, decisions, and experiences by examining how landscapes and gendered spaces are depicted which offers insightful knowledge about the social structures and power relations of the Victorian age.

Keywords: Physical spaces, Chronotope, Gender dynamics, rural landscapes.

The Renaissance and the arrival of modernity associated with the birth of the notion landscape, across the continent Europe in the fifteenth century. The term "landscape," which was coined by Dutch painters to describe drawings of inland outdoor or rural scenery, gave rise to the modern version of the word with its implications of scenery in the latter part of the sixteenth century. The term "landscape" was originally used by Dutch painters and was first documented in 1598. It is not enough for us to limit the idea of the landscape to cooperative efforts between the fields of geography, architecture, sociology, and ecology. Because the landscape has multiple elements, including social, mental, and cultural, in addition to its physical reality. Therefore, certain researchers aim to obtain a thorough understanding of the environment by proposing methods that cross boundaries between disciplines and use integrative strategies, covering everything from the human and natural sciences to the arts. By introducing existentialism and

phenomenology, certain modern philosophers, such as Hegel Husserl and Heidegger, have split the bipolar group of phenomena into objective and subjective categories. "Heidegger proposes a topological model for thinking about the relationship between people and the landscape as a matter of the 'thereness' of the self-disclosure of Being in and of the world" (Tilley, 1994). The natural world and the surrounding environment have a significant influence on the encounters and dispositions of the people in Thomas Hardy's Wessex books. Through engaging his characters in the rich and vast countryside of Wessex, Hardy effectively communicates the mutual dependence of mankind and the natural world. Hardy's fascination with the development of English and European art practically runs throughout his life, and he frequently shows indications of his admiration in his works of literature. In truth, the link between Hardy's works and the field of visual art is obvious and has been thoroughly studied. He regularly depicts images using scenic techniques, allowing readers to see them in their imaginations. Hardy is skilled at using light and colour to create the environment in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*; as a result, his description of landscape is very visual. In a landscape painting, the use of light, colour, and angles highlights the stunning beauty of the sceneries. The most noticeable feature in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* at the start is the concreteness of the scenery described. Hardy employs a panoramic perspective of an observer who views the area to present the Vale of Blackmoor as the "most part untrodden as yet by tourist or landscape-painter" Hardy applies a traveller's panoramic vision to see the landscape. Here is a wonderful scene with hills, plains, and valleys: "Behind him the hills are open, the sun blazes down upon fields so large as to give an unenclosed character to the landscape, the lanes are white, the hedges low and plashed, the atmosphere colourless. Here in the valley the world seems to be constructed upon a smaller and more delicate scale; the fields are mere paddocks, so reduced that from this height their hedgerows appear a network of dark green threads overspreading the paler green of the grass. The atmosphere beneath is languorous, and is so tinged with azure that what artists call the middle-distance partakes also of that hue, while the horizon beyond is of the deepest ultramarine... Such is the Vale of Blackmoor".(Hardy14) The depiction of the scenery is vibrant and comprehensive, with a variety of light and colour used. The abundance of colour here, including the "dark green" hedgerows and "paler green" grass, highlights a layered impression of multiple life forms, adding to the realistic appearance. *J. B. Bullen's The Expressive Eye: Fiction and Perception in the Work of Thomas Hardy* (1986) focuses on the relationship between the visual arts and human emotions in Hardy's literature. Bullen indicates that J. M. W. Turner's paintings might be an essential source of inspiration for the effects of light and colour in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* landscape description. Turner was a brilliant English landscape painter known for his use of a multicoloured palette and sweeping atmospheric splashes of paint. Turner's paintings of landscapes, with regard to painting qualities, are primarily concerned with expressing an overall image of landscape, giving special focus to the impacts of light and mood. As a result, Hardy's landscape approach shows him as the student of various masters but the most prominent is Turner. His resemblance in romantic style isn't restricted to this work. Scholars say of Hardy's other work, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Turner's name has come to be associated with Victorian-era landscape painting, and his paintings show man's powerlessness compared to the romance and glory of the natural world. In this regard, he is extremely identical to Thomas Hardy. In another instance we see as Tess attempts to begin her new life at the Talbothays Dairy, she stands upward and looks out over the gorgeous landscape "These myriads of cows stretching

under her eyes from the far east to the far west outnumbered any she had ever seen at one glance before. The green lea was speckled as thickly with them as a canvas by Van Alsloot or Sallaert with burghers. The ripe hues of the red and dun kine absorbed the evening sunlight, which the white-coated animals returned to the eye in rays almost dazzling, even at the distant elevation on which she stood". (Hardy 150) There is also an element of Impressionism art in his landscape depictions. When Tess accepts Clare's proposal, the countryside looks like this: "They saw tiny blue fogs in the shadows of trees and hedges, all the time that there was bright sunshine elsewhere. The sun was so near the ground, and the sward so flat, that the shadows of Clare and Tess would stretch a quarter of a mile ahead of them, like two long fingers pointing afar to where the green alluvial reaches abutted against the sloping sides of the vale". (Hardy 129)

The depiction of "tiny blue fogs," "bright sunshine," and "shadows of Clare and Tess" all portray a lovely afternoon setting. Because they are drunk in love, the light and colour feel magical. Blue light and shadow are classic impressionist characteristics, as shown in Claude Monet's artwork "Impression, Sunrise" (1872), which is filled with blue green light and shade. Studying Hardy's landscape portrayal is similar to viewing an impressionist painting in the same sense as how he describes the green alluvial reaches abutted against the sloping sides of the vale.

Hardy, as a writer and poet, not just possesses the temperament of a poet, but also the eyes of a painter. His works are filled with beautiful charm, which exhibit numerous painting techniques, and have a direct connection to the situations in which he wrote this novel, in addition to the execution of colour and light. According to Hardy, all artworks have an essential core. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, he has a unique literary style combined with scenic tactics. This style of writing also suggests his own aesthetic beliefs. "The beauty of association is entirely superior to the beauty of aspect, and a beloved relative's old battered tankard to the finest Greek vase" (Norman 9). This suggests that Hardy promotes personal perception in aesthetic judgments instead of traditional values accepted by all schools or societies. A multidisciplinary strategy has been brought to light by the research of the picturesque in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

The novels' storylines are influenced by the natural world, which serves as both a setting and a driving force, shaping the characters' motives, choices, and results. Hardy portrays the beauty, strength, and unpredictable aspect of nature via his poetic and evocative style, emphasising the transforming and sometimes catastrophic effects of nature on his protagonists' lives. Many of these works, situated in the imaginary Wessex area, employ landscapes and wildlife to examine emotions among people, friendships, and societal issues. Hardy uses nature to represent his protagonists' state of mind, landscapes mirror their own internal turmoil, anxiety, violence, wishes, desires or disputes, and how nature acts as a background for passionate relationships or societal problems. His writings are widely admired for such strong connections and representation of the natural environment in the novels he wrote. The characters and surroundings of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* mimic each other. Hardy's passion for land comes from the fact that the novel's settings are mainly encountered in person by Hardy, who was born in Dorset. Here are his wonderful childhood and calm life memories. As a result, Tess is initially in perfect balance with her homeland, which contains aesthetic beauty as well as emotional sentiments. Tess originates from a world that originates in the lovely countryside near Marlott.

She travels to The Slopes to "claim kin," and the setting is elegant and traditional, but also developed for example, the new home where she anticipated to discover a familiar one. Tess finds her ultimate satisfaction in Talbothays, which is lush with life, a shade of green and fertile. Flintcomb-Ash, on the contrary, is a desolate place not even cared for by its own residents. The sky and Earth are both pale and colourless that reflects the hardness of the labour and Tess' existence. Furthermore, the backdrop in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* reflects the scenario for example, Tess's trip from Marlott to Trantridge involves her leaving behind her early innocence in favour of a harsh reality dictated by societal norms. In contrast to the darker aspects of Alec D'Urberville's estate when Tess returns home shortly after getting seduced by Alec d'Urberville and sacrificing her youth to him, she notices traces of rebuke in the environment relating to what happened to her. "The midnight airs and gusts, moaning amongst the tightly-wrapped buds and bark of the winter twigs, were formulae of bitter reproach".(Hardy224) The environment gets haunted in this scenario, and Tess's image gets objectified as a visual aspect. Tess's misery derives from persuasion and exploitation. The picturesque Talbothays Dairy farm represents a fresh beginning for Tess, where she meets Angel Clare and finds love and happiness. In *Far from the Madding Crowd* Hardy uses vivid pictures to portray the characters' fluctuating moods and feelings, the Weatherbury Farm, which Bathsheba Everdene inherited, represents both her growing power and the alteration of natural areas as a result of her decisions on farm management. Hardy acknowledges the vital relationship between humans and their environment in his autobiography *Early life of Thomas Hardy*, emphasising the importance of this connection in forming our understanding of the landscape. Hardy asserts that "an object or mark raised or made by man on a scene is worth ten times that of unconscious Nature." "As a result, clouds, mists, and mountains are insignificant in comparison to the wear on a threshold or the print of a hand'. the novel's depictions of nature—such as the "insipid" beauty of spring, which symbolises Fanny's fleeing from dignity, and the harsh winter that coincides with Troy's reappearance in the story—effectively capture the emotions of the characters and intensify the tensions. Hardy's writings are filled with vivid representations of landscapes that are natural that inspire strong emotional reactions from his characters. This has two purposes: it immerses audiences in the fully constructed realm of Wessex while also allowing him to demonstrate essential parts of his characters' state of mind through how they engage with their environment. In "*Tess of the d'Urbervilles*," for example, Tess' hikes across the beautiful Blackmore Vale reflects her innocence and her optimism for a new life. Her latter adventure to the lonesome Egdon Heath, on the other hand, reflects her sadness and misery after her traumatic events. Bathsheba, in "*Far from the Madding Crowd*," has infatuation with Sergeant Troy takes place in a fern-filled valley where he lives like an outlaw, the surroundings serving as an imagery for their reckless and fatal connection. Nature is more than just a passive witness of the characters' emotions; it actively shapes the path of occurrences. The weather, storms, and the changing nature of the seasons all act as triggers for dramatic transformations in the relationships or shared dynamics between the characters. a feeling of belonging or gratitude to a given area or environment is one major issue to address in Hardy's Wessex novels. This relationship has an impact on many parts of a character's sense of self, such as their status in society, emotional psychological well-being, and individual beliefs. In "*Far from the Madding Crowd*," for instance, Bathsheba Everdene's attachment to her ancestral land develops her into a self-sufficient, determined woman who rejects traditional norms. The landscape's empathy impact strengthens her ambition to be

successful in handling her farm on her own. Characters who are striving against their environment as a whole, on the other hand, frequently encounter difficulties that reflect their own personal struggles. Tess Durbeyfield's terrible fate in *"Tess of the d'Urbervilles"* is linked not just to her bad circumstances in society, but also to the harsh landscape she lives in. Her trip across bleak landscapes corresponds to her emotional struggle and anticipates her final tragedy. These encounters with nature highlight the protagonists' struggles with emotions, functioning as triggers for dramatic transformations in their lives. The importance of the natural environment in Thomas Hardy's Wessex books is crucial not just in terms of location, but also as a moral force in the everyday lives of the protagonists. Nature takes on the role of supreme justice and mediator, directing the fate of people who live in its domain. Hardy portrays nature as a mighty force that determines our thoughts and judgments. People who function in accordance with natural principles are frequently rewarded, whereas those who blatantly disregard them experience repercussions. This is shown in *"Tess of the d'Urbervilles,"* as Tess' transgression of societal conventions results in her terrible end. Despite the fact that she was innocent, her resistance to conform to cultural standards puts her at disagreement with the environment, leading to her death.

It's also interesting noting the amount of times Hardy connects morally immoral individuals with urbanisation or industrialization. Those who cherish financial prosperity and social prestige frequently despise rural living and have an unstable connection with nature. This sense of conflict implies that a detachment from nature might result in psychological decline. On the reverse side, true kind hearted individuals like Gabriel Oak from *"Far from the Madding Crowd"* have a harmonious connection with nature, highlighting the significance of living in peace with the surroundings.

Another important element we see in the texts is symbolism of nature Hardy uses significant symbolism in his images of nature to capture the rustic and pastoral charm of the fictional place and to reflect the intricate connection that his people have with their surroundings. Oak trees, a sign of strength, occur three times in the text. The first oak tree, which occurs in the very first description of Tess's birthplace, establishes the novel's dim tone and demonstrates the courage Tess is going to need. Then, after Tess' critical rape, oak trees arrive. The presence of oaks reinforces the disappointing tone of the previous scene and hints that this scenario is, in reality, a rape because the rape is not clearly mentioned. "above them rose primeval yews and oaks of The Chase.. But, might some say, where was Tess's guardian angel?" (Hardy 77). Tess relies on her own inner power, symbolized by the oak, to survive the rape and accepts her new place in society. When oaks appear for the third time, they warn Tess regarding her new marriage to Angel. The newlyweds drive to a lodge to celebrate their wedding, and there they encounter a messenger. He informs them about three girls Tess knew who had fallen in love with her husband. The informer leaves, Angel shuts the door and locks it with "a massive oak bar" (Hardy 219). The mood in the cabin has already switched from joy to regret. The oak represents Tess's upcoming difficulties in telling Angel about her rape and lost child. The oak also represents a reminder; Angel rejects Tess when she is honest with him and thinks they must live apart. Tess's need for courage is symbolised by oak trees, which presage the difficult years ahead of her. Thomas Hardy employs many symbols in *"Far from the Madding Crowd"* to reveal the novel's deeper significance. First and foremost, the title itself is significant. The term means that the

rural village residents have better lives than the city folks. They are comfortable, quiet, and joyful. They are far apart from the "madding crowd" of metropolitan civilization. The incident of the huge storm that threatens Bathsheba allows the author to compare Gabriel Oak's stubbornness with Troy's reckless immorality.

Hardy's Wessex books utilise environment and landscape on a deeper level than only as background setting. The natural world is depicted as an evolving force that strongly impacts both the everyday lives of the characters and the plots' general course. The brilliant landscapes and mesmerising beauty seen in Thomas Hardy's Wessex books have a function beyond mere aesthetic appeal.

Conclusion

In examining Thomas Hardy's masterful utilization of landscape in his novels *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Far from the Madding Crowd*, it becomes evident that nature serves as far more than mere backdrop. Instead, it emerges as a dynamic force that is intricately intertwined with the lives, emotions, and destinies of his characters. Through the rich tapestry of rural landscapes, Hardy infuses his narratives with layers of symbolism, reflecting the inner struggles, aspirations, and fates of his protagonists. Through his nuanced portrayal of nature, Hardy invites readers to contemplate the profound connections between humans and their environment. The landscapes become a mirror for the characters' inner landscapes, revealing their hopes, fears, and desires. Moreover, Hardy's use of nature as a symbolic language adds depth and complexity to his narratives, enriching the emotional resonance of his stories. Hardy, especially in *The Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Far from the Madding Crowd*, showed the influence of landscape on human which becomes the life by itself. The landscape is marked in the detailed descriptions and keen observations as more than just a background. It reminds the feelings of self. This encompasses the following: landscape is a powerful theme in his books, fate and social change being among it, and the struggle between man and nature is another one. Ultimately, using the landscape, Hardy intensifies characterization in his novels.

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