

## The Representation of Nature and Man in Thomas Hardy's Selected Works

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### Abstract

*This research aims to discover the thematic relationship between land, writing, man and nature in the selected literary works of Thomas Hardy. Hardy's treatment of nature reveals the foundations of thinking that has contributed to our contemporary environmental crisis. Hardy shares affinity philosophically reconstructing culture through presenting the truth value of literary art and nature in the heart of natural elements and images. As a reaction against a mechanized and materialized society that politically values technological advancements and expositions, self-consciously Hardy portrays the naked truth of nature and land and the place of man. Hardy has distinctively portrayed nature, having his own unique style and perspective in his writing. Analyzing Hardy's work helps learning about the Victorian social and ecological criticism on the man-environment linkage that could be biologically and psychologically intriguing and strange when it comes to the question of placing man in the world. The research will show how someone like Hardy portrayed his nature consciousness through a mere portrayal of any harmony or disharmony of man with his environment. Hardy encourages the notion that setting is an essential and central element in human life which consciously or unconsciously has direct impact on their life. Discussing different characters and their different qualities and the roles the characters are given in relation to the natural world surrounding them is immensely important to understand the man-environment linkage. Not only in his novels, but also in his poetry Hardy portrays the representation of man's true place in nature and the significant of such representation in human life.*

**Keywords:** Land, Nature, Environment, Writing, Man.

## Introduction

Nineteenth century England in the mid to late experienced radical changes socially and culturally when industrial revolution and machinery transformed almost everything. Industrial factories changed the way of production and were reflected in the literary works (Sussman 336). Creative writing and the art of novel writing and wonder and imagination of representation of life has been a great part of Victorian community which has also had a crucial role in a realistic portrayal of Victorian life having a major role in the construction of individual and national identity (Childers, *Fiction of Resolution in Three Victorian Novels* 2). Among many other Victorian writers, Hardy's style and approach to human being, culture and environment is different. Thomas Hardy's poetry and fiction, almost unlike other contemporary writers, portrays a different perspective on nature that has less to do with industrialization, pollution, or an idealized and romantic like representation of it; signifying his concern about human place and the relationship between man and land. His writing style has a dramatic representation of a new world different from the Victorian; the world and the people are in search exploring and trying to have an understanding of an increasingly bewildering world. Hardy deals with concepts such as (Human and nature conflict, fate, human condition, mutability and death, the self-versus nature, and the fragmented experiences of man). Such perspective presented him differently in a conformed society towards culture and religion. The function of the physical world, its elements, and its relationship with human being are among the major thoughts in Hardy's writing. His regional writings can greatly reflect his universal insights on the place and role of man in the ecosystem. His contemplation and experience of his life time in rural areas can better be seen in his writing as a unique production and medium that is timeless.

## Major Questions

This paper discusses Thomas Hardy's poem *Darkling Thrush*, his novel *The Return of the Native* (1884) (Henceforth *RN*) and provide a literature review of his fictional region of Wessex in Hardy's fictions and explores setting and place in his perspective along with highlighting his other literary works. The essential questions are as follows:

- How has Hardy discussed nature and its relationship with man? Why?
- Does setting has an impact on man both consciously and unconsciously? How? Why?
- How has Hardy portrayed the relationship between the setting Egdon Heath and the major characters? Why? What is the significance of such representation?
- How is the image of man shown in nature in *Darkling Thrush*?
- How does Hardy emphasize and echo certain human values with the elements of nature?

## Wessex, *The Return of The Native*, man and nature

Living and writing about his place of living in the south-western is unique as his concentration on the rural environment "depicted with sympathy, appreciation and humor as well as his characteristic sense of tragic potentiality" that "portrayed culture and predominately rural and prehistoric times" (Gatrell 205, 19). Wessex is a historical term defining the southwest regions after the medieval Anglo-

Saxon kingdom (Williams “a preface to Hardy” 64). Hardy has lived the experience of the rural, refamiliarized certain nature elements, narrated their effects and portrayed their universal values and influences. And thus, they depict his keen observation on setting and the place has given it a universal treatment as fields of action and can present his thoughts of eco-system. Hardy’s Wessex essentially comes to mean “the whole culture-predominately rural and preindustrial” to which Egdon Heath is an example because the Heath wombs a number of characters (Pite 54). Although Alison Byerly’s observation of nature is a wilderness that exists in the absence of human beings and outside the context of humanity it has no meaning, for Hardy nature and culture are in constant contact, mingling and connected. Wessex was based on realities faced in rural life; a partially real and partially fictionalized setting and because of his Wessex regions writings, Hardy for many is known as “the historian of Wessex, the Wordsworth of Dorset” (Pite 2). His choice of Wessex “reflects his primary interest in examining ... the nature of the relationship between man, the community and the environment” (Birch 352). Place and its presence in *Darkling Thrush* and *The Return of the Native* further portrays the contract between characters and their surrounding showing physical and mental presences of nature and land and man.

His love of the natural world and representation of man’s struggle to survive in an indifferent world are among his best quests that make him a key modernist writer as well. Al-Asmar in his paper, “Thomas Hardy and William Wordsworth as a Ruling Power and Instigator”, maintains that:

Hardy’s love of nature is clear from the title of his novels as *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874). These titles indicate the nature-loving aspect of Hardy’s character. In fact, it is one of the major contributions of Hardy to the English novel when he introduced nature so closely in his novels. In his hands, nature becomes almost a character. It dominates the plots and determines the character. It has life; it feels; it speaks; it plays. (55)

Writing and land has become the key elements in Hardy’s intellectual imagination questing an understanding the possible relationship between man and land. Hardy’s choice of “Novels of Character and Environment” reflects his portrayal of interactions between characters and setting “making them equivalent to one another” (Pite 1). For instance, in his description of the Heath, Hardy says, “It was at present a place perfectly accordant with man’s nature ... like man, slighted and enduring” (Hardy 4). Thus in an alien universe, to Hardy the individual is fragile and he wants to reshape truth. His pessimistic view of life better signifies a sense of absurdism and the alienation of man in an indifferent world. Hardy’s insightfulness on human-environment relationship in Egdon Heath identifies his perception of the relationship between two elements that are unextractable (Erchinger 794).

The term ecology and along with it the terms “nature” and “environment” have been used interchangeably throughout the history of modern environmentalist discourse because of the similar contents they share (Dixon 6). John Parham in his essay “Was There a Victorian Ecology?” maintains that the “Victorian writers were incorporating precisely ... scientific ideas that formed ecology” and displayed at least an “intuition of both ecosystems’ theory and sustainability” (158). What one can perceive here is an understanding of the ecological concerns of this author that is the outcome of his

reflection to the study of society and man Along with the Victorian industrial ecology as a contemporary mid-Victorian theory, eco-criticism theory as a modern concept can be applied to the works of Thomas Hardy and the ways people and nature are represented. Hardy can be called proto-eco-critical author because of his concern and analysis of the land-man relationship. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's in their *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996), define ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (xviii).

Additionally, Wessex helped Hardy to portray his characters in environment as "part of the ecology of the chosen area" (Birch 353). Hardy is the keen seer presenting how place is a 'living element' that is comprehensive and universal in man's life and Wessex regions seem to portray "Hardy's conscious skepticism about progress and his hostility to Victorian ideas" that hardly depicted or valued nature (Pite 113). Hardy represents the physical world –Egdon Heath- as wilderness, nature, or mere agricultural and rural setting as it is where the novel takes place; thus, it is as important as any other characters or maybe more important than all as he opens his novel *RN* with the description of Egdon Heath without mentioning any persons' name. Furthermore, the first chapter title "A Face on Which time Makes But Little Impression" indicates the very essence of wilderness and originality of the setting as the Heath has a "wild face" and is "the vast tract of unenclosed wild ... embrowned itself moment by moment" (Hardy 3). Egdon Heath as wilderness signifies "nature in a state uncontaminated by civilization" which is another example of Hardy's landscape reflecting the permanent human condition as it is described as: "Civilization was its enemy; and ever since the beginning of vegetation its soil had worn the same antique brown dress, the natural and invariable garment of the particular formation" (Hardy 6) (Garrand 59). The people on it seem very small in comparison to "vast tract" of Egdon Heath because it is the only thing the characters can see (6). Indeed, Egdon Heath seems to have an omniscient of presence that the characters are constantly aware of its present reality in comparison to their very small being.

Hardy has been under the influences of so many changes in his time and thus his concept of nature as he merged in to most of his novels was influenced by certain tendencies in his lifetime; as Hazel Williams states that Hardy lived in "a period of shifting emphasis in literature and in science, but many social, political and economic changes also occurred during his early youth. Some changes added progress, and some brought anxiety, doubt, and pessimism" (1). Bush noted the following of Hardy in one of his critical works: "The intellectual ideas of the self—educated Hardy — if not his imagination and compassion — started from such emancipators as Mill, Darwin, Spenser, and Essays and Re views" (135). Thus, Bush considers Hardy's novels as Victorian ones. He also states that Hardy's ideas seemed to have a scientific orientation: "Both Hardy's matter and his manner proved welcome to the early decades of our country, and his philosophy appeared to have a special scientific sanction." (135)

The Heath is world of "all the antinomies and idiosyncrasies of the real, larger world" (Vigar 126). It surrounds and incorporates "all the living being of the world of dream and fantasy, of superstition and witchcraft ..." (Hardy 126). This suggests Hardy's interpretation of man and nature that each act on the other, yet Egdon Heath is a world with no secret "no human actions can go unnoticed" (Boumelha 259). The condition of the Heath is "recorded therein as that of Heathy, furzy, briary, wilderness- Bruaria" portraying an untamed place and a symbol of an all-encompassing world (Hardy

6). His view is a realistic perception, though bitter as a reality but interesting and thoughtful, uncovering the universe and the environment being independent and noble in originality. Portraying various cycles in nature uncovers his keen observation of the minute details portrayed. He reveals and demonstrates the myths of growing. The characters are almost all linked to an element of nature if not nature being the only main and dominant being within which the characters live affecting it and affected by it. The destiny of his characters almost lies in their decisions and feelings towards their surroundings. One can infer that the projection of nature and the inner feelings of the characters have layers of understanding the relationship between the inner feelings of the characters and nature and yet nature as the dominant existence within his tales and poems. Humans' consumption in the environment is another crucial aspect apart from its presence that "acknowledges the intricate, inextricable network linking culture and environment" (Bate 559). The novel begins with a sense of separation between man and environment, but, then shows how a sense of connectedness can be achieved through human being challenging and maybe accepting their environment. The Heath is: "the untameable, Ishmaelitic thing that Egdon now was it always had been ... distilled by the sun, kneaded by the moon, it is renewed in a year, in a day, or in an hour. The sea changed, the fields changed, the rivers, the villages, and the people changed, yet Egdon remained" (Hardy 7). Furthermore, nature is starkly different for Hardy:

The nature that Hardy loves is dense with people who underwent its power with either useless or scanty resistance and or futile, while the nature that loved by Wordsworth and imagined is just like the Ideal City of Plato, although his nature is nearly empty of people, that is to say the virgin nature that forms the ideal love to Wordsworth, that took him into its warm lap, and that the people of Wordsworth are considered part of it, unseparated from it, and unable to live without its warm encompassment. (Al-Asmar 56)

Hardy's Egdon Heath depicts the underlying reality of human fate in relation to land and eco-critically, Hardy's only industry among many and unlike his contemporaries is agriculture; "a way of life, unique and irreplaceable in its human and spiritual values" which is his representation in the Heath (Brown 39). The Heath is a dominant element and energizing medium reinforcing the link between man and environment and an eco-critical contemplation about human place consciously or unconsciously. Hardy portrayal of human culture and their interactions with Egdon Heath suggests his ability "to integrate the elements of his work into a natural, agricultural, biological, seasonal background" where people can get their living away from the industrialized world of nineteenth century and not only as a mere romantic stage setting for emotions, but rather "a living soil which nourishes" (Hardy 136, Bulter 51). Hardy combines a portrayal of the primitive life of individuals in tribes and community as well as of modern man and his individualistic sphere to a stage of "the realization of the unity of individual with universal life" (Williams H. 123).

To Hardy, Nature is an existence broadly that provides a linkage between human life and sadness. In "The Voice," the wind's sound is mixed with the lover's voice as the poet stands in a desolate lonely place reflecting the inner mode. This can reveal insightful endeavors of Hardy's politics and morals of a strong connectedness between man and the physical environment. Even in his "The Voice" in which Hardy portrays the death of his wife, he pictures the death of his wife through elements of nature or being as nature; further showing the interconnectedness:

Or is it only the breez, in its listlessness  
Travelling across the wet mead to me here  
You being ever dissolved to wan listlessness  
Heard no more again far or near?

Hardy portrays human being as “leaves around me falling”. Thus, nature portrays the very destiny of man as leaves on the ground dying and decaying.

Historical landmarks also internalize and reserve man’s history of contact with land and the Heath plays the role of a preserver preserving man’s previous historical interactions with his environment. Archaeologically, Hardy creates a union between the ancient and modern world. The Barrow links both literally and materially the layers of past and present a physical spot of both national and universal identity. The narrator mentions “the great Western road of the Romans ... an aged highway, and a still more aged barrow ...” that were not only “remained as the very finger-touches of the last geological change” but also representative of an environment mingled with people (Hardy 8). Eustacia is first seen standing on top of its peak in the beginning of the novel, and later Clym preaches from this same place, using the summit as his platform. The passage of time is indifferent because “on Egdon there was no absolute hour of the day”, thus fundamentally portraying the rooted link between individuals and their environment. (Hardy 152). The narrator better portrays this when he says:

The scene before the reddleman’s eyes was a gradual series of ascents from the level of the road backward into the heart of the Heath ... The traveller’s eye hovered about these things for a time, and finally settled upon one noteworthy object up there. The Rainbarrow is represented as a very crucial spot that combines “continuous human gathering and ritual from the time of ancient British to that of the Heath men (Hardy 12).

Through his half fictional and half historical regions of Wesssex Hardy essentially portrays “a dynamic relationship between England’s material past and Britain’s present” (337). Penny Boumelha in an article “Wild Regions of Obscurity’: Narrative in *The Return of the Native*” maintains that “the invisible, the bodiless, the dead seem to have as much effectively as the living” as the Heath or the Barrow further represent the only setting where most cultural activities take place signifying the notion of man’s rooted connection with environment (Boumelha 256). It is a vast impersonal force of nature and presented as “a touchstone for humanity to live by and make judgments by” and like a man “slighted and enduring” which emphasis man-environment linkage (Butler 51) (Hardy 4). Various characters in *RN* have various interactions with the nature as some fail to live with it while others have made it part of their life living by it. Hardy was influenced by science and particularly Charlse Darwin’s theory of evolution and his *On the Origin of Species* (1859). Thus, Hardy’s work effectively explores “deeper understanding of nature, of our place in it, and ourselves” (Richardson “Hardy and Science” 156). Hardy’s Depiction of man and natural world resonates with Darwin’s idea of human being as a product of a repeated process and how species survive based on how they adapt to their environment (Darwin 33, 41). Eustacia Vye rebels against her life on the Heath and attempts escape from it. Showing the reality of nature can not mean that nature is cruel but exists as it is though being destructive to man as Mrs. Yeobright is destroyed by an adder in a beautiful sunny day. Similarly, in other novels of Hardy, such perspective of nature can be noticed that the nature-human relationship tend to be a corollary of his

more pressing thoughts about the situation of man. Hardy has deeply shown the very fate man faces in contact with nature whether in harmony or in row with it. Manes and William Ruecker further discuss nature as a silenced subject that practises its forces and shifts from “an animistic to a symbolic presence” (17, 113). The existence of all life and the natural elements and their evaluation are as crucial as our understanding of human existence, culture, and the individuals’ lives because of a crucial relationship between human beings and their environment as human being is part of it and defined by the place. Furthermore, “The element of chance or accident is indicative of Hardy’s belief in a cruel, hostile fate. The only persons who are happy in Hardy’s novels are the rustic people who have no desires and aspirations and here he meets with Wordsworth whose belief is the same concerning sadness and happiness of his characters.” (Al-Asmar 57)

For Eustacia, the Heath is a dark, intolerable and empty place as she states: “There is a sort of beauty in the scenery, I know but it is a jail to me” (Hardy 106). She is not separated from the environment and Hardy describes her as "the raw material of a divinity" whose "celestial imperiousness, love, wrath, and fervour had proved to be somewhat thrown away on netherward Egdon" (Hardy 75). Eustacia further says, ‘O, the cruelty of putting me into this ill-conceived world! I was capable of much; but I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control! O, how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all!’(Hardy 420). Eustacia’s state of feeling depicts her unbearable emotions about Egdon Heath, “Extreme unhappiness weighed visibly upon her. Between the drippings of the rain from her umbrella to her mantle, from her mantle to the Heather, from the Heather to the earth, very similar sounds could be heard coming from her lips; and the tearfulness of the outer scene was repeated upon her face” (Hardy 419). The Heath is the unchangeable place of man suggests not only the indifference of natural world to man, but also demonstrates the responsibility of man to understand nature.

Elements of Nature as Characters In Hardy’s novel there are frequent lapses into rigid philosophy of human destiny within the frame of living nature of the Wessex. Nature in Hardy plays an important role in the lives of the characters, for itself nature is a character. His novels are mostly pictures of human being struggling against fate and chance ... Hardy employs nature as a main player in the game of coincidence and human melodrama. Nature in Hardy’s novel is embroidered with pictures of the painful man. The next important point about Hardy’s treatment of nature is that the description of nature is not impersonal. It is not the description of a biologist who would describe nature from outside. In majority of cases of the natural scenery shown to us at any point in a story will be found to have an emotional connection with events happening at that moment. For example, in *Tess of the D’urbervilles* when Clare got up in the morning after having decided to desert Tess, he finds the morning colored almost with the same intentions (Al-Asmar 62)

Although there are rich traditions in all major cultures that have focused on human place and nature, Hardy is one very different novelist when it comes to self-conscious environmentalist attention to literature. Clym revolted against nature, “I hate her already” (Hardy 235). Such feelings unavoidably depict her inseparability from nature and being part of it. Eustacia’s contemplation about the Heath is that it will be “my cross, my shame, and will be my death” and this ironically comes true (Hardy 123).

Damon Wildeve a local innkeeper and Eustacia's lover seems to share her dream of escape and her fate and they manipulate hopes of leaving Egdon Heath in order to achieve a larger existence in Paris, but they become eternal residents when they drown at the end of the novel in Shadwater Weir just before making an escape and her death symbolically seems her return to it "as if she were drawn back to the Barrow by a hand from beneath" (Hardy 220). Mrs. Yeobright, Clym Yeobright's mother, also becomes another victim of environment and dies because she is exhausted by the heat on the way back to her house and is bitten by an Adder; thus, both Eustacia and Mrs. Yeobright are "ceaselessly entangled and thwarted by the external forces" (Chew 55). This emphasizes Hardy's depiction of a strong bond between human beings and nature because death is portrayed as the only escape possible. Hardy's expectation of the environment, then, echoes the qualities each individual offer to his/her surroundings.

Clym Yeobright is one of Hardy's major characters that has an intimate knowledge of the natural features of the Heath and a harmonious relationship with the Heath, becomes absorbed in it and believed to be the "Native" of the novel's title *RN*. Clym is "fully alive" to the beauty of Egdon Heath, but he is also aware of "its oppressive horizontality" which seems to give him "a sense of bare equality with no superiority to a single living thing under the sun" (Hardy 245). The narrator describes him as "a brown spot in the midst of an expanse of olive ..." (201). Clym thus is the strongest impulse of an abandonment of urban life showing his absorbed feeling with the Heath and the notion of man-environment relationship. Such relationship is shown through his feeling of Heath as the "most exhilarating, and strengthening, and soothing" that she also says, "I would rather live on these rather than anywhere else in the world" can better show man's natural connectedness to nature (Hardy 220). Closeness to natural environment and such connection is shown in the assimilation of Clym, who has a good understanding and relationship with nature, to "an insect ... a mere parasite of the Heath, fretting its surface in his daily labor" (Hardy 327). If Clym said to be the product of the Heath, Diggory is literally saturated with it for his skin is impregnated with the materials dug out of earth. Furthermore Oak has a good relationship with the Heath and can read signals and signs of nature and portrayed as a competent interpreter of the Heath. For instance, seeing the large toad, Oak realizes what it means. Venn is portrayed as changing from being physically undesirable (dyed red by his job as a reddleman) to be strong, fit, gentlemanly, and most importantly able to adapt to his environment.

The people of Hardy who were filling nature with their movements, full of tumult of life, humbly went under its heavy foot without resistance, for resisting nature is useless and futile, ... Hardy beware us from nature, for it may stand against us at any time and at any place, as we see Eustacia and her lover Wildeve who were drawn into a deep weir in a harsh and hard weather with no mercy to its protagonists ... Hardy sees the whole heat and poison and death scattered abundantly in nature as we see in the case of Mrs. Yobright, in *The Return of the Native*, who was the victim of a harsh merciless nature, and in the case of Mr. Oak who suffers the failure of his harvest in that Summer. Thus nature to Hardy works silently upon its subjects; it takes them smoothly without warning. Therefore, nature to Hardy stands as that immense unrepentable; untamable and unpredictable monster ... Hardy is not so definite of the good intentions of nature. In his pages, nature is very often indifferent. It has its own ways. It does not care very much for human happiness. At the most, it shows sympathy with people in difficulties than with happy



ones. But at the same time, it will be unfair to say that Hardy has always seen nature in his black binocular and through its sharp claws (Al-Asmar 81)

What Hardy presents is a truth naked as the winter he presents in “Darkling Thrush”. Nature is functioning, existing and flowing as an indifference force on its own track. Human being can stop it and change its direction. A stone doesn’t stop from falling unless one stops it. This reality Hardy presents is in fact a truth in the form of fiction or literature has been a unique medium to represent this truth. As Emily Dickenson maintains “Tell all the truth but tell it slant” since “The Truth’s superb surprise as lighting to the children eased/ with explanation kind”, thus “The truth must dazzle gradually/ or every man be blind” (). The Various incidents happening in the novel carry similar meaning to the reality and the truth on nature as Dickenson portrays.

**The Darkling Thrush - Poem by Thomas Hardy**

I leant upon a coppice gate,

When Frost was spectre-gray,

And Winter's dregs made desolate

The weakening eye of day.

The tangled bine-stems scored the sky

Like strings of broken lyres,

And all mankind that haunted nigh

Had sought their household fires.

Hardy has dedicated the entire poem to a bird “Darkling Thrush”. Entitling the poem after the bird signifies the weight of emphasis Hardy has put on nature. The first two parts of the poem is almost a background that Hardy portrayed in details. It is a scene of a winter evening; pictorial, realist and detailed. The Thrush is the one key character. Personified as “he”, the bird is the game changer, a different tone and a character that has astonished the speaker of the poem or “Hardy” himself. Hardy or the “I” speaker is the keen observant character that narrates what he sees, feels and realizes. He plays a

painter or a story teller. Various descriptions of the natural scenery such as “Frost”, “eye of day”, “tangled bine-stems” reinforces the naturalness of the setting, the unique environment and season Hardy notices. The speaker isn’t in a careless mode, but rather is a keen observant that has rested “upon a coppice gate” noticing the colors, the patterns and various forms and shapes of an evening in Winter. Personifying Frost to a “spectre gray” is rather a bleak reality that Hardy isn’t shy to portray. Thus, the scenery is like a gray ghost, becoming symbolic of the presence of one element of nature. There isn’t much of winter left, rather the image is in “dregs” that has portrayed the desolateness of winter and the sunset, though to many it seems a beautiful scenery and rather romantic. The trees present no life but a scene similar to a “broken lyres”. One can notice decay, dying, and numbness, the scene is pessimistic and dark. The word choice signifies such sadness. Every statement carries a thoughtful meaning presenting the surrounding, the environment, colors and various patterns. Most important of all is the way human being is discussed in the poem. They are all “haunted” which can clarify the humans becoming ghost like characters, finding no promising place to be except being near their household fires. They are thirsty of some human values as the humans are like winter: numb, exhausted, disconcerted and haunted. The fire they all seek to be around symbolizes the inner thoughtful feeling they all wish to have, passions, or wonder and imagination that they lack. Uniquely enough, the description starts with elements of nature then comes down to human being in the bottom of the ladder.

The land's sharp features seemed to me  
The Century's corpse outleant,  
Its crypt the cloudy canopy,  
The wind its death-lament.  
The ancient pulse of germ and birth  
Was shrunken hard and dry,  
And every spirit upon earth  
Seemed fervorless as I.

The Speaker precisely discusses the features of the land he is examining. He is well aware of its features and functions assimilating it to a “The Century’s corpse outleant”. Hardy talks about the land as well as the century within one statement. The century is dead thus the land is like its “corpse”, the ceiling or roof of the dead is the “cloudy canopy” and its “death lament” is the wind. Making use of the element of nature as assimilating them to various locations and elements in a funeral signifies the unique approach of Hardy discussing both winter or environment and man. There is no life but death and decaying, numbness. This is better portrayed when Hardy turns into agriculture and biology portraying how the seeds and the pulse of life and birth were “shrunken hard and dry”. The pessimistic and the bleak representation of winter can be inferred as there is no hope of life, living and survival. Similar to the previous stanza, Hardy doesn’t use right references for humans, like the previous one the human beings are almost dead as they are referred to as “spirit” and “fervorless” as the seeds and the land. Thus, one can infer the similarities between the lands the humans in the poem, even the observant speaker emphasizes how he is also as motionless, passionless and live less. One can safely argue that this poem marks the beginning of modernism especially after its presentation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as dead. Furthermore, the image of man presented here reminds one of the “Hollow Men” by T. S. Eliot. Men

lack conviction, faith and determination. The scene of a funeral further signifies the melancholic tone, sad and disheartening situation.

At once a voice arose among  
The bleak twigs overhead,  
In a full-hearted evensong  
Of joy illimited.  
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt and small,  
With blast-beruffled plume,  
Had chosen thus to fling his soul  
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings  
Of such ecstatic sound  
Was written on terrestrial things  
Afar or nigh around,  
That I could think there trembled through  
His happy good-night air  
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew,  
And I was unaware.

Part three of “Darkling Thrush” indeed introduces us to the “Thrush” that the poem is entitled after as the bird is singing. There is a radical and sudden change to the scene and the tone previously described. Among the leaves of the tree described as lifeless and dead with no sign of positivity and rather “bleak” there is a bird singing. The descriptions of the previous two parts as one dead motionless and lifeless picture have surprised the speaker and the reader to one only singing in the area. The irony lies in the nature of the bird and its sound which is “of joy illimited” and “in a full-hearted”. Yet the bird is not as powerfully physically described! The bird is aged weak small and thin that the wind is playing with its features. Yet, it has chosen to give all it has to the “growing gloom” Hardy has described. Materialistically and biologically speaking, the bird cannot do so, but the will, the power that lies within it has sung loudly. It is small, but noticeable, weak but can stand the wind, thin and aged but loud and hearable. Such qualities are surprising reminding one of the way Hardy portrays man and nature. What the bird gives is not decoration and outwardly beauty as it has none to offer, but has given its soul, the internal part of itself described almost as life to a lifeless environment.

The bird exists in presence as well as absence of man; human being as the speaker is one unique complex existence that can comment what he notices. The bird naturality is of vital importance yet what the bird offers is what he offers rather than what he is as he offers a song that speaks with the internal part of man. The Voice is so magical, “Of such ecstatic sound/ was written on terrestrial things” that the speaker has dedicated all part three describing it. He cannot find what causes the bird had for singing as there is “so little cause”. In the bleak scene where there is no sign of life, hope, love, joy, and meaning,

the bird represents meaning-centerhood and content and not form or superficiality. There are the men who are unaware and mindless and numb as hollow men heading together and seeking fire and warm. The poet as an artist and knowledgeable man, seer and observer, a care taker and a thoughtful man is well aware of what is missing in the life of the poem and meaning he can give birth to the singing. Above all, although the poem does reveal what is missing, the speaker can not make sense of the type of "Hope". The depth of Hardy's observance is remarkable.

Hardy is a minute and accurate observer of nature. He is highly sensitive to external impressions in nature. An average intelligent observer notes small things and forgets most of them, but an artist of Hardy's power not only takes up minute details and changes in the world around him, but also links them up with human personality in a remarkable manner. Hardy is sensitive to almost everything in nature. His ears are open to every sound. He sees, and makes us see every delicate shade of color, and he constantly creates the illusion in the reader's mind that he is in the actual spot described (Al-Asmar 65)

### *The Mayor of Casterbridge*

Like his *Darkling Thrush* and *The Return of the Native*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is another novel of Hardy that presents naturalistic details and shows rural life and a connection with nature. Casterbridge itself seems to be a dominant character in the novel. It has moods, emotions and a magnetic appeal that affects the other characters. The characters are linked to nature and the traditional values and customs. Albert J. Guerard in his "Hardy A Collection of Critical Essays" says, "Founding itself upon an ancient psychology, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* celebrates, first of all, the subordination of the passions that link man with nature to the reason that unites him with God." Furthermore, Mullik rightly observes, "Hardy embodies fate in various forms. Sometimes it appears as a natural force. Henchard's plan for making himself rich are brought by a bad harvest; the weather takes the part of fate here." All the three characters, Henchard, Elizabeth-Jane and Susan, are symbolically presented as "doomed leaves" because they die before the end of the novel. The bird seems to provide man with a chance, for example Michael Henchard showing how nature victimizes the characters. "For a long time, there was none, beyond the voice of a week bird singing a trite old evening song that might doubtless have been heard on the hill at the same hour, and with the self-same, quavers, and braves, at any sunset of that season for centuries untold." (2) (*The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Page no.2)

As Anssam Ali Flefil Al-Husseinawy in his "The Concept of Nature in Thomas Hardy's Short Poems" maintains:

Nature, to Hardy, can be depressing as hell at times like "The Convergence of the Twain," and can be rather beautiful at other times as "birds at Winter Nightfall." Thus, he seems to have an ambivalent attitude towards it. He utilizes it not just as a decoration but also as a function since it is not all the flowers of nature inspire him and should be celebrated in his writings. In addition, he uses his mediations on the nature scenes to contemplate serious issues like life itself.

Moreover, one can see that in Hardy's nature poems, Man is depicted as the smallest of insects, which possess Knowledge far beyond that of Man. (8)

This further clarifies the point that nature is unique or for Hardy “one tends to see that Hardy wants to show the unity of man with nature in the point that the latter is a sort of divine teacher for the former through controlling his action.” (9)

## Conclusion

Hardy has dealt with nature as another existence that has a rooted linkage with man. Nature has been a mirror, a stage, or a unique existence where Hardy has pursued for a refined culture and/or individual, but also portrayed how such pursue reveals where man and nature stand in a mysteriously unlimited universe. The very existence of Egdon Heath is a means through which the existence of human being is stressed. Generally, characters cannot escape the consciousness and the very present reality of Egdon Heath and they are “inextricably involved” (Lothe 119, William H.125). This emphasizes Hardy’s depiction of a strong bond between human beings and nature because death is portrayed as the only escape possible especially for those characters who strive to escape.

Setting is a unique existence or one can safely say a major character throughout Hardy’s selected works. This explains the importance of it and how significantly we are defined through it as it has direct impacts on man. The search whether it has a conscious or unconscious relationship with man is a greater quest than the claim of one research paper. Egdon Heath profoundly portrays the study of human nature in an environment indifferent to human actions signifying the link and the interaction of man and nature. Yet, the very portrayal of the characters shows the importance of land in determining one’s destiny and the way we deal with it. The Heath is the unchangeable and unsympathetic place of man and it is an organic yet motionless place that some accepts its reality and achieves a harmonious life with it while others are antagonistic towards it and struggle to live on it. Thus, the emotional and contemplative responses of different characters and their communication with the physical world of Egdon Heath dictate their place and destiny in the world. This emphasizes Hardy’s depiction of a strong bond between human beings and nature because death is portrayed as the only escape possible especially for those characters who strive to escape. Egdon Heath, thus, is a microcosm representation of the physical world of the novel, and a microcosm, both in space and in time of the total history of the world, compressed to the present existence. The Heath represents the indifferent natural world, suggestion that man has responsibility to comprehend it and live by it.

Hardy has a distinctive personal vision, a unique presentation of nature in both *RN* and *Darkling Thrush*. Nature in both works represented as unique and not romantic. If *RN* present as a microcosmic world through which he signifies a rooted interconnectedness between characters, their setting and environment, *Darkling Thrush* portrays a truly naked presentation of nature where everything is dead and numb including almost the men. The Heath’s function seems to be “the intensifier of time and space, and thus of character and action” and this is also true for *Darkling Thrush* that can depict Hardy’s profound and least biased study of human nature and the ways human beings can find harmony and understanding with their external environment in an environment surrounded by and in continuous

communication with it. In *DT*, the weather is cold and indifferent, the environment is gloomy and melancholic, the land is dead, the century is like the land, the wind and the sky offer setting of funeral, the tree is leafless, the wind is death's music and harsh to the bird; thus, the nature exists and dominates in its existence and man has to live by it as fighting its natural flow might lead to one's destruction. Like, the speaker in *DT*, one has to understand what the land, the weather, environment and nature offer and understand what they could mean and how they could make us feel. Along similar lines, Hardy shows victims and those characters that adopt themselves with the natural world of Egdon Heath and survive. Hardy describes the Heath as "a place perfectly accordant with man's nature- neither ghastly, hateful, nor ugly: neither commonplace, unmeaning, nor tame; but, like man, slighted and enduring" (Hardy 4).

Unlike the previous arguments on only consciousness towards nature, this research was an attempt to provide a potential background to examine the human values, such as uniqueness, authenticity, freedom. This research maintains that the interdependence of human-respecting cultures and a purer nature, looking for any harmonic relationship between humankind and land is an essential pursuit.

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