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# 1. Introduction

This paper aims to provide a comparative ecocritical reading and analysis of Thomas Hardy's novels, from a focus on pure nature as represented in his works to social implications.

In an age of global crisis, recent years have seen the rise of a new literary approach called ecocriticism, which focuses on the relationship between literature and the physical environment. This interdisciplinary movement of literary and cultural studies has moral claims and unites fields like history, philosophy, Marxism and feminism in an attempt to make people more aware of the earth and how our behaviour affects it. While nature, landscape and the whole physical environment were formerly treated as a by-product of the text, seen in relation with the writer, the text and the world as society only, the ecocritical approach tries to dissect the environment into its natural parts, expanding the notion of the world to its ecologic biosphere and insofar looking at the environment as a literary category: "In addition to race, class, and gender, should *place* become a new critical category?" (Glotfelty xix). In the UK, this approach to literature is often traced back to canonical writers, especially well-known British nature writers like Thomas Hardy, analysing leading questions such as "How is nature represented in the novel?" and "What role does the physical setting play?" (see Glotfelty xix).

In order to approach the topic of Hardy and ecocriticism, I will first provide a theoretical background of the ecocritical approach, from its beginnings in the 1970s in the USA to its British equivalent. Additionally, I will include a closer look at some of the sub-approaches, deep ecology, ecofeminism and urban ecocriticism, the latter two being subjected to social ecology in general. Furthermore, I will outline some of the difficulties the approach has to face, especially concerning the nature/culture dichotomy. Lastly, I will outline some ideas on the general distinction between Romantic and Victorian Ecology, with Hardy being analysed from both views.

Subsequently, an analysis of Hardy as an ecocritical writer will be given, in order to bring the writer's use of language into focus, in particular ecocritical devices like anthropomorphism, the use of the senses and shifting narrative positions, with which the author himself tried to highlight his and the characters' interaction with the environment.

The second part will focus on the different uses of the terms landscape, nature and environment and show a detailed comparative analysis on Hardy as read by various ecocritics, ranging from topographical to social- and deep ecological readings. In the first instance, it will delve into the importance of the relation between Wessex and Dorset and its implications for the reader, as well as look at the reading of the novel's setting as an actual map that is outlined by the characters' movement, linking the literary approach with geographical mapping. Furthermore, it will detail the socio-ecological and historical implications of texts written in the Victorian period being read in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, how and why Hardy looked at his native environment in certain ways in his time and what the present-day reader can deduct from his descriptions and its ramifications. Additionally, I will pay attention to how ecocritics look at different ways of landscape and nature representation in the novels and how they read the characters' relationship to their native environment, including an ecofeminist approach. These socio-ecological findings will be compared to a focus on what will be called 'pure' nature, in an attempt to complete Hardy's depiction of the environment by looking at it from a deep ecological perspective.

After this comparative analysis, the paper will conclude with a prospect of what could still be done in terms of Hardy and ecocriticism, looking at a cinematic approach which has so far not established Hardy in detail, providing an ecocinematic point of view of the opening scene of *The Return of the Native* (1994) and in particular the representation of the environment in the 1997 movie version of *The Woodlanders*.

## 2. Ecocriticism

The last few years have seen the rise of the new literary approach called ecocriticism, also known as Green Studies in the UK, an approach necessary to respond to the contemporary issue of "the global environmental crisis" (Glotfelty xv). While looking at gender, class and race as important literary topics, the 'outside' world was neglected even though environmental destruction suggested otherwise over the years. Only when such matters as the destruction of the rain forest, oil spills and the hole in the ozone layer became too important to ignore, did literary studies jump on the train of environmental studies in the 1970s, with individual essays and criticism published, though by no means organised as an approach or movement (Glotfelty xvi). At that time, environmental literary approaches were the odd ones out, having no scientific body or subject heading under which to publicise (Glotfelty xvii).

Ecocriticism as an environmental literary approach developed in the USA in the 1980s, as the "study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty xviii). According to Buell, early ecocriticism served the purpose to try to "rescue" literature from the distantiations of reader from text and text from world that had been ushered in by the structuralist revolution in critical theory. These ecocritical dissenters sought to reconnect the work of (environmental) writing and criticism with environmental practice" (Buell, *Future* 6). The driving force behind this development was the apparent interest in nature and the environment as such, especially because the majority of people began to notice that they actively had to do something in order to save the planet, given that green issues became more high profile since various environmental incidents (Buell, *Future* 4).

With the introduction of collected essays in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty, literature and the environment were explored together through this new approach, combining social, cultural and ecological fields, putting a new emphasis on the setting of literary novels and poetry. Since then, ecocriticism has spread widely across the world, developing its own association, named ASLE (Association for the Study of Literature and Environment), founded in 1992 by Glotfelty, with its own literary journal called ISLE (Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment) and contributions from all

over the world (Barry 248), even leading to the foundation of ASLE India and ASLE Australia. Since the 1990s, universities have also offered literature courses on green writing and provided academic university positions in the field (Glottfelty xvii).

According to Westling, the first wave of ecocritics, coming from the USA, usually praised nature writing, focusing on writings about the non-human environment “in an effort to turn cultural attention back to the wider living environment, from the specifically human realm” (Westling 1). As a consequence, American ecocriticism centres on wilderness, which for them is 'pure' landscape, a concept that will be looked at more deeply. Within the US version of ecocriticism two areas of emphasis can be found. The first area of interest is on “Western literature set in open landscapes of cattle ranges and mountains, a regional tradition including early narratives of exploration and settlement, and the cult of the frontier or cowboy hero” (Westling 2). The second area focuses on nineteenth century nature writing and the transcendentalists Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, "whose work celebrates nature" (Barry 251). Nowadays, American ecocriticism goes back as early as works such as colonisation narratives.

In contrast to the American tradition, British ecocriticism emerged a few years later “within an older literary tradition concerned with long-domesticated and densely populated landscapes and, for the past 200 years, with problems of industrialization and urban space” (Westling 3). The British tradition goes back to the pastoral tradition from its earliest movement in the Renaissance period, usually perceived as an artificial, elitist and aristocratic privilege, up to the Romantic tradition, contradicting the Renaissance movement in terms of its elitism. Contrary to the Renaissance period, the emphasis in the seventeenth and eighteenth century lied on the picturesque and “manicured beauty” (Westling 3). Bot traditions show that British ecocriticism has been influenced by the apparent industrialisation and is insofar more culturally related

as Jonatahan Bate has demonstrated in both *Romantic Ecology* and *The Song of the Earth*. Wordsworthian nature poetry and the proto-environmentalist writings of Hardy, Ruskin, and Morris depict landscapes where industry exists side by side with agriculture, and wild creatures must coexist with domesticated animals in spaces bounded by human settlement. (Westling 4)

Not only can British ecocriticism be differentiated in terms of style, the UK version being more minatory in style rather than the American celebratory version, warning

about global destruction and environmental damages rather than celebrating nature as it is (Barry 251), British ecocritics, additionally, have their own ecocritical expressions and ecocritical reader. While the Americans write about 'ecocriticism', the British favour the term "Green Studies", a term going back to Jonathan Bate as the founding UK ecocritic writing on *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* and look towards Laurence Coupe's *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*, a collection of essays on theoretical concepts and practical studies, as the main equivalent to Cheryl Glotfelty's *Ecocriticism Reader*. As the British ecocriticism approach dates back to British Romanticism from the 1790s, Britain also regards itself as the founding country of ecocriticism instead of the USA, which is due because of a longer tradition of nature writing, leading back to the Romantics. The particular interest in the Romantics as founding writers leads to a dominance of mainly Romantic poets analysed in British green studies. In Hutchings' view, it is especially these writers who have contributed to ecocritical theory and practice because they celebrate nature and lament its destruction (173). Generally it can be said that the different ancestry of ecocriticism, the term which will be used in this thesis as the main denomination for the approach as it is more widely spread, gives way to a certain rivalry between British and American ecocritics over who 'invented' the approach (Barry 251).

Despite its variations, "ecocriticism [in general] takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies" (Glotfelty xix), focusing on 'place' as a new critical category that looks at the environment and nature as a valid concept on its own. The approach thus "designates the critical writings which explore the relations between literature and the biological and physical environment, conducted with an acute awareness of the devastation being wrought on that environment by human activities" (Abrams 71). This physical environment, also known as 'nature', containing animals and plants, is often categorised into four main areas:

- area 1: 'the wilderness' (e.g. deserts, oceans, uninhabited continents)
- area 2: 'the scenic sublime' (e.g. forests, lakes, mountains, cliffs, waterfalls)
- area 3: 'the countryside' (e.g. hills, fields, woods)
- area 4: 'the domestic picturesque' (e.g. parks, gardens, lanes) (Barry 255)

Although trying to categorise the environment in this way, the 4 areas remain problematic, given that it is very difficult to find a particular landscape (in the sense of nature) in one area only. The categorisation therefore allows critics to mainly question

the 4 positions and move from one concept to another and back again, blurring the boundaries without having to find the one true category, as will also be found in the analysis on Hardy.

Ecocriticism, combining the Greek terms *oikos* and *kritis*, actually meaning “house judge”, is used to refer to nature writing in the broadest sense. An ecocritic therefore can be said to be “a person who judges the merits and faults of writings that depict the effects of culture upon nature, with a view toward celebrating nature, berating its despoilers, and reversing their harm through political action” (Howarth 69). This celebration of nature is achieved through language, which all ecocritics are concerned with, studying “the relations between species and habitat” (Howarth 69).

Ecocriticism derived from four main disciplines, which offer guidelines to ecocritics. These four disciplines are ecology, ethics, language and criticism:

As an interdisciplinary science, ecology describes the relations between nature and culture. The applied philosophy of ethics offers ways to mediate historic social conflicts. Language theory examines how words represent human and nonhuman life. Criticism judges the quality and integrity of works and promotes their dissemination. (Howarth 71)

The principle of ecology, coined by Ernst Haeckel in 1869 (Howarth 72), “is the study of the interactions between organisms and the environment” (Buell, *Future* 140) and goes back to a time when it was clear that industrialism and mass societies had an impact, often a negative one, on the world. This led to another area of interest of ecocriticism, namely analysing the relation between the individual and the populace with the environment (Howarth 72-73). Ecology is of course interested in the ecosystems, “the importance of maintaining bio-diversity, and the unpredictable consequences of any, however seemingly insignificant, subtraction from it” (Soper, *Nature* 25) and “generally opposed to the hierarchical ranking of species that is the organizing principle of the Great Chain” (Soper, *Nature* 25). Over time, ecology also “became a narrative mode” (Howarth 74), relating to the principle of language, using human sources, such as foot, head, cap, ... to refer to the names of specific land forms. This of course, again relates to the socio-ecological relationship between humans and the environment.

Through this social discourse it was possible to also look at the ethical principles underlying ecology (Howarth 74-75), known as “ecological conscience” (Buell, *Future*

140), which is “the ethics of living in accord with the welfare of the ecological community” (Leopold qtd. in Buell, *Future* 140). Ethical ecological principles are therefore underlying ecocriticism's social discourse, applied in the study between men and the environment.

Due to the fact that nature is often linked to the sciences through scientific research, the combination of the two is what often leads to discrepancies in literary studies, hence leading to ecocriticism often being adverse to theory and focusing on practice instead. Ecocriticism only uses scientific ideas very vaguely as an underlying principle to base its ideas on, calling into question the principles of language and criticism because nature is expressed through images and words: “Ecocriticism observes in nature and culture the ubiquity of signs, indicators of value that shape form and meaning” (Howarth 77). Though important devices, language and criticism are often regarded as problematic by other literary non-ecocritics, who are of the opinion that the voice of nature as debatable, because nature has no voice on its own and because there is still the tradition of viewing nature as a subordinate, dominated by culture. Insofar, literary theory and scientific ecology seem opposed to each other on the one hand, while they can be combined through language on the other hand, especially as both have to speak from a human point of view. This opposition of principles shows the dichotomy of nature and culture, two concept, that as far as ecocriticism is concerned, typically find themselves at opposite ends but still constantly mingle insofar as they are very difficult to separate.

All these principles, ecological, ethical, historical, cultural and geographical are interlinked and form the basis for ecocriticism. Hence it is no wonder that many other disciplines joined ecocriticism, by taking some of their principles and modifying them for their own studies: feminist and gender studies, focusing “on the idea of place as defining social status” (Howarth 81), postcolonial studies, looking at the various power relations between oppressors and the oppressed within a strong regional focus or structuralist critics, examining “symbols from agricultural fertility rites” (Howarth 81). Ecocriticism therefore influenced more literary critical schools than assumed at first sight, as it offers many possibilities and new perspectives.

Ecocriticism itself was, and sometimes still is, critiqued as a kind of naïve development, one point being that it cannot be taken seriously as it is a mere “amateur

enthusiasm” (Buell, *Future* 6) of academic critics, artists or green activists, rather than an academic literary field which should be taken seriously. Scepticism also arose because the development took place in 'outside' institutions, such as the University of Nevada (Glottfelty xvi), rather than so-called first class universities in the important cities. In addition, critics stress that although it is possible to speak *as* an environmentalist, "no human can speak *as* the environment, *as* nature, *as* a nonhuman animal" (Buell, *Future* 7). According to Hutchings, the problems with ecocriticism lie in the fact that people can only speak 'for' the environment, which according to Bate is "an image of man at the centre, *surrounded* by things” (*Song* 107), which makes it impossible to extinguish the anthropocentric voice in ecocritical matters (Hutchings 174). Another problem for him is that the prefix 'eco' tends to focus on the 'natural' environment only and does not take into consideration the 'built' environment, such as urban issues, as well (Hutchings 174), a problem that will be explored in the chapter on 'Urban Ecocriticism'. Furthermore, the movement as such is problematic, as there is no common consensus on neither of the critical practices nor on the different connotations of the various terms used to describe the movement.

Buell highlights another main dilemma of ecocriticism, that is to say that there is no common ground for what ecocriticism actually is or does. According to him, the basis of the approach is that “ecocriticism means what its self-identified and imputed practitioners say it does” (“Insurgency” 702). Barry agrees with Buell, saying that although ecocriticism is nowadays a widely spread literary approach, it “still does not have a widely-known set of assumptions, doctrines, or procedures” (Barry 248), only marginally mentioned by introductions to literary studies or general books on literature (Barry 248).

Nevertheless, Buell argues that the interest in ecocritical studies is very strong and will stay strong. The first reason for the ongoing interest is that human beings are biological products themselves, which elicits our interest in this environmental field, and in turn, combines both past and present. Secondly, the turn of the century has seen a rise in environmentally pressing matters and the destruction of the earth has become apparent even to those who wanted to ignore it completely (Buell, “Insurgency” 699). According to Carroll “ecology cannot by itself generate a theory of literature or serve as the basis for a literary theory, but [...] responsiveness to the sense of place is an



elemental component of the evolved human psyche and that it thus can and should be integrated into a Darwinian literary theory” (296). The direct link between literature and nature, that “literature is produced by the psyche, not the ecosystem, and the psyche has been produced by natural selection” (Carroll 297) gives ecocriticism a valid dimension. According to Pat Louw, using an ecocritical perspective means going “beyond the mode of literary criticism that reads setting only as a metaphor” (102). And Bennett states that

if ecocriticism 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. [...] As one scholar of place notes, the landscape contains many names and stories, so that learning and writing them becomes a way of mapping cultural terrain. ("Anti-Pastoralism" 197)

## **2.1 Deep Ecology**

With the rise of a new interpretation of nature in literature at the end twentieth century, different positions began to form within the field of ecocriticism. While the Enlightenment period saw a domination of nature, both in real life as well as in literature, the turn of the century is known for the development of “deep ecology”, a biocentric approach which “accords nature ethical status at least equal to that of humans” (Nash qtd. in Hutchings 181). The development came about in the 1970s in connection with the 'green' movement and was made popular by the philosopher Arne Naess and the two environmentalists Bill Devall and George Sessions (Kerridge, "Environmentalism" 536). The term itself was coined by Naess in 1973, looking for a deep and spiritual approach to nature (Devall and Sessions 65), seeking an immersion of human beings with nature instead of a distinction between the two.

The main concern for deep ecologists is the preservation and conservation of nature, not its conservation: “Instead, Deep Ecologists advocate a biocentric view, which recognizes the non-human world as having value independently of its usefulness to human beings, who have no right to destroy it except to meet vital needs” (Kerridge, “Environmentalism” 536). Therefore, “ecological consciousness and deep ecology are in sharp contrast with the dominant worldview of technocratic-industrial societies which regards humans as isolated and fundamentally separate from the rest of Nature, as superior to, and in charge of, the rest of creation” (Devall and Sessions 65). What differs

deep ecological from 'normal' environmentalism insofar, is that “whereas 'shallow' approaches take an instrumental approach to nature, arguing for preservation of natural resources only for the sake of human, deep ecology demands recognition of intrinsic value in nature” (Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 21). It insists on the “return to a monistic, primal identification of humans and the ecosphere” (Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 21). It suggests that ecocriticism itself, understood as the basic relationship between literature and the environment, does not take the nature/culture and human/non-human debate far enough because of the obvious barrier between the two. Instead, deep ecology proposes that humans, animals as well as rivers, landscapes and mountains should be considered as being equal to each other (Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 21).

In order to decrease the rift between humans and non-humans, deep ecologists look at wild nature, as this is the only landscape which fosters “self-realization and biocentric equality” (Devall and Sessions 111). Self-realization, in the sense of deep ecology, is understood as more than in an egoistical sense. Instead we should try to look at a self which “stands for organic wholeness” (Devall and Sessions 67), which “is best achieved by the mediative deep questioning process” (Devall and Sessions 67). This deep questioning process is very often of a religious nature as “deep ecology has a religious component, and those people who have done the most to make societies aware of the destructive way in which we live in relation to natural settings have had such religious feelings” (Devall and Sessions 76). In respect of biocentric equality, Devall and Sessions see a necessity that humans create an environment where “all things in the biosphere have an equal right to live and blossom and to reach their own individual forms of unfolding and self-realizations” (Devall and Sessions 67). This living together does not exclude using each other, for example for shelter or food, because this is a biological necessity to survive (Devall and Sessions 67). All in all, deep ecologists believe

that we may not need something new, but need to reawaken something very old, to reawaken our understanding of Earth wisdom. In the broadest sense, we need to accept the invitation to the dance – the dance of unity of humans, plants, animals, the Earth. We need to cultivate an ecological consciousness. And we believe that a way out of our present predicament may be simpler than many people realize. (Devall and Sessions ix)

In this sense of 'experiencing' nature, an important contributor to deep ecology is the science of ecology itself, "the study of the interactions between organisms and the environment" (Buell, *Future* 139): the first contribution is that everything is interconnected with each other, hence experiencing the environment or ecosystem as a whole, including both humans and non-humans. The second contribution is the encouragement of "students to go into the field and really see interrelationships rather than just study them in textbooks or laboratories" (Devall and Sessions 85). Insofar, deep ecology is about taking care of and saving the environment and living consciously. For Buell this amounts to "living-in-rustic-place-and-letting-nature-be" (*Future* 103).

Deep ecology, additionally to asking questions about nature itself, is interested in sustaining the environment, asking for the 'how' and 'why', offering questions such as what society could do to maintain one or another ecosystem and raising ethical and political issues rather than just showing superficial concern (Devall and Sessions 65). It looks at the literary tradition for inspiration, especially the European Romantic movement and the Romantic poets because they "can be viewed as a counterforce to the narrow scientism and industrialism of the modern world" (Devall and Sessions 82). But even more than European writers, deep ecologists look at American nature writers, such as Emerson, Thoreau, Twain and others, because their "literary tradition has called to us to reject the technocratic-industrial worldview and reestablish our roots in Mother Gaia" (Devall and Sessions 83). This tradition of writing led to looking at wilderness as the main source rather than at a tamed countryside, wilderness being "a landscape or ecosystem that has been minimally disrupted by the intervention of humans, especially the destructive technology of modern societies" (Devall and Sessions 110). The term landscape is certainly related to the term nature insofar as both refer to a place where wilderness grows. Nevertheless, landscape began to be used in the sense of an aesthetic nature, designating a wilderness controlled by humans and consequently rejected by deep ecologists. This aesthetic nature refers to the picturesque, an "artistic appreciation of nature", which could also be called an "elitist appropriation of the environment" (Byerly 53) as the artistic movement is controlled by the elite: "The aestheticization of landscape removed it [the landscape] from the realm of nature and designated it a legitimate object of artistic consumption" (Byerly 53). The effect of landscape's removal from 'wilderness nature' led to a different treatment and perception

of it, used merely for artistic purposes which "permits the viewer to define and control the scene, yet fosters the illusion that the scene is part of self-regulating nature" (Beyerly 53-54). In this sense, the landscape stays the same over generations, as it can be captured in a picture or a novel, staying the same forever, but never being more than an image rather than 'the real thing'.

In order to point out the problems within our environment, deep ecologists mostly look towards wilderness instead of landscape as the source to bring humans closer to nature. Wilderness is, contrary to the picturesque and the aesthetic landscape, defined as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man ... which generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable" (Allin qtd. in Byerly 57). In *Deep Ecology*, Devall and Sessions formulate four principles of deep ecology in relation to experiencing the wilderness, which are necessary to get closer to mother earth: "1) developing a sense of place, 2) redefining the heroic person from conqueror of the land to the person fully experiencing the natural place, 3) cultivating the virtues of modesty and humility and 4) realizing how the mountains and rivers, fish and bears are continuing their own actualizing processes" (110). This approach to wilderness, and to the environment in general, stands in contrast to what most people nowadays label "outdoor recreation," with its emphasis on easy access to some lake or river, comfort and convenience for traveler, and extensive focus on recreational equipment such as all-terrain vehicles or snowmobiles" (Devall and Sessions 111). Wilderness has to be experienced differently from 'outdoor recreation' for it to have a deep ecological effect: it has to be seen as the habitat of other beings, animals and plants in order for us to experience self-realisation and biocentric equality (Devall and Sessions 112).

Merely this focus on wilderness is what makes deep ecology a difficult approach among ecocritics, and especially social ecocritics. One point against deep ecology is made on the basis that the concept of wilderness as a whole raises the question whether untamed areas are still to be found rather than non-existent, as humans strive for exploration of every part of the world and as a consequence marginalise still untamed areas. Even those areas which are considered as 'wild' nature by some people, such as wilderness parks, are more a reflection of what is considered to be wild by a majority of people. As Byerly points out, this wilderness "describes an image, not a reality" (57).

Insofar, wilderness is said to be an aesthetic illusion because true wilderness could not be experienced by us when there should be no human trace found (Byerly 58-59).

A further point made against this sub-branch is that although the principles of deep ecology may seem a good idea when trying to reawaken human involvement with nature on a cultural, philosophical, ethical and political level, they bring problems when attributed to literary studies. Carroll argues that deep ecology cannot function as a valid basis for literary theory because firstly, readers do “not seriously wish to read novels that feature lichen as protagonists” (300) and secondly, because the approach fails “to take account of the evolved structure of motivations that are specific to human beings, and [...] erroneously invest the whole natural order with moral characteristics that are appropriate only within the human sphere” (Carroll 300). Furthermore, Bennett argues against deep ecology as “there is no unmediated way of existing in harmony with nature, and there never has been. Once we make human decisions on how to exist in our surroundings, we are already involved in sociocultural [...] modes of thought” (Bennett, "Metropolitan" 300) and especially literature is a sociocultural involvement. What is more, by pointing towards nature, especially its beautiful spots for aesthetic appreciation, literature and culture are adapted for the pleasure of men, which in turn makes deep ecology's goal, to extinguish an anthropocentric point of view, near impossible (Soper, *Nature* 255). Of course, humans can try to live in harmony with their surroundings, but all their attempts will only be valid when expressed through language, a poststructuralist mode that goes against deep ecology's principles because it involves an anthropocentric device of language. Ecocritics like Michael Branch and SueEllen Campell focus on this difficult relationship between deep ecology and poststructuralism, noting that although ecocriticism and poststructuralism are similar in their basic premise that meaning, and individuals, they exist only in a series of contextual relationships, which poststructuralists call “intertextuality” and which ecophilosophers see as the primary interconnection of humans and their environment” (Bennett, "Metropolitan" 299). As a result, Branch views poststructuralism as problematic to the concern of deep ecology because it tries to sneak anthropocentrism into its criticism. According to Bennett, critics trying to reconcile poststructuralism and ecocriticism fail because of deep ecology's principles of 'nature only' ("Metropolitan" 300).

Not only is deep ecology viewed as problematic by social ecologists and

poststructuralists, it is echoed, as deep ecologists find fault with the anthropocentric view of 'normal' ecocritics. According to Guttman, "some ecologists, [...] such as those allied with the deep ecology movement, fault writers who presume to speak for the natural world, finding in this act one more example of human hubris or anthropocentricity as they put it" (37). As a consequence, a mediation between the two positions becomes quite difficult for ecocritics because the two centre on different perspectives: deep ecologists think "that overpopulation and ecosystematic imperilment are more pressing problems than human poverty and disease", which has led social ecocritics call this approach "antihumanism or ecofascism" (Buell, *Future* 137). One reason for the discrepancy between deep ecology and social ecology may result from the geographical distribution of ecocritics. While the majority of deep ecologists is located in mainly rural areas, researching at universities such as the University of Oregon, the University of Nevada and other colleges, situated in rural areas where one can find real nature instead of landscape, social ecologists are mostly centred in urban areas (Bennett, "Metropolitan" 302). As a result, the geographical position of the researcher might be linked to the various ecocritical branches, each centre focusing on problems that are geographically nearer to their needs and interests.

According to Buell, deep ecology is also critically related to some varieties of ecofeminism, "especially those which commend a neopagan "immersion in natural surroundings". [...] Attempts to frame ecofeminism in executive summary terms like "holism, interdependence, equality, and process" understandably come out sounding quite similar to deep ecology" (*Future* 108). But despite their similarities, ecofeminism contradicts deep ecology by dividing everything into gender categories, going against deep ecology's tendency to speak of 'humankind', and 'men' only, "which has led to a series of disputes and attempted mediations, from which ecofeminism seems to have emerged in the stronger position even if not on all counts" (Buell, *Future* 109). As a result,

environmental criticism in literary studies is increasingly moving – albeit irregularly – in the direction of extending the concept of environment beyond the arena of the "natural" alone and in the process is becoming increasingly sophisticated in its address to how [...] "natural" and "social" environments impinge on each other. (Buell, *Future* 127)

## 2.2 Ecofeminism

Around the 1980s, the movement of ecofeminism developed in the USA next to the subcategory of deep ecology (Gifford 166). When ecofeminism emerged as a sub-branch of ecocriticism the main focus of this study was on “the configuration and representation of male and female in relation to culture and nature” (Garrard, "Sustainability" 361). The approach is therefore concerned with the androcentric dualism of man/woman in relation to nature (Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 23).

In general, the relation between feminism and ecology lies in the theory that nature is related to women, which is in turn associated with the emotional and the material, while men are linked to culture, which is related to the nonmaterial and the rational (Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 26). In this sense, Soper argues that the reason why women are linked to nature “lies in the double association of women with reproductive activities and of these in turn with nature” ("Naturalized Women" 139). Women's biology, especially procreation, links women and nature ("Naturalized Women" 139). By associating women with reproduction, women are dominated by men, who are linked to production which in turn is determined by culture. This of course leads to the assumption that women are completely without culture while men find themselves without nature (Soper, "Naturalized Woman" 140). Nevertheless, “production, [...], can no more be regarded as independent of biological and physical processes than reproduction can be viewed as reducible to an unmediated matter of biology outside the cultural-symbolic order” (Soper, "Naturalized Woman" 140). It is therefore impossible to view the terms culture and nature as completely separate from each other. By looking at them in opposition, problems and discriminations are obscured instead of assisted (Soper, "Naturalized Woman" 141).

Nature is portrayed as female in a two way meaning:

'she' is identified with the body of laws, principles and processes that is the object of scientific scrutiny and experimentation. But 'she' is also nature conceived as spatial territory, as the land or earth which is tamed and tilled in agriculture [...]. In both these conceptions, nature is allegorized as either a powerful maternal force, the womb of all human production, or as the site of sexual enticement and ultimate seduction. (Soper, "Naturalized Woman" 141)

Nature is therefore both the spatial territory, which can also be associated with sexuality,

as well as the mother of science. The problem with nature as feminine lies in the view that nature is dominated and women being oppressed because “if Nature is, after all, both mother and maid, this surely reflects a genuine tension between the impulse to dominate and the impulse to be nurtured” (Soper, "Naturalized Woman" 142). Nature as purely feminine is therefore wrongfully associated with dominance only, as it evokes feelings of regret, guilt and nostalgia at the same time (Soper, "Naturalized Woman" 143).

Feminists and ecofeminists have argued against this distinction of female nature and male culture because gender is socially constructed within a patriarchal society rather than biologically determined. Ecofeminists nowadays seem to agree on the fact that they have to take both femininity and masculinity into critical consideration. Insofar, as far as environmental issues are concerned, Garrard is of the opinion that “ecofeminism emphasises environmental justice to a far greater degree than deep ecology. The logic of domination is implicated in discrimination and oppression on grounds of race, sexual orientation and class as well as species and gender” (*Ecocriticism* 26). Still, the problem with ecofeminism is the fact that ecofeminist critics are divided in their approach to the nature/women versus culture/men distinction, some of the critics celebrating these dichotomies, an approach known as radical ecofeminism, while others try to liberate themselves from it. But it has to be mentioned that radical ecofeminism is viewed in a negative light by most ecofeminists because ecofeminists acknowledge that the gender constructions made by critics are developed in a patriarchal society, which undermines radical ecofeminism in terms of feminism (Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 24). Garrard also argues that this 'radical ecofeminism', which only attributes ecological consciousness to women, is limiting when "showing instead how gender is culturally constructed" (*Ecocriticism* 24). In terms of ecology, radical ecofeminism is not well regarded either as it tries to reverse the androcentric principle of reason dominating emotion, which in turn makes the approach anti-scientific (Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 24-25).

Though feminism and ecofeminism do not always share the same beliefs, one can find equally many differences and strands within ecofeminism as within feminism: liberal feminism, striving for equality of women behaving like men, cultural feminism, supporting the idea that the difference between men and women should be celebrated,



and socialist feminism, which focuses on the parity between men and women within economic and social fields in a modern world. Guttman summarizes Noël Sturgeon, who differentiates between five main positions within ecofeminism, and argues that the approach:

1. Operates from the assumptions that because patriarchy associates woman with nature, feminist analysis is the key to understanding the root of our environmental crisis. As Sturgeon puts it: 'where women are degraded, nature will be degraded, and where women are thought to be eternally giving and nurturing, nature will be thought of as endlessly fertile and exploitable'.
2. Shares the same basic assumption as the first but contents that women's cultural attachment to nature 'dooms them an inferior position'. Thus feminist activism is also inherently environmentalist: 'If women are equated with nature, their struggle for freedom represents a challenge to the ideas of a passive, disembodied, and objectified nature'.
3. At odds with the first two, reads women's historical, social, and material relationship to nature as a special universal benefit to women across all cultures. This I would interpret as emphasising the legacy of women' (normally) domestic culture forcing them, by circumstance to be the gatherers rather than the hunters, developing domestic arts including small-scale agriculture.
4. Claims that because of their anatomy and their reproductive and biological cycles women are automatically 'closer' to nature than men, and thus more naturally empathetic and understanding of their environmental needs. As opposed to the idea of 'nurture' (albeit universal) [...], this, then is the belief in 'nature' – that is, women's essential relationship with the Earth seen largely through the kinship of women's menstrual cycles to those of the moon, the oceans, the rhythms of the earth and so on.
5. Seeks to establish a network for spiritual feminism that borrows from nature-based religions. Witchcraft, paganism, goddess worship, native American and other religions which focus on female power and strong female deities, are all used by this loosely organized group of women searching for an 'ecofeminist' spirituality. American writers such as Gloria Freman Orenstein and Starhawk are proponents of this form of spiritual ecofeminism. (Guttham 41-42)

As Guttman points out, socialist ecofeminism, attributed to the first two positions, is often regarded as the 'truest' version of ecocriticism because "of its rejection of the nature-culture dichotomy" (42). In contrast to this view, cultural ecofeminism is often called into question for its celebration of this dichotomy, appreciating the women's role as nurturers as well as for its tradition to go back to seeing nature as goddess and therefore celebrating ancient rituals. Hence what cultural ecofeminism reinforces is the dualistic difference between men's rationality as negative and women's intuition as positive, which in Guttman's opinion does not change anything in our thinking. In

contrast to this cultural ecofeminism, social feminists fight against the acceptance of the nature-culture distinction because, according to them, it does not offer any perspective for modern-day political thinking as it refuses to "romanticize women's culturally conditioned 'closeness' to nature" (Guttmann 42).

By relating men to a rational thinking of the earth, in relation to economical reasons, Marxism and ecofeminism find themselves at opposing ends as well. Marxism is often rejected by ecocritics and ecofeminists alike, on the grounds that it leads to the exploitation of resources and the destruction of landscape. According to Guttmann, feminists' rejection of Marxism exists because "feminist critics attacked Marxism for failing to pay attention to the economy of gender and for neglecting patriarchy as an institution which does not obey class lines but oppresses and controls women of all classes" (39). As does Guttmann, Salleh argues against Marxism and in favour of ecofeminism because

ecofeminism opens up the feminist movement itself to a new cluster of problems and challenges urban-based theoretical paradigms—liberal, Marxist, radical, post-structuralist—that have dominated feminist politics over the last two decades. By pitting new empirical concerns against established feminist analyses, ecofeminism is encouraging a new synthesis in feminist political thought. (197)

As nature is usually associated with women, the whole ecocriticism debate is often seen as women's concern for the environment, as opposed to men's more Marxist treatment of nature, which looks at nature from a more economic perspective that might lead to exploitation.

As a result, Salleh views ecofeminism not in a linear tradition but as an approach which has various tasks of uniting feminism and nature, as well as established a debate about its relation to deep ecology and Marxism:

Unlike environmental ethics in general, and deep ecology in particular, ecofeminism does not go after its object with a simple linear critique. It is obliged to engage in a zig-zag dialectical course between (a) its feminist task of establishing the right of women to a political voice; (b) its ecofeminist task of undermining the patriarchal basis of that political validation by dismantling the patriarchal relation of man to nature; and (c) its ecological task of demonstrating how women have been able to live differently in relation to nature. (Salleh 197-198)

What makes ecofeminism in this sense special for Salleh, is that it brings literature, feminism, socialism and environmental ethics together, showing how they can depend on each other (195).

Generally, the ecofeminist approach is more open than the traditional ecocritical approach. While ecofeminism can be applied to political, economical and cultural movements in general, ecocriticism is mostly limited to literary and cultural analysis, looking at the respective positions within literary works. The openness of ecofeminism is also reflected in its literary criticism, which, as does ecofeminism in general, draws on feminist ideas: it tries to discover 'ecofeminist vision' in literature in general but especially in nature writing, trying

1. to read literature, particularly writing by women, from an ecofeminist perspective;
2. to examine nature writing as a marginalized, 'feminized' genre and to recuperate that genre into the general canon by employing ecofeminist theories;
3. to recuperate voices thought to be apolitical, in line with Bate's study of Wordsworth, in order to reveal their ecofeminist value;
4. to develop an ecofeminist literary praxis along the lines of gynocriticism, that feminist criticism 'which concerns itself with developing a specifically female framework for dealing with works written by women'. (Guttman, 44-45)

In this sense, literary ecofeminists' goal is to make people aware of the distinction of opposing terms, like men/women, culture/nature, reason/emotion, while at the same time they try to show that these dichotomies have to be looked at in relationship to each other. As a result, literary ecofeminism has the tasks of linking literature, feminism and ecology in relation to the aforementioned cultural and socialist approaches.

### **2.3 Urban Ecocriticism**

As ecocriticism is a very broad and open field, some ecocritics lean towards a new focus within this approach, called urban ecocriticism. This sub-branch of ecocriticism is related to the study of social ecology, which looks at all societies as connected with their immediate environment and "enlists science and technology to the end of creating ecologically sustainable human communities" (Buell, *Future* 146). In this socio-ecological sense, urban ecocriticism

tends to reject mainstream ecocriticism's focus on the genres of nature writing and pastoral, insisting on the incapacity of these genres to represent the complex interactions between political choices, socioeconomic structures, and the densely populated ecosystems that shape urban environments. (Bennett, "Metropolitan" 296)

The term "urban ecocriticism" might be seen as an oxymoron in itself, combining the opposing interests of pure nature and urban space. However, its roots lie in various areas, environmental, social and political, which add up

when it became clear that a huge gulf of understanding existed between environmentalists, whose activism was explicitly tied to the protection of open-space areas affecting white, middle class suburbia, and social justice activists in inner city areas, concerned with affordable housing, sustainable income, and environmental security. (Ross 15)

Still, just the term itself could make readers question what urban ecocriticism might actually entail, as ecocriticism is normally concerned with the protection of wildlife and natural landscape instead of cityscapes. As Ross mentions, social ecologists are interested in looking at urban living and working conditions, like housing, income and security, but also other priorities such as sanitation, health issues, and premature death (15). Just as ecocriticism developed when wildlife and environment were endangered in the 1970s, urban ecocriticism emerged around the same time, a decade when social problems within the cities could not be ignored anymore (Ross 16).

As a consequence, urban ecocriticism particularly looks towards social ecology because ecological and social problems often go hand in hand (Bennett, "Metropolitan" 298), though social ecology looks at urban environments with mixed feelings: on the one hand, it critiques urbanization and "the ways in which metropolitan culture transforms urban environments" (Bennett, "Metropolitan" 298), on the other hand it also "note[s] the progressive role played by cities in the ongoing social dialectic that weaves together humans and nonhuman nature" (Bennett, "Metropolitan" 298). In this sense, "social ecologists [...] offer a critique of urbanization at the same time as they note the progressive role played by cities in the ongoing social dialectic that weaves together humans and nonhuman nature" (Bennett, "Metropolitan" 298).

Urban ecocriticism also faces problems with the fact that it is mostly overlooked by deep ecologists, who tend to ignore metropolitan areas in favour of pure wilderness. Bennett, however, argues that deep ecologists wrongfully overlook the urban areas, as

the four deep ecology principles, established by Devall and Sessions, can also be attributed to urban environments (Bennett, "Metropolitan" 297). Though deep ecology principles can be applied to social ecology, the crucial difference between deep and social ecology is a philosophical disagreement about how the global environment is influenced by humans and the built environment. As already established, the main point made by deep ecologists is the fact that humanity tries to destroy the natural habitat, which for deep ecologists is the main problem underlying our global crisis. But for social ecologists, this theory has two flaws because "first, it establishes an absolute dichotomy between domination of humans and domination of the environment, [...] second, humans can only act on human values and make human choices, so it makes little sense to speak of moving beyond human issues and adopting a biocentric viewpoint" (Bennett, "Metropolitan" 298-299). And as the term nature itself is always linked with societies and culture, social ecocritics find it difficult to exclude everything that is urban solely on the grounds that men destroy the environment. Additionally, Bennett and Teague mention that another point of urban ecocriticism is reminding city dwellers of their place within the ecosystem ("Urban Ecocriticism" 4). In general it has to be said that social ecology does not exclusively focus on the urban environment, as social interaction between humans and the environment is going on everywhere. It therefore takes into consideration both natural and built habitats in relation to their biosphere.

Urban ecocriticism, which comes from the field of urban studies in relation with Marxism, has at its basis the thesis "that the growth of cities was analogous to principles of plant ecology. Just as plant ecology is determined by the struggle of species for space, food, and light, so too the spatial organization of city life can be explained as the products of competition and selection" (Ross 17). The city, just like any other habitat, is seen as a continually shifting environment where dominant groups and subgroups fight for dominance and survival. Social conflict, political sponsorship and economic power were the results, leading to "the rhetorical image of the city as an immense biological organism" (Ross 17). This might be especially true for

[...] a British perspective [of ecocriticism, which] has to accommodate the densely populated and suburban character of most of the British countryside, and, most importantly, the historical meanings assigned to 'nature' in Britain, particularly the identification of rural life with feudal traditions and

hierarchies, in opposition to urban capitalism and its forms of social mobility [...]. (Westling 8)

In this sense, it is no wonder that British ecocritics, in contrast to their American colleagues who are more interested in deep ecology, focus on writers such as Thomas Hardy and Elizabeth Gaskell, who themselves experienced the effects of industrialisation on the rural landscape.

Another direction of urban ecocriticism looks at “the greening of the cities in ways that directly affect the material environment; green spaces, green architectural design, human-scale neighbourhood planning, traffic mitigation, pedestrian-friendly development, waste management, and energy efficiency” (Ross 18). Though urbanisation is often viewed critically by people favouring the natural environment, spreading rapidly and destroying the natural habitat to build urban space. It has to be said that it is exactly this development that allows greener suburbs and the countryside to remain as they are, by clustering people within a certain space while leaving the suburbs and green belts unchanged (Ross 18). This second strand of urban ecocriticism, dealing with the green space within the cities, is located within the literary tradition of the nineteenth century, when green spaces were seen as a refuge from urban spaces. They were civilised areas, designed to create a 'wilderness' feeling, equalling today's rare parks within cities, places “of intense socialization and cohabitation” (Ross 22). Besides, urban ecologists should not forget that the built environment of the city, with skyscrapers, ghettos, sports arenas, apartment complexes, street canyons and tube maps, can be considered as interior wilderness as well (Ross 22).

While some ecocritics favour urban environments over the wilderness area, others prefer the natural environment, which offers them a place to feel at home: “the environmental repertoire is vastly diminished in urban life, perhaps to the point of making genuine attachment to place very difficult” (Evernden 100-101). Although urban ecocriticism might seem at the other end of the scale than 'pure' ecocriticism, namely deep ecology, the two share the principles of being concerned about the environment. And both have to acknowledge that, at least today, so called wilderness is as much controlled by humans as are urban areas. The distance between the two is therefore decreasing (Bennett, "Metropolitan" 300-301). As a result, deep ecology and social ecology should not be considered enemies anymore but two branches which

complement each other. They do not have to adapt to the other's opposing point of view but rather look at the lowest common denomination, which is nature in any form (Bennett, "Metropolitan" 310-311). This is also what Buell means when saying that

the city as environment, both the built and the “natural” spaces, generally presents itself in pieces to literary and critical imagination. But at least we are starting to see the beginning of incorporations of urban and other severely altered, damaged landscapes – “brownfields” as well as greenfields – into ecocriticism's accounts of placeness and place-attachment. For ecocriticism to recognize “the city” as something other than non-place is itself a great and necessary advance. (*Future* 88)

In this way, urban ecocriticism is also applied to in literary texts. Here, urban ecocriticism is used “to compare some of the traditional urban genres – the detective, crime, and gangster stories – with the more recent ones, like dystopian science fiction and the disaster genre” (Ross 20). The change in genres is reflected in the depiction of the urban environment. While the earlier genres used the city as a mere background where the story was set in, the newer genres feature the city as a starring character: “the city as a whole has become the object, not just of judgement (in the biblical tradition), but of radical ecological transformations. Citizens, in these genres, are often passively at the mercy of an urban environment that has been turned against them” (Ross 20). This tradition ranges from literature to works of art also including films like *Batman* and *Ghostbusters* (Ross 20).

The citizens also become of interest in what urban ecocriticism calls “environmental racism” (Bennett, "Metropolitan" 303). In relation to 'classic' ecocriticism, which mostly focuses on the preservation of natural landscape and wilderness, urban ecocriticism is “mostly devoid of people of color” (Bennett, "Metropolitan" 304). Just like urban environments are outsiders of ecocriticism, people of colour are seen as a threat to a city's change. This leads to the attempt of combining both the environmental and the civil rights movement. Combining these two movements should of course not try to deflect from the fact that racism does not only exist in big cities, but that it is only a starting point (Bennett, "Metropolitan" 304).

A further focus is an ecofeminist perspective within urban ecocriticism. Ecofeminism, as combining “both a feminist and an environmentalist ethic” (Gardner 192), shows both the oppression of women as well as of nature. Ecofeminism with the urban environment looks at urban environmental issues in relation to feminist concerns,

for example “that pollution, such as lead poisoning, affects the children of the inner city disproportionately – particularly black children living below the poverty level” (Gardner 208), and especially in relation to single households. These issues unite gender, class, race and environment and show their complex interrelations. Urban problems are said to affect women more than men, such as income differences, medical care, heavier workloads (caring for both the household and workplace), pollution and poverty. “While the urban environment creates these greater demands on women as mothers and caregivers, it also serves to frustrate them in fulfilling these roles” (Gardner 208). Hence urban environments can be analysed through an ecofeminist lens, which “as an ethical approach is able to demonstrate that although calls for social and racial justice [...] are appropriate, it is not simply urban dwellers' rights that are under threat” (Gardner 209). In general, ecofeminism has the power to question urban environmental developments, and offer feminist solutions (Gardner 209).

As shown with these 'sub-categories' of ecocriticism, ecofeminism, deep ecology and urban ecocriticism/social ecology, the definition of ecocriticism as such gets quite complex and difficult. Ranging from deep ecology to ecofeminism and urban ecocriticism and even intersections within these areas, terms like environment and nature are used in a wide range, from pure nature like wilderness, to urban surroundings. Ecocritics are challenged to combine the notions of these terms and work with them, although this sometimes poses some problems. Especially the differences between deep ecology and social ecology seem impossible to overcome, and ecocritics have to face these problems and not strictly rule out the other side, especially as both have relevant claims which complement each other and could prove useful in finding possible solutions for the endangered environment.



### 3. Ecocriticism - A Romantic or Victorian Tradition?

Studying texts on ecocriticism and by ecocritics, the reader gets the feeling that the main focus lies on the Romantic period. This feeling might intensify when looking at one of the first and most important works in British green studies, Bate's *Romantic Ecology – Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*. As the title suggests, the main focus lies on the romantic period and William Wordsworth. But it is not only Bate who concentrates on the Romantic era, Carroll, too, is of the opinion that the favoured writers within British ecocriticism are the Romantics, who “are deemed particularly responsive to nature” (305) in contrast to Victorian writers, such as Austen, Dickens, Eliot, or Fielding, who are “relegated to the realm of purely personal and social preoccupations” (305). One writer, who, according to Sanders, can be excluded from this “mainstream British fiction” (183) group, is Thomas Hardy, who is regarded as a pure nature writer in the sense of ecocriticism, as he responds to ecocriticism's principles (Sanders 183), while in the works of the other Victorians “the social realm – the human morality play – is a far more powerful presence than nature” (Sanders 183). According to Carroll and Parham the ecocriticism approach has generally widened in the last few years and extended to other canonical writers, shifting away from the Romantics to include the above mentioned, as well as present day 'ecological writers' per se, who directly and deliberately refer to the ecological crisis in their writings.

One of the critics arguing in favour of a distinct Victorian ecology is John Parham, who critiques the dominance of the Romantics and argues that “despite its attempts to re-write the canon, ecocriticism, to some extent, has only succeeded in creating a canon of its own” (156), which for him is a Romantic canon (156). Parham especially criticises Bate's dominating book, *Romantic Ecology*, a study mainly focusing on Wordsworth. Parham argues that his book is not so much about Wordsworth but more about the Victorian tradition of combining nature and industrialisation and he therefore proposes the existence of what he calls 'Victorian ecology', a Victorian ecological tradition that offers a rich choice of environmentally confident texts.

Parham identifies three underlying principles for proposing a Victorian ecology: first, scientific philosophy and social philosophy, which are both related to contemporary ecology, second, the correspondence between Victorian critics and

modern environmental critics, especially concerning negative impacts, such as industrialisation, on the environment, and third, what Parham calls the 'shared critical problem'. This third reason is probably the most important one as it is what critics have identified to be the shared ambivalence towards Romanticism as the ecological root for ecocriticism. Pepper argues that “while Romanticism is one of the 'roots of ecocriticism', it is nevertheless, problematized by its concentration on 'the isolated individual' (contrary to ecology's holistic nature) and its failure to 'contemplate rationally the nature of social, political and economic structures'” (Pepper qtd. in Parham 159). A Romantic ecology, with the focus on the individual only instead of the ecological implications on a community as a whole, is therefore problematic for some ecocritics, who want to focus more on social ecology rather than deep ecology.

British nineteenth century writers lived in an age of dense population in the big cities, industrialisation, colonialism and new explorations into unknown places, often considered as 'wild' (Carroll 305). What differentiates the Victorian period from the Romantics is that the industrial revolution took its toll. Social, political and industrial changes were the order of the day (Bayer 86). The big fallacy in this period was the belief that the world could be divided into wilderness and cultivated territory. While wilderness was associated with pure nature, favoured by American ecocritics, cultivated territory was seen as something not pertaining to nature at all (Carroll 305). In his essay on Victorian ecology, Carroll tries to show how some of the wilderness entered into cultivated domestic Victorian writing. In his analysis, he argues that cities such as London, as for example in Dickens' and Joseph Conrad' novels, can be regarded as untamed and wild because “London is often a dangerous and bewildering wilderness, full of dark lairs that house monstrous, subhuman predators” (307). Hence Carroll argues in favour of urban criticism in relation to Victorian ecology, even going so far as to include more “cultivated” writers such as Austen, Thackeray, Gaskell or Eliot, who in his opinion also made their contributions to ecocriticism because even though they often focus on one place in particular, one estate or one farm, their setting is often as important as the characters as “it is kept vividly before the reader's eyes with all its attendant changes of season and weather, as an essential aspect in the quality of experience” (Carroll 308). For him, “plots in the Victorian novel are most often stories of growing up and stories of marriage, but such stories, in real life and in fiction, depend

heavily on the place in which people live” (308).

One of the differences between Romantic and Victorian ecology is the fact that Darwinism and the corresponding questions about evolutionary theory did not enter Romantic ecology. While Romanticism tried to seek the positive moral order and nature in balance, Victorian writers always had the impending evolution in the back of their mind. Victorian writing was therefore concerned with an

intense self-consciousness that derived from the 'uncertainty' engendered by social change (political upheaval, urbanization, loss of faith, and so on) and by a 'deep feeling of ambivalence about the sea, the sky, the seasonal tress, flowers, fruits, the very light of day – about the whole Romantic landscape. (Wendell qtd. in Parham 160)

While for the Romantics, "the point is not return to primitivity, but to discover in 'nature', both inner and outer, the source of redemption from the alienation and depredations of industrialism" (Soper, *Nature* 29), Parham is of the opinion that

ecological theory is diverse and that the utility of Victorian ecology lies in its range of available sources for and approaches to early ecological thinking. [...] Accordingly, the two criteria for studying those writers who might constitute Victorian ecology should be a detailed philosophical understanding of nature as a dialectical system and, in terms of the human relationship to it, an attempt to translate this understanding into some form of 'social philosophy'. (168-169)

In Parham's opinion, writers who fulfil these points are Ruskin, Morris, Hardy, Gaskell, Dickens, John Stuart Mill and Hopkins. Some of these writers also open up new perspectives in ecocriticism, such as urban ecocriticism in Gaskell's and Dicken's novels (Parham 169). Hardy, too, offers new perspectives on political ecology, depicting

the impact of a non-sustainable 'political economy', alternatively, on the rural ecosystem and its people. Both the reaping-machine that reaps in circular motions pushing 'rabbits, hares, snakes, rats, mice' into an 'ephemeral refuge' and inevitable death in the middle of the field, and the threshing machine that shakes Tess 'bodily by it spinning' and into an 'incessant quivering, in which every fibre of her frame participated' serve a distant metropolis exploiting land and people alike. (Parham 170)

Questions such as how the human is incorporated into the ecosystem, about the human body, and anxieties about society and nature become apparent. It is not surprising that Romantic and Victorian ecology have different viewpoints because

in the Victorian period, as we know, the industrial impacts experienced ('on the senses') by the 'Romantic artist' had escalated. In particular, urban expansion

created problems around housing, working conditions, unemployment, and what we would now more specifically understand as ecological problems – sanitation, air quality, disease, deforestation. (Parham 163)

These problems of course led to the desire to intervene and point to them, as well as to say and do something about them. According to Parham, one of the most important Victorian writers addressing these problems was John Ruskin, who was one of the first to recognise that it was the task of Victorians to point out ecological problems (164). Differentiating between 'typical' beauty, referring to aesthetic rules like symmetry in painting, and 'vital' beauty, referring to a character's inner beauty, is an important device for him of looking at nature and landscape. His interest lay in attacking Victorian environmental damage and with it came the concern for social engagement. His interest in the weather and whether we can determine its warning goes hand in hand with Hardy's description of the weather in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Oak's gift of reading the sky, including weather changes as well as the stars, is what to Ruskin would be the most effective consumption of natural energy without destruction (Parham 165).

It can be seen that Victorian ecology, although at the order of the day by ecocritics nowadays, is by no means undisputed, and still has to be argued for. As already shown in 'Urban Ecocriticism', the question whether cities can be used as 'natural' settings is still questioned, but it is quite clear that it cannot be left out anymore. As Westling, points out in her introduction to *The Environmental Tradition in English Literature*, a Victorian ecology is interested in different things than Romantic ecology:

John Parham's object in 'Was there a Victorian Ecology' is to complicate the 'Romantic Ecology' model proposed by Bate. Accordingly he views Victorians such as Ruskin, Morris, Tennyson, Carlyle, and Hardy as much more directly engaged with ecological questions than earlier writers of the century. Victorian writers, he argues, were keenly interested in the developing scientific disciplines of their day [...]. Furthermore, this scientific interest informed Victorian critiques of the impact of industrialism on the English landscape. (Westling 6)

Hardy might be situated as a writer between Romantic and Victorian ecology. While, like the Romantic, focusing on the aesthetic experience of landscape, celebrating the alienation from an industrialised world (Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 170) he is also interested in the modern processes of his time, which changed the country for future generations and which pointed towards the impossibility of maintaining the rural life which the

characters were used to. This will be analysed in the comparative analysis on Hardy and ecocriticism in the following chapters.

#### **4. Hardy and Ecocriticism**

While the physical setting was formerly treated as a by-product and only seen in relation to the writer, ecocriticism tries to the environment into its natural parts, expanding the notion of the world to its ecologic biosphere (Coupe 2). Grouping his novels together under the name of "Novels of Character and Environment" (Bate, *Song* 18), Thomas Hardy was the first writer who actively used the term environment, which makes for an interesting study concerning the landscape and the setting. This comparative analysis looks at how this physical setting, including men and pure nature, is interpreted by ecocritics and what the present-day reader can learn from the representation of this environment.

The first part, literary devices, looks at how Hardy confirms an ecological awareness as a writer himself, using language as a means to point towards an ecological crisis that he was aware of and focused on. Through the use of anthropomorphism, heightened senses and shifting narrative perspectives, Hardy brings the reader closer to the protagonists' relationship with the environment and shows the dependency of the human and non-human relationship.

This dependency between nature and men is also what ecocritics look at in their analysis of Hardy as a nature writer: topography, social ecology and the representation of the environment is what ecocritics look at in Hardy's novels. As far as topography and Thomas Hardy are concerned, Hiller J. Millis and B.P. Birch offer insights into the relationship between "man, the community and the environment" (Birch 352), looking at the geographical importance of the Wessex area which Hardy focused on. With the use of topology and toponymy, these two critics look at how Hardy's use of the real area of Dorset and fictional setting of Wessex serve as an ecological reminder of the importance of a particular environment. This topographical importance is also what is reflected in social ecology, which is analysed by ecocritics like Richard Kerridge,

Jonathan Bate and Lawrence Buell: Kerridge is particularly interested in the characters' relationship with the non-human environment, Bate analyses the environment from a historical perspective, looking at past events that influence the present and the future, and Buell contributes to ecocriticism's culture/nature dichotomy in relation to Hardy. All three of them look at how men change the environment and in what ways men and nature can live together. Additionally, ecocritics Pat Louw and Stefan Horlacher focus on the power relations between men and women in the respective communities, a debate which centres on an ecofeminist analysis of Hardy's novels. These topographical and social analyses are centred on character movement within the environment, focusing on the social aspect of human behaviour.

The last chapter centres on Hardy and deep ecology, providing a more biocentric approach than social ecology (Hutchings 181). Within this approach, Miller, Kerridge and especially Buell look at how Hardy illustrates the special importance of the environment which has to be treated with care in order to avoid life changing consequences. It looks at how Hardy presents pure nature and if and how biodiversity is maintained.

Generally, this part will look closely at how the environment in Hardy's works is analysed by ecocritics in terms of social ecology, deep ecology and how it is presented by Hardy himself. The main focus lies on Hardy's novels and the relationship between the characters and the environment. This environment comprises the human and non-human biosphere, including the existing landscape of Dorset as well as the fictional setting of Wessex.

## **4.1 Literary Devices**

The ecological crisis of the last years has been more and more reflected in literary ecocriticism. Ecocritics primarily look at the relationship between literature and the environment in relation to the setting of novels and poems as well as the characters' movement and behaviour within it. This often leaves out the actual language with which the author or poet describes the environment in order to point to ecological occurrences. Alwin Fill, who in "Literatur und Ökologisierung" analyses how ecocritical language is reflected in literature, is of the opinion that "ökologische und ökokritische Ideen werden durch Sprache vermittelt" (145). This means that it is not only the content which serves the purpose of shedding light on ecological problems but that language itself has an active part in it as well. Halliday formulated the importance of language in relation to the environmental crisis with the following words: "destruction of species, pollution and the like— are not just problems for the biologists and physicists. They are problems for the applied linguistic community as well" (199). Thus, language is one of the most important factors to express one's concern with the ecological crisis because it is the direct link between the author's opinion on ecological problems and plays an important role to express one's concern.

To illustrate the link between language and the environment, Hardy uses different literary devices: anthropomorphism, the de-personification of humanity, shifting narrative positions and the use of heightened senses. Each of these devices will be analysed individually, highlighting their importance for the ecological impression of the text and what purpose they serve.

### **4.1.1 Anthropomorphism**

Language, which in its most evaluated form is given to humans only, is anthropocentric in itself (Fill 148), insofar as 'anthropocentric' means that humans regard themselves "as the central fact of the universe, to which all surrounding facts have reference" (Mühlhäusler qtd. in Fill 146). This would mean that language generally cannot adequately express what is going on in the non-human sphere. According to

Guttmann, “some ecologists, [...] such as those allied with the deep ecology movement, fault writers who presume to speak for the natural world, finding in this act one more example of human hubris or anthropocentricity as they put it” (37).

To overcome the difficulty between an anthropocentric language and an adequate description of the environment, Fill differentiates three types of ecological language, namely anthropocentric, anthropomorphic and physiocentric (147). An anthropocentric language distinguishes humans from animals and plants, using different words and expressions to refer to their living space, how they look and how they behave. It also refers to terms alluding to nature which are given a human-focused designation, such as 'delicious meat' (Fill 148).

In contrast to anthropocentrism, anthropomorphism does not differentiate between humans and nature (including animals, plants, rocks...). In an anthropomorphic language, human attributes and words, such as uncle, sister, etc. are used to refer to nature. Plants and animals can have human feelings, they can love and hate, they can conduct human gestures, such as laughing or bowing, and nature's language, for example the screech of an owl, can mirror human language (Fill 149). In literature, anthropomorphic language is often found in "humanizing metaphors" (Fill 150) in order to blur the lines between humans and nature (Fill 150). The term anthropomorphism is preferred in this paper instead of 'personification' as personification again refers to the human- instead of the non-human sphere.

The third category of ecological language is physiocentric language, which is related to, and often not quite distinguishable from, anthropomorphism. This kind of language tries to 'speak' through the eyes of nature, giving nature its own value. This leads to expressions such as 'non-human companions' to refer to 'pets' and non-human animal products' referring to eggs, milk or cheese (Fill 150-151).

The ecological importance of Hardy can be found in his use of anthropomorphism, linking nature and humans and dissolving the lines between the human and non-human world (Fill 155). Two ways of this device can be found in the works of Hardy, the personification of nature, referring to the personification of the human sphere, and the 'naturalising of humans', denominating a de-personification of humanity that brings humans closer to nature.



#### 4.1.1.1 The Personification of Nature

Personification, or prosopopeia, is a literary figure "in which either an inanimate object or an abstract concept is spoken of as though it were endowed with life or with human attributes or with feelings" (Abrams 103). In Hardy's novels and poems, this humanisation can often be found in relation to nature, leading to an anthropomorphic personification. According to Birch, "he [Hardy] not only tied the characters and their misfortunes to particular environments, [...], but often humanized the physical landscape to further stress the ecological link" (354), such as in the case of the heath in *The Return of the Native*:

It was at present a place perfectly accordant with man's nature – neither ghastly, hateful, nor ugly: neither commonplace, unmeaning, not tame; but, like man, slighted and enduring; and withal singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony. As with some persons who have lived long apart, solitude seemed to look out of its countenance. It had a lonely face, suggesting tragical possibilities. (Hardy, *Return* 11)

This heath is a "personification of impersonal forces that rule man cruelly without cruel intent" (Miller 27).

The reader can find various examples of this humanisation in *The Woodlanders*, where "nature does not carry on her government with a view to such feelings" (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 22). Nature here is referred to as a 'government', a typical human form of power relations which is used in reference to nature because of nature's power over human beings living in it. In another instance, Hardy uses human attributes to refer to nature, as in the following description of a new day arising: "There was now a distinct manifestation of morning in the air, and presently the bleared visage of a sunless winter day emerged like a dead-born child" (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 26). The winter does not only have a human face but is also compared to a dead-born child, conveying the human sentiments of a still-birth to those of a sunless winter. These examples show how Hardy uses personification of nature as a means of bringing it closer to humans.

Fill uses the third and fourth stanza of Hardy's poem "The Darkling Thrush" to point out the anthropomorphic personification through the use of a thrush:

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

So little cause of 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 *blessèd Hope*, whereof *he knew*  
And I was unaware.<sup>1</sup>

The poem reflects the positive mood of a thrush in contrast to the author's pessimistic view on the upcoming twentieth century (Fill 155). The anthropomorphic personification of the thrush can be found in the use of the personal pronoun *he* to refer to an aged, frail and gaunt thrush, who/which equals a singer during the evensong. The thrush has, like a human being, free will ("had chosen") and sings an "ecstatic" song, carrying hope for the future. He/It even seems to know more than the pessimistic author (Fill 155-156). According to Fill, the use of this anthropomorphic personification is to abolish the lines between nature and humanity. Nevertheless, the thrush and the author are never completely equal because the last two lines show again a distinction between men and nature ("he" and "I"). The interesting thing is that in the end it is the author who is inferior to the thrush in knowledge because the thrush is nearer to God, expressed by the words "evensong" and "blessed", than the author (Fill 156).

Generally, the personification of nature evens humans and non-humans, putting them on the same level. Neither of the two is inferior to the other, which stresses nature's importance and shows that humans cannot live 'above' nature, dominating at without serious consideration. The same happens in the de-personification of humanity, which brings humans down from their usual dominating position to the level of nature.

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<sup>1</sup> in Fill 155

#### 4.1.1.2 The De-Personification of Humanity

Hardy not only uses anthropomorphic nature, he also uses a device which will here be called the 'naturalising' of humans, referring to humans given nature's attributes. Still a personification, this device is suggested here to point out nature's influence on humans, leading to a de-personification of humanity. Some of the characters, such as the unnamed man in the first chapter in *The Return of the Native*, are associated with nature's attributes, seemingly completely in harmony with nature: "Along the road walked an old man. He was white-headed as a mountain, bowed in the shoulders, and faded in general aspect. He wore a glazed hat, an ancient boat-cloak, and shoes" (Hardy, *Return* 13). In contrast to the personification of nature in the first part, this passage shows how humanity is de-personalised by the use of anthropomorphism. This kind of anthropomorphic language is, in Hardy's case, only applied to characters living in harmony with nature, treating it with respect, such as the reddleman, who seems a creature born out of nature because he has lots of knowledge about the environment (Bayer 88). The reddleman's closeness to nature can be found in "his eye, which glared so strangely through his stain, [and] was in itself attractive - keen as that of a bird of prey, and blue as autumn mist" (Hardy, *Return* 14). He is tied to nature because his eyes are compared to that of a bird, and have nature's colour. He and his fellow workers are even so involved with nature and its animals that they take over their habits: "Every individual was so involved in furze by his method of carrying the faggots that he appeared like a bush on legs till he had thrown them down. The party had marched in trail, like a travelling flock of sheep; that is to say the strongest first, the weak and young behind" (Hardy, *Return* 19).

Another character who is described in terms of this anthropomorphic language is Marty South. In *The Woodlanders*, Marty's hair is compared to nature: "Upon the pale scrubbed deal of the coffin-stool-table they [the long locks of her hair] stretched like waving and ropy weeds over the washed white bed of a stream" (22). Her hair, being compared to weeds, brings Marty's character even closer to nature than it already is, fusing her body's attributes with nature's image. In chapter V, Hardy picks up this idea of her hair being compared to nature again, when Giles finds himself next to Marty carrying the basket containing her hair: "But nature's adornment was still hard by, in

fact within two feet of him. In Marty's basket was a brown-paper packet, and in the packet the chestnut locks [...]" (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 36). Not only is Marty given her hair by nature, but it is directly referred to as 'nature's adornment'. Also the use of the colour chestnut refers to both her hair as well as the colour and texture of a chestnut tree, linking her directly to nature.

The characters of Eustacia and Clym are also de-personalised by the use of anthropomorphism. Clym, although punished by nature first in getting blind, comes again closer to nature by giving up his ideas of educating his environment and instead working as a furze-cutter, a trade directly related to the earth (Kerridge, "Maps" 272):

This man from Paris was now so disguised by his leather accoutrements, and by the goggles he was obliged to wear over his eyes, that his closest friend might have passed by without recognising him. He was a brown spot in the midst of an expanse of olive-green gorse and nothing more. Though frequently depressed in spirit, when not actually at work, owing to thoughts of Eustacia's position and his mother's estrangement, when in the full swing of labour he was cheerfully disposed and calm.

His daily life was of a curious microscopic sort, his whole world being limited to a circuit of a few feet from his person. His familiars were creeping and winged things, and they seemed to enroll him in their band. Bees hummed around his ears with an intimate air, and tugged at the heath and furze flowers at his side in such numbers as to weigh them down to the sod. The strange amber- coloured butterflies which Edgon produced, and which were never seen elsewhere, quivered in the breath of his lips, [...]. Huge flies, ignorant of larders and wire-netting, and quite in a savage state, buzzed about him without knowing that he was a man. (Hardy, *Return* 247)

Clym has become like nature himself, completely disguised and even unrecognisable for these 'lower' creatures which seem completely unfazed by him and do not fear him at all. Similarly to Clym, the reader can find a "scene in which Eustacia Vye is described as being a part of Egdon Heat" (Nishimura 910):

The form [of Eustacia] was so much like an organic part of the entire motionless structure that to see it move would have impressed the mind as a strange phenomenon. Immobility being the chief characteristic of that whole which the person formed portion of, the discontinuance of immobility in any quarter suggested confusion. Yet that is what happened. The figure perceptibly gave up its fixity, shifted a step or two, and turned round. As if alarmed, it descended on the right side of the barrow, with the glide of a waterdrop down a bud, and then vanished. The movement had been sufficient to show more clearly the characteristics of the figure: it was a woman's. (Hardy, *Return* 17-18)

As in the case of Clym, character and nature become indistinguishable. Eustacia is so rooted in the landscape, that she could easily be taken for a rock. Also her movement resembles that of a drop of water, which glides down a bud and in the end transpires. For Nishimura this interdependence of nature and character shows "that in Hardy's world, both objects and characters are reliant upon personification for their very existence, [to the extent that] the act of writing consists for him not in representing an existing reality with language, but in using language as the medium through which to call a reality into being" (Nishimura 911):

The passage implies first that the heath owes its personification in part to the character of Eustacia, and second that a fictional character is something "immobile" made mobile, an entity brought into existence rather than pulled from it. For Hardy, characterization is completed personification, the trope of prosopopoeia taken literally. (Nishimura 911)

The use of this anthropomorphic language shows that humanity and nature are brought closer together, especially in harmonious moments. Characters who live in harmony even become like nature itself, which is established linguistically by the use of anthropocentrism.

#### **4.1.2 Heightened Senses**

Additionally to anthropomorphism, Hardy further used the device of heightened senses to make his reader more aware of his characters' environment, especially the auditory sense. The gift of these senses is mostly limited to native characters who have a vast knowledge of their environment and can distinguish between the different sounds that can be heard in the environment.

This contrast in perception of the sounds can be found in Fitzpiers' and Eustacia's hearing. Fitzpiers, a foreigner to Little Hintock, is not comfortable and familiar with the sounds he hears: "He [Fitzpiers] heard in the distance a curious sound, something like the quack of ducks, which though it was common enough here about this time was not common to him" (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 129). But when Eustacia, a native inhabitant, listens to the music of the wind, every tone is familiar and distinguishable:

It might reasonably have been supposed that she was listening to the wind, which rose somewhat as the night advanced, and laid hold of the attention. [...]

Part of its tone was quite special; what was heard there could be heard nowhere else. Gusts in innumerable series followed each other from the north west, and when each one of them raced past the sound of its progress resolved into three. Treble, tenor, and bass notes were to be found therein. (Hardy, *Return* 56)

Standing alone in the night, a woman, who is later revealed to be Eustacia, is completely aware of all the different sounds, treble, tenor and bass notes, which the wind makes. This sound distinction is possible as for two reasons, firstly because of the silence around her, which heightens her senses, and secondly because of her local knowledge of all the trees, flowers and hills that contribute to the wind's song:

Suddenly, on the barrow, there mingled with all this wild rhetoric of night a sound which modulated so naturally into the rest, that its beginning and ending were hardly to be distinguished. 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. (Hardy, *Return* 57)

Eustacia can discern each of these different sounds and even knows when to contribute to the 'wild rhetoric' herself, without disturbing the wind's music. Eustacia can use all her senses to find her way round the area (Rode 53). At night, she uses her ears in exchange for her eyes: "She strained her eyes to see them, but was unable. Such was her intentness however, that it seemed as if her ears were performing the functions of seeing as well as hearing" (Hardy, *Return* 116).

For Kerridge, these instances show the relief of the modern, cruel world into an unaffected one, the characters concentrating on what is most important in the woodlands and the heath: the nature surrounding them. It benefits the character to take a break from modern and foreign intrusions. Consequentially, these "pauses may be carefully placed to heighten anticipation" ("Maps" 269), a device used as "a deliberate dislocation of ordinary perception" (Buell, *Environmental Imagination* 104). Thus Hardy leads the reader to what Buell calls "environmental literacy" (*Environmental Imagination* 107) whose "purpose is to remind us of neglected non-human perspectives" (Kerridge, "Maps" 269). The reader is introduced to the environment through the characters' senses, which to him serve as an imagery of the nature presented. Hardy wants the reader, who unlike the native characters does not have their environmental knowledge, to listen closely, so that he can pick up some of the ecological awareness of the characters.

### 4.1.3 Shifting narrative positions and the effects on the reader

Another literary device found in the novels is that the readers are constantly challenged by the characters' shifting narrative positions and are never allowed to rest for a minute because the reader himself shifts together with the characters. These different perspectives provide the reader with various ecological insights, which in turn make the reader question his own ecological position on earth. As Kerridge puts it:

in Hardy's narrative it is the frequent shifting, in spatial and social terms, of the reader's perspective that brings to life such a sense of responsibility. The reader may be positioned close to a character and then made to retreat to the perspective of a passing tourist. [...] Each shift of the narrator's position asks us to reassess our own. ("Ecological Hardy" 133-134)

These different ecological narrative positions range from being a mere passer-by, as in the case of the barber from Great Hintock, who just stays for a few minutes, completes his business and then leaves, to the aesthetic viewer, like Fitzpiers, appreciating the landscape for its beauty, to the native, such as Giles, who has grown up and lived in this environment his whole life. Hardy deliberately uses these ecological positions and the characters insights into what they entail to make the reader think about them and about himself. To achieve this kind of relation between the characters and the reader, Hardy makes the reader both observer and character, both 'outsider' (observer perspective) and 'insider' (character perspective) letting the reader take part in the story and the setting (Kerridge, "Ecological Hardy" 151).

The reader develops his own position gradually, constantly finding himself in a borderline position, sympathising or condemning the characters' ecological positions and responsibilities and shifting with the characters' views. From the beginning of the novel, the reader usually takes on the position of the outsider, coming to a foreign environment, observing the characters and the environment. In the course of the novel, by learning the characters' perspectives, the reader gets closer to their positions and can become an insider himself.

According to Kerridge, Hardy provides such a different narrative shift at the beginning of *The Woodlanders*, namely that from insider's to outsider's position, when the reader is introduced to

an unspecified "rambler" arriving in the place where the novel is set. Out of this guidebook introduction to the region and its landscape, the particular

neighbourhood of Little Hintock slowly comes into focus. After several pages, the “rambler,” who until this point might be anyone and functions as a generalized reader, is identified as a particular character, Barber Percombe. Abruptly he is distant in social class from the implied reader. (“Ecological Hardy” 151)

The rambler is one of those characters only visiting Little Hintock, providing the reader with a tourist’s perspective. At first, the reader makes the journey with him, being introduced to Little Hintock through the rambler’s eyes. As the reader does not know anything about this character, neither his name, age, profession, history, purpose of the journey nor his attitude towards Little Hintock and its inhabitants, the rambler at this stage of the novel equals the reader because both share the same perspective: that of being strangers. But when the rambler is known as Barber Percombe, the reader distances himself from this character. The rambler has become a specific character of the novel while the reader finds himself the observer of both the character and the landscape. “Ceasing to be the reader’s proxy, as he [the barber] was at the outset, he becomes a character in the scene, an object of the reader’s gaze” (Kerridge, “Ecological Hardy” 151). The reader shifts from an insider’s to an outsider’s perspective.

This is a constant narrative shift in Hardy’s novels, the reader shifting between outside observer and inside character, which gives him the different ecological focuses of the novel’s landscape. Depending on the character that the reader either observes or is, he is provided with different ecological viewpoints, either viewing the portrayed landscape as a whole or in detail.

Readers are thus shown a series of intermediate positions. Nature, similarly, is always shifting and alternating, appearing as a knot of emotional significance and scientific objects. Hardy’s narrative perspective sometimes draws back to take in a wide sweep of landscape, and sometimes zooms in close [...]. (Kerridge, “Ecological Hardy” 151)

These shifting ecological views, being an insider or an outsider, of the landscape provide the reader with the necessary information, which he needs to form his own ecological position. According to Louw, an ecological reader has to be able to envision these various viewpoints, and be conscious about them as “the imagery of vision [...] provides a way of accessing the forest communities and gives a key to the dynamic process of identity formation in relation to place” (Louw 113). The reader’s identity formation takes place by re-valuing all the narrative positions offered by the characters



and in the end forming his own identity, with which he takes on the ecological responsibility coming with choosing to be an insider (the native) or an outsider (the tourist) (Louw 113). This enables him to choose for himself in the end whether to become an insider or stay an outsider. It offers the reader the opportunity to use all the information provided by the shifting positions and even use them to his own advantage in preventing the future destruction of the environment because he can apply the ecological knowledge, gained through Hardy, to modern-day life and knows what happens if he takes on one particular perspective. In this sense the shifting narrative positions serve Bate's understanding of an ecocritical reading: to live "with thoughtfulness and with care for the earth" ("Culture" 559).

Hardy uses this literary device to make the reader aware of the different ecological positions that can be taken. He offers various insights into life in the woodlands or the heath so that in the end the reader can assess his own position (Louw 113). Additionally, Kerridge is of the opinion that this literary technique serves to make

the readers long for, or fantasize, the possibility of intervention, and thus emphasizes the exclusion that is the reader's price for leisure and safety. This technique also reveals the dependency of nature on those who observe and construct it. ("Ecological Hardy" 151)

Especially the power of finding oneself in the position of a character, as in the case of Barber Percombe's introduction, makes the reader want to change certain happenings in the stories as well as the landscape portrayed. Although the reader is not part of this nature, he still longs for control over it as a character and an outsider and thus will remain an intruder and outsider "since the shifts of narrative position so often remind us that reading itself is a sort of intrusion" ("Maps" 271).

The different positions affect the reader insofar as he starts questioning his own ecological position in life. Nabhan suggests that we might overcome our doubt about the shifts from one position to the other by valuing it as diversity, which enriches our life (Nabhan qtd. in "Maps" 272). We have to accept that everyone can find himself in one of the three suggested positions, passer-by, aesthetic viewer and native inhabitant, and even in more than one at the same time, as will be seen in the case of the borderline characters. And as mentioned by Kerridge, the reader experiences responsibility ("Ecological Hardy" 133): by looking at the environment through the shifting narrative positions the reader is able to expand his horizon and take on responsibility for his

actions within the environment. It serves to raise the reader's consciousness - which, according to Glotfelty, is the most important task of ecocriticism (xxiv) - by making him aware of the different positions he can find himself in and what this means for him personally as well as for the environment.

## 4.2 Topography

Using the aforementioned literary devices to contribute to the imagery of nature, many ecocritics point towards Hardy as an ecocritical writer, since the author's writing style relates to the ecocritical notions already pointed out. According to Kerridge, this combination of literature and the environment is not an easy undertaking. Literature is put into the category of the humanities, a field more connected to humans, while the environment is often put into the category of science, technology and business. Literature operates on a more personal level than the sciences which try to measure and categorise by using results. What ecocriticism tries to achieve, is to combine literary texts with 'real life', to show what happens in the world in terms of ecological issues. Problems addressed in these texts should be taken seriously, instead of being regarded as something distant because it is only a written word instead of a scientific measurement (Kerridge, "Introduction" 5). What should be found in ecocritical texts is therefore a combination of the personal and the global, making the public aware of small-scale and large-scale problems that affect us all (Westling 5-6).

One form of analysing the physical environment by combining both the humanities and the sciences, is the use of geographical topography, "the general configuration of the land surface, including its relief and the location of its features, natural and human-made" (Huggett 3). Looking towards geography for ecocritical analyses is important because "we also live and die in place" (Bate, *Romantic Ecology* 85), rooting us to a particular area and its culture. This form of ecocriticism combines both geographical and socio-ecological knowledge of the terrain and its inhabitants. In relation to literature, topography serves as the setting's basis, looking at how the literary environment is made up, and is related to the author's "rootedness, his *knowing* of place" (Bate, *Romantic Ecology* 87). On the one hand topography includes physical

features such as the location of woods and villages as well as symbolical features such as the sun and the moon, on the other hand topography uses topology, to look at the characters' movement across the literal surface of the landscape and toponymy, to look at the characters' names in relation to the environment.

Generally, a text, which in Miller's analysis is *The Return of the Native*, functions as the reading of a new map (Miller 51): "the reader moves across the text of *The Return of the Native*, going from feature to feature across its surface" (40). Together with the narrator the reader moves across the heath's topography, but also across the text in a literal way, moving from one page to another. Just as the earth has its surface where the characters dwell and stay, the text's surface can be moved upon by the eyes of the readers. The reader 'stays' in the same villages and travels along the same roads as the characters, and it is his task to decipher the environmental signs and symbols of the heath, which forebode the story: for instance the sun as a sign which cannot be looked at directly without consequences, a moth, flying around Eustacia as the symbol for Wildeve's return, her dream forestalling her death, and the heath's 'tragical possibilities' reflecting the real tragedies happening in the story and on the heath (Miller 40).

Miller uses topography to show the socio-ecological link between place and people:

The remarkable poetry, as it might be called, of *The Return of the Native*, as of much of Hardy's work in fiction and in verse, is topographical poetry. Or rather it is a poetry of the exchanges between human beings and the landscape. [...] It would be almost as true to say that *The Return of the Native* is a prose poem about topography of the heath, the people in their tangled relations standing for this, as it would be true to say that it is a novel in which the human relationships are symbolized by the feature of the heath. (40)

Here, Miller looks at the novel's topography in relation to human interaction: characters and place serve each other, both feed off the other and exist because the other is there. For Miller, the ecocritical importance in Hardy's *The Return of the Native* lies in these links between nature and the people. By using mental mappings Miller makes the reader aware of how everything and everyone, reader/characters/author, are linked to each other and cannot be separated, all three of them moving across the same environmental surface. And it is this environmental surface, the topography, which remains in the end, "the imperturbable countenance of the heath, which having defied the cataclysmal

onsets of centuries, reduced to insignificance by its seamed and antique features the wildest turmoil of a single man" (Hardy, *Return* 317). These features

are the heath's topographical characteristics, which allow it to be seen as a face. These include superficial marks – lines of roads, paths, and fences – marks made by man on the landscape, seams that are connecting filaments and also rifts. The characters have, in their comings and goings, ever so slightly altered those features and made them legible in a different way. They now tell a different story. This makes it possible to draw a new map, different from any real one, with different place names and a different configuration. (Miller 51)

They can be drawn into a map, which is shaped and reshaped by character movement, and which refers to topology, the author's "specificity, his *recording* of 'times and places of composition'" (Bate, *Romantic Ecology* 87).

#### 4.2.1 Topology

As established before, the socio-ecological use of character movement is of importance to the representation of the environmental surface of the setting insofar as it changes the surface's features. Linked to topography in this sense is topology, also known as mental mapping, "the study of the placement of places" (Miller 10), which looks at the movement of people back and forth between different communities, cities and habitats in general. In relation to Hardy, Birch is of the opinion that it is in this topological sense "that the geographer can most usefully contribute ideas about imaginative literature" (Birch 353) because it "reflects Hardy's primary interest in examining, by means of his fiction, the nature of the relationship between man, the community and the environment" (Birch 353).

Topology, a form of ecological criticism based within the field of modern geography, studies these relationship between men and space and looks at how characters move within the narrative setting. It traces "out in its course an arrangement of places, dwellings, and rooms joined by paths and roads" (Miller 10), investigating "the mental mappings we make of our environments, whether "we" are aborigines or dwellers in modern cities" (Miller 9). Everything gets linked and re-linked mentally by reading and re-reading. Hardy's novels are analysed for characters' movement within, as well as outside their communities and what this means for the ecocritical debate:

A novel is a figurative mapping. The story traces out diachronically the movement of the characters from house to house and from time to time, as the crisscross of their relationships gradually creates an imaginary space. This space is based on the real landscape, charged now with the subjective meaning of the story that has been enacted within it. (Miller 19)

Generally, Hardy's environmental novels, such as *The Woodlanders*, *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *The Return of the Native*, can be divided into an inside and an outside circle. The isolated inhabitants, also natives to the environment, such as the reddleman, Gabriel Oak, and in the end Winterbourne - who has to move due to economic reasons -, live farther away from the centre. This is actually why they find themselves in harmony with nature, as they geographically reside nearer to the woodlands and forests, which surround the communities. The reader can therefore draw up a mental map, as does ecological topology, and draw a circle: at the geographical centre, one can find the villagers, living in towns such as Little Hintock. In the outer circle, ecocritics find those geographically and ecologically nearest to nature, leading an isolated life (Louw 100).

The various dimensions, inner circle, outer circle and those communities established beyond these two, are linked through a road system, a "connective structure joining two places - a known point of departure and a recognized yet more uncertain destination" (Rode 5). These roads were sketched by Hardy himself in *The Return of the Native*, providing the reader with a map as to the locations of the heath's topography. The use of such a map, as Rode mentions, is that it "grounds the reader in a landscape that seems tangible and realistic rather than merely fantastic and fictional" (23). And Hardy "provided sufficient topographic information and landscape description to allow the reader to identify fragments of the real world within the fictional" (Birch 354). The names used in the map and their positions make the reader look at the fictional landscape in relation to the real one, leading to Hardy's first point in using the map: to get the reader's interest in the novel and its places, which for him, in the end, signifies commercial success (Rode 25):

The text of the novel and the real landscape may be thought of as elements in a series. The actual landscape exists not only in itself but as if it has already been transposed into photographs or maps, for example, into official topographical survey maps [...] of Dorset, or into photographs of "originals" that illustrated the Wessex and Anniversary editions of Hardy's novels. The real maps are in

turn remapped in the texts of the novels that are “based on” those scenes and on the psycho-socio-economic realities of ways of life there – modes of transportation, agriculture, kinds of houses, roads, paths, walls, marriage customs, kinship systems, the annual round of local observances -for example, the Maypole, the Fawkes Fires, and the Mummers' Play in *The Return of the Native*. (Miller 19)

Mental mappings are therefore an important device, not only for the author, who can play with the reader by providing literal maps of the novels' fictional landscapes, but also for the readers, because mental mapping allows them to reread the stories and establish new relationships between the characters, the environment and themselves. The continual challenge for the reader to distinguish between fictional and real, especially with existing photographs and maps of the fictional landscape, provides Hardy with a perfect basis for reader interest.

Hardy's second purpose of using the map is "to provide unity of place" (Rode 33), which works in a twofold way. Firstly it narrows the setting down to particular places, focusing on the narrative, and secondly it constricts character movement as it only allows them to move within Hardy's sketched map. Insofar, the map reflects Eustacia's restlessness of wanting to break out of her native environment but not being able to (Rode 33). As Miller points out, these roads are "seams that are connecting filaments and also rifts" (51). In the sense of the road as a rift, the incompatibility of Eustacia and Clym is reflected in the map:

Although Eustacia and Clym both view the road as *prospect*, their prospective destinations are diametrically opposed: Clym employs the road to to return to the heath, leaving Paris and his past behind while Eustacia would use the road to escape the heath to Paris, her destination and future. (Rode 50)

The mapping of Eustacia's native environment restricts her in her goals: she has to stay. The farthest point she reaches is also the farthest point on the map, Shadwater Weir, where "the road approached the river which formed the boundary of the heath in this direction" (Hardy, *Return* 360). She drowns in her "topographical limit" (Rode 55), leaving Clym to roam the heath and the roads alone.

Mental mapping is of ecocritical importance as it is through character movement that the characters and the readers explore the fictional environment. To be able to draw these new maps, Miller suggests a rereading of the reading, as the rereading of the landscape offers new possibilities. It additionally brings attention to the real

environment, as Wessex and Dorset are so closely linked, both existing in terms of maps. The characters alter the environment by their movement, leaving their traces on the heath's surface, as does the reader on the real landscape. The difference between the characters' movement and the reader's is that "of course the events of the novel never really happened" (Miller 51). And "if the reader is aware of this, he or she will think of the novel as a paradigmatic representation of the way dwelling in a place, living and dying there, changes it" (51). In this respect, topology serves as raising the reader's ecological awareness, making him see how the characters' movement can change the topography of the earth.

#### 4.2.2 Toponymy

In addition to the topology in Hardy's novels, topographers also concern themselves with toponymy, the study of "the names of the chief characters and places" (Miller 45), which refer to the author's "localness, his naming of places" Bate, *Romantic Ecology* 87). The novel provides Miller with ample opportunities to show how the novel's toponymy relates to the environment, especially the linkage between the characters' names to the author and to the landscape.

The ecological importance of the novel's toponymy can be found in the personal link between the author and his writing, showing Hardy's personal involvement with the environment. Firstly, Hardy is present in name by writing the story and determining the characters' movement around the heath. Secondly, Hardy left his name on Wessex by re-mapping existing Dorset and placing Egdon Heath on a map where "in living they [the characters] have left the traces of their lives behind in tombstone inscriptions and in names given to houses, villages, fields, roads, or streams" (Miller 46).

The personal involvement of Hardy is also to be found in the names of the characters. These, according to Miller, are related to Hardy's own name, as they all, orthographically and/or acoustically, "combine the hard consonance of the first part of "Hardy" with some version" (47), linking the author personally to his characters. Additionally, they are also permutations of each other, containing parts of their story in the name, which are in turn related to the heath: 'Vye' containing the word 'eye',

'Yeobright' containing 'bright eye', 'Diggory' standing for 'digging in the earth', 'Venn' for 'van', a gipsy cart, 'Wildevye' for a 'wild beast in the night' and 'Damon' for 'demon' (Miller 46). In a sense, all the names show what Miller deems necessary for good names – arbitrariness and motivation, because for him a good name "must take values from both the public domain and twist them so they function in a way that corresponds, however obscurely, to the nature of the person or place named or to its function in a system of relationships making a story" (47).

This system is also reflected in the toponymy of the places in the novel: 'Mistover Knap', where Eustacia and Captain Vye are staying, denominates a place behind a veil but at the same time rising out of the mist ("knap" signifying 'hill'), which goes together with Eustacia rising out as a single spot on the hill (Hardy, *Return* 17). This toponymy also applies to "Blooms-End", the Yeobrights' cottage, whose name stands for "the return of the native" as "the bloom ends, the flower goes back into the ground from which it came and to which it is native" (Miller 48). These names show how Hardy deliberately uses toponymy as a link to nature but also as a back-projection to his authorship.

The link between toponymy and the environment is also obvious in *The Woodlanders*. Winterbourne and Oak, two completely opposite characters, are not only differentiated in their relation with the environment but also in their toponymy. While 'Winterbourne' signifies everything related to nature, namely one of the four seasons as well as a stream, hence showing his obvious link to the rural community, 'Fitzpierre's', although related to the ancient family of Oakbury-Fitzpiers, including the traditional tree in the name, rejects this part of the name and goes by Fitzpiers alone, showing no ties to nature (Bate, "Culture" 553). Bate relates the oak rather to Winterbourne (Bate, "Culture" 554), as "he had a marvellous power of making trees grow. Although he would seem to shovel in the earth quite carelessly there was a sort of sympathy between himself and the fir, oak, or beech that he was operating on" (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 63). These toponymies show again both arbitrariness and motivation, not being too obvious in their choice but still relatable to the characters and their story.

All in all, the ecological importance of toponymy links the characters' and places' names to the environment portrayed in the novels. It shows the characters' motivation behind their actions and how their names can effectively function as a



portrayal of the story and the environment. In other words, it serves as a reminder of a particular environment, as in the case of Hardy the Dorset/Wessex area, as a place's toponymy is timeless: while the real map of the Dorset landscape has changed over time, the Wessex area with its fictional names stays the same. This timelessness is made possible by toponymy in relation to mental mapping: "These maps may be thought of as the last element in the series going from the real landscapes to the maps or photographs of them, to the texts of the novels, to the the maps based on the novels" (Miller 20). Miller argues that it is this map, made up by new names, which remains in the end, even after the characters' death as well as after the change of the real landscape. (Miller 20).

The novels' characters need these maps to "live and die in place" (Bate, *Romantic Ecology* 85). Contrary to these characters, who need roads and places to move around, Hardy's poetry is mostly absent of entitled places because of the lack of people in the poems. According to Bate, the absence of names shows Hardy's rootedness to place more than the novels' names: "the people who know places best, who are most rooted in them, tend not to be those who give them names. They do not need to bother with maps" (*Romantic Ecology* 87). This is found in Hardy's poetry, in which he labels his poems with names such as 'Scene. - A sad-coloured landscape, Waddonvale', 'From Pummery-Tout to where the Gibbet is' or 'By Mellstock Lodge and Avenue'. According to Bate, this kind of naming places shows Hardy's particular knowledge of his native region (transformed into a fictional area), which is related to Hardy's personal involvement with the environment, in which he also invokes the spirit of his beloved-ones (*Romantic Ecology* 110). Toponymy in this sense means "not only the registering of received names but also of a broader sense of naming that involves defining a place through its character" (Bate, *Romantic Ecology* 87).

#### **4.2.3 Wessex and Dorset: Fictional and Real Environment**

A related perspective to the ecological topography of Hardy's works is the combination of a fictional (Wessex) and a real (Dorset) landscape, both feeding off each other. Hardy's translating of Dorset into Wessex and Wessex into Dorset, shows how important this specific locality is to him and that the use of the area is inextricably

linked with his concern for the Dorset landscape and the surroundings. By transforming it into the fictional county of Wessex, Hardy tries to make his readers aware of this region and raise the ecological consciousness.

Basing his novels and poetry in the fictional Wessex/real Dorset, shows a personal link between the writer and his environment, using a personal background and experience of the environment for the characters' setting. By re-naming the real landscape and translating it into an imaginative one, Hardy makes the reader aware of this particular area, demonstrating social and ecological change in the real and the fictional world. The writer and the landscape used each other for the outcome.

This means that novels do not simply ground themselves on landscapes that are already there, made by prior activities of building, dwelling, and thinking. The writing of a novel, and the reading of it, participate in those activities. Novels themselves aid in making the landscapes that they apparently presuppose as already made and finished. [...] Dorset has been made what it is in part by way of Hardy's Wessex. (Miller 16)

Both Dorset and Wessex influence each other, neither would be the same without the other and without the author's experience of it. In this sense, the re-naming of the landscape means "not only the registering of received names but also a broader sense of naming that involves defining a place through its character" (Bate, *Romantic Ecology* 87), giving it a soul. Insofar, a certain connection can be felt between the author and the environment, which is the case with most of the Romantic poets, but also later writers, such as Hardy (Bate, *Romantic Ecology* 110).

The soul evoked in the new environment's name is based on the personal reflection of the author in the landscape. According to Bate, Hardy is Wordsworthian in this particular tradition of naming, because he also has "the Wordsworthian way of investing the spirit of their loved ones in nature" (*Romantic Ecology* 110), such as the places where Hardy courted his future wife Emma, in which "the beloved is as deeply enshrined in these places as Wordsworth's Dorothy" (*Romantic Ecology* 110). This is also what Barry identifies in Hardy's poem "The Breaking of Nations" in which Hardy projected himself and his wife Emma into the scene (Barry 267) in which "Yonder a maid and her wight/Come whispering by" (Barry 266).

For Bate, Hardy is situated among those authors writing "in a tradition of a particular beloved place" (*Romantic Ecology* 87) Their writings, including

Wordsworth's and Heaney's poetry, have a 'mnemotechnical function', meaning that the place serves as a personal memory (Bate, *Romantic Ecology* 87). For Hardy this place is the fictional Wessex area, based on the real region of Dorset where Hardy grew up, which provided him with the inspiration for texts and characters (Bate, *Romantic Ecology* 87). It is this personal involvement which makes Hardy's landscapes of ecological importance as they reflect his concern about the soul of the region. The importance of Dorset is ecological in the sense of consciousness raising and awareness, which stems from Hardy's personal link with the fictional environment, combining not only fiction and reality but also past and present insofar as Wessex will live on, forever serving as a reminder of social and ecological changes.

### 4.3 Social Ecology

Social ecology views "societies and their environments as biophysically linked systems" (Fischer qtd. in Buell, *Future* 146). According to Buell its purpose is to create "ecologically sustainable human communities" (*Future* 146) and to integrate "the study of human and natural ecosystems through understanding the interrelationships of culture and nature" (Davis qtd. in Bennett, "Metropolitan" 298). In contrast to deep ecologists, who are interested in nature only, social ecologists look at the human and non-human interaction going on in the setting and how these two parties affect each other. They are interested in the literary representation of the environment in the past, present and future and how humans and the living space interact with each other (Buell, *Future* 146).

For ecocritics like Birch, Hardy's success as a writer came from his use of social ecology, linking the environment with social situations and practices. As Birch argues, Hardy's success

came by encompassing the fictional characters and their communities within a carefully drawn environment in such a manner that the individuals in the stories could be seen as part of a continuum of vegetable, animal and human life within a defined habitat, seeing man as part of the total ecology of the chosen area. [...]. As Hardy showed in his development of the socio-ecological method, one could examine the so-called 'laws of nature' and how they affected individual lives; the nature of social organizations and village communities

could be considered. [...] Above all, the approach called for appreciation and description of landscape. (353-354)

This socio-ecological method of looking at the environment goes together with what Parham calls Victorian ecology, looking at ecological problems within nineteenth century writing. Questions such as how the human is incorporated in the ecosystem, about the human body, and anxieties about society and nature, such as deforestation or air quality, became apparent which were previously unknown (Parham 163). The concern for these Victorian developments "reflects Hardy's primary interest in examining, by means of his fiction, the nature of the relationship between man, the community and the environment" (Birch 352-353).

The natural setting not only provides a background for the characters but functions as a character on its own, which establishes the relationship between humans and the environment and how they influence each other (Bennett 298). Within this ecocritical setting, one of the main points of focus of ecocritics is character movement, which makes up the story. When the characters move around on a local as well as on a global scale, the stories are put into action, either leading to tragedy, as in the case of *The Major of Casterbridge*, in which Henchard walks with his family to Weydon Priors where he sells his wife and daughter (Birch 354), or a happy ending. The local scale includes character movement within a certain community, while the broad or global scale includes characters who expand the borders of their native environment.

The characters which appear in Hardy's novels can be divided into three groups: stable characters, living in the same place their whole live or at least throughout the novel, visitors and foreigners - characters using Wessex only as a means of passing through or as a completely new community – and characters returning from a journey to their native environment, so called "borderline or transition figure[s]" (Louw 109). These types of characters treat nature differently, either living in harmony with nature or treating it condescendingly, which will be explored in the next chapters.

As for Hardy, social ecocritics look at the way he represents socio-ecological change over time, taking into account the relation of self to place, the culture and nature dichotomy, as well as the relationship between humans and the nonhuman setting.

### 4.3.1 Linking Past, Present and Future

As far as Hardy and social ecology is concerned, one point of interest is ecological history. This history, which maps the progress of the environment over time, looks at how the environment has changed over the years, linking past and present in order to point towards future events and raise awareness for past events which might affect us again. By looking at literature and the environment in this historical sense, ecocritics try "to find ways of keeping the human community from destroying the natural community, and with it the human community" (Rueckert 107). Though it also looks at pure nature and the landscape portrayed in the novels, ecocritical history is mostly a social ecocritical approach, bringing men's relationship with the environment to the front.

As for Hardy, the main focus lies on social history, the treatment of economic, social and cultural influences on the environment. Hardy himself does not really focus on landscape history, with a few exceptions such as the description of architectural changes over time:

The situation of the house, prejudicial to humanity, was a stimulus to vegetation, on which account an endless shearing of the heavy-armed ivy went on, and a continual looping of trees and shrubs. It was an edifice built in times when human constitutions were damp-proof, when shelter from boisterous was all that men thought of in choosing a dwelling-place, the insidious being beneath their notice. (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 58)

With a few exceptions such as these, Hardy is considered one of the most important figures in terms of social history, as he himself stood at the brink of nineteenth century social and economic change. In his writings he combines both rural countryside with modern technological inventions which leads to a rethinking of old and new times.

Analysing Hardy in this historical context, leads to the question why Hardy has been so appealing to his readers over the centuries. According to Jonathan Bate, who looks at the ongoing interest in Hardy's works, Hardy, together with Jane Austen, is one of the two most popular writers – as far as the quantities of sold books is concerned. Bate is interested in why these two writers are still popular nowadays although their stories are set at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. According to Bate, the reason for the novels' enduring appeal is that their novels offer a longing for a past which is long gone ("Culture" 541). While Austen stands "for a lost

world of elegance, of empire-line dresses, of good manners, of ladylikeness and gentlemanliness in large and beautiful houses” (Bate, "Culture" 541), Hardy represents “nostalgia for a simple, honest, rustic way of life among hedgerows, haystacks, and sturdy English oak trees” (Bate, "Culture" 541). This long-lost past, when a trip to the nearest village was an important event in people’s lives, stands in complete opposition to the present, a time in which nothing remains impossible anymore and where changes occur within minutes. Although this fast moving world has its advantages, it makes people aware of its possible dangers for the future, which leads to a renewed interest in the lost past. Bate argues that people seem to be sick of the present and therefore tend to emerge themselves into the past where everything seemed healthier and better in general ("Culture" 541). Present meets past, modernity meets backwardness. A cultural and historical clash seems inevitable, which is dealt with in Hardy’s novels (Bate, "Culture" 542).

Although mainly looking at Hardy in a nostalgic way in this sense, a world in which “people live in rhythm with nature” (Bate, "Culture" 541), Bate also identifies a shift towards the future, an openness and change which is present in the novels as well. Outsiders interrupt the quiet life of the rural inhabitants and the life of elegant cities such as London and Paris is in the back of the mind of some of the characters. In Bate’s words, “his [Hardy’s] novels document rural customs of great antiquity even as they represent a world standing on the brink of modernity” ("Culture" 541). The reader therefore wrongly assumes that Hardy did not have any knowledge of what was going on in the world outside rural Dorchester. The contrary is the case: when Hardy died he knew of modern inventions such as the plane, the railway, the radio and the automobile. Nevertheless, he wrote about a world that for him, had already been lost (Bate, "Culture" 541), insofar as he set his novels in the England of the 1830s (Plietzsch 32), though writing them at the end of the nineteenth century. The world he wrote about was already lost for him and his contemporaries, and it is even more lost from our present point of view.

Sanders agrees with Bate’s analysis on the ecological-historical importance of Hardy. According to him, the interest in Hardy lies in the personal involvement of the present-day reader, who cannot experience nature the same way as people could years ago, because of social history (Sanders 183): urbanisation and technological progress

have changed our perception of the environment; the present society, that mainly lives in the cities, can neither identify with the country, nor do people care about it:

While our theories of nature have become wiser, our experience of nature has become shallower. [...] Thus any writer who sees the world in ecological perspectives faces a hard problem: how, despite the perfection of our technological boxes, to make us feel the ache and tug of that organic web passing through us, how to *situate* the lives of characters – and therefore of readers – in nature. (Sanders 194)

It is this historical dimension which makes the readers ecologically aware, "to make us feel the ache and tug" for the environment that is represented. Readers have to look backwards in order to situate themselves in the present and the future.

This social-historical perspective looks at the economic influences on the countryside over time (Howarth 85), often placing rural and urban areas at different ends. It uses time to point to differences, such as rurality and modernity, the differences between the readers and the characters or even the extinction of an existing ecosystem because of social changes. The centuries which separate the present-day reader from Hardy's characters, can of course also be found in the history of the novels' environment. What for us might seem old, was new in the time of the characters. Time as well as place lead to a change in perspectives:

The picture of to-day in its frame of four hundred years ago did not produce that marked contrast between ancient and modern which is implied by the contrast of date. In comparison with cities, Weatherbury was immutable. The citizen's *Then* is the rustic's *Now*. In London, twenty or thirty years ago are old times; in Paris ten years, or five; in Weatherbury three or four score years were included in the mere present, and 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 smock-frock, by the breadth of a hair. Ten generations failed to alter the turn of a single phrase. In these Wessex nooks the busy outsider's ancient times are only old; his old times are still new; his present is futurity.

So the barn was natural to the shearers, and the shearers were in harmony with the barn. (Hardy, *Madding Crowd* 140-141)

Here, the reader is presented with social history, placing country and city at different ends, leading to different perspectives of time and space. While social change seems welcome in the city, modernity is viewed with distance in rural Weatherbury because the characters seem aware that its consequences might be far reaching and destructive. And it seems that time ceased in this environment, although the reader and the

characters seem aware of an underlying implication that although everything seems unchanged, something dark and fatal looms behind the facade. This combination of past, present and future is what makes the reader aware of the earth's present condition and vulnerability: nothing is as immutable as it seems.

This vulnerability of the environment over a course of time is illustrated by Plietzsch, who, as does Bate, looks at the ecological implications of social history in Hardy's *Weatherbury*. According to her, the description of *Weatherbury* might, at first glance, show the stability of the rural country, where everything has stayed the same over centuries whereas in other parts of the country time has changed the environment. Plietzsch argues that "according to the narrator's description, [*Weatherbury*] is still represented as relatively stable and uninfluenced by the social and economic transitions that have already irreversibly changed life in many other parts of the country" (66).

At second glance however, it implies that a change must already have happened, because the narrator, as well as some of the characters like Clym, already have some 'external' knowledge and are able to compare life in the city to that in the country. Insofar, the portrayal of an unchanged setting stands in opposition to the characters' modern knowledge and the change it brings to the rural communities. Although linked to the stable community, the characters change over time, as indicated in the example of Batsheba, who dismisses her bailiff and continues to manage her father's farm on her own. "This is perceived as an alarming alteration by the population of *Weatherbury* because they feel it threatening to the stability of their community" (Plietzsch 66) and leads to a clash between modern thinking and rooted ideas. This is also true for the character of Gabriel Oak, who on the one hand finds himself completely in harmony with nature and can "tell the time [...] by the stars" (Plietzsch 67) but who on the other hand "leads the life of a modern shepherd to whom money matters" (Plietzsch 67). Both Batsheba and Oak represent modern life and change in this stable community, but they still 'belong' to it, in a sense that they preserve their native knowledge, which prevails a sudden change: Batsheba might be managing her farm and the labourers might be shocked at first, but she, as well as Oak, are too much embedded in their strong rural tradition "for their relatively modern lives to have an impact on *Weatherbury*" (Plietzsch 67).



This shows that social history can be found in the natural environment of Weatherbury and Edgong Heath and that the characters, the narrator and Hardy are aware of the social, cultural and economic changes happening over time. Though social history is pointed out by ecocritics, they tend to view the social history in Hardy's novels as rather slow, the countryside being a "A Face on which Time makes but little Impression" (Hardy, *Return* 9), staying nearly the same over the course of the novels. As Gatrell puts it: although "by the end of the novel one important custom is done away with, much survives intact, for the time being" ("Wessex" 20). This is also Buell's opinion when he notes that "in the Little Hintock of Hardy's late nineteenth-century novel *The Woodlanders* (1887), people's lives get traumatically disrupted or extinguished, but the villagers' basic life-rhythms have scarcely changed for years and seem unlikely to do so in the future. [...]" (*Future* 88). For ecocritics, past and present are insofar not so much linked through change but rather in their ability to remain the same.

#### **4.3.2 Aesthetic Appreciation versus Inhabiting**

Within social ecology, another important point for ecocritics is the characters' behaviour towards and within the rural environment. This behaviour can either happen as aesthetic appreciation or inhabiting, both of which are found in Hardy's novels.

Generally, aestheticism is related to the difference between nature and landscape. While the term nature is often associated with an untouched part of nature designated as wilderness (Soper, *Nature* 20), landscape is seen as an aesthetic treatment of nature, which "removed it [the landscape] from the realm of nature and designated it a legitimate object of artistic consumption" (Byerly 53). The effect from landscape's removal from 'wilderness nature' led to a different treatment and perception of the landscape, used merely for artistic purposes which "permits the viewer to define and control the scene, yet fosters the illusion that the scene is part of self-regulating nature" (Byerly 53-54). In this sense, the landscape stays the same over generations, just as it can be captured in a picture or a novel, in which it stays the same for the duration of contemplation. An aesthetic object such as landscape, that "pleases for its own

sake” (Abrams 4), corresponds to the understanding of landscape as "a portion of territory the eye can comprehend in a single view" (Silko 265). This aesthetic nature or landscape refers to the picturesque, an "artistic appreciation of nature" (Byerly 53), removing it from the real object. Such an understanding of landscape leads to the assumption that humans stand outside the landscape (Silko 266), gazing at it, watching it from a tourist's perspective.

In literature, this gazing at the environment is the “notion of bridging world and text” (Head 238), which "may also tap into an innate human process of cognition” (Head 238). Underlying this process of cognition is an aesthetic experience, which “is always already a material engagement rather than merely a contemplative one” and this aesthetic experience “undercuts the binary opposition between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism, since human perception is continuous with the material world” (Head 238). Insofar, the difference between aesthetic appreciation and inhabiting is not as big as might be assumed as both use the process of 'active involvement'. The important difference between the two is that

pure aesthetic judgements ask and expect an agreement in taste whose source is neither in the object occasioning the judgement nor in any personal liking or interest, and for this reason must be rooted in some universal cognitive structure linking us all as human beings and disposing us to a pleasurable harmony of our faculties in certain situations. (Ryle and Soper 37)

As far as Hardy is concerned, ecocritics do not dwell too much on a differentiation between the two terms of nature and landscape because it appears that the real nature of Wessex is reflected in the fictional landscape of Dorset, uniting nature and landscape. Nevertheless, both nature and landscape are treated like an aesthetic object by some of the characters, especially the outsiders, as well as the readers. According to Miller, the link between the novels and the reader lies in aesthetic appreciation because the reader will never be more than an outsider only gazing at the heath, picturing it as presented in a book through the narrative voice (Miller 27).

In contrast to an aesthetic treatment of nature, characters, in particular the so called 'insiders', can also inhabit it. This inhabitation of the environment presupposes a certain knowledge about its history and ecosystem (Louw 104-105), meaning that one has to be living within it as a native. According to Kerridge, the difference between aesthetic appreciation and inhabiting is that "the unalienated lover of nature inhabits; the

alienated lover of nature gazes” (Ecocritical Hardy 134). In order to live in the community, which means to inhabit it, one has to be born into it. If not, one will never be able to get the same feeling about the community as the natives do and only be able to gaze at the environment from afar.

Both ways of looking at nature can be found in Hardy as “his novels are appreciative of both ways of loving nature, and intent on exploring the relationship between them” Kerridge "Ecological Hardy" 134). Within Hardy and ecocriticism, the distinction between aesthetic appreciation and inhabiting is used by ecocritics in order to relate to various socio-ecological issues: character movement within the environment, identity information, also including power relations, the relationship between the reader and the text, and modernity. Ecocritics are always aware of the difference between the two possibilities of 'being' in an environment, which will be reflected in the interaction between humans and the non-human environment and their relation of self to place and the community.

#### **4.3.3 The relation of self to place and the community**

As already seen, an ecocritical analysis which shows the link between the environment and its inhabitants, looks at the place in which we live and die, which is a place people usually have a relation to (Bate, *Romantic Ecology* 85). The social mobility which is available to Hardy's characters, both in terms of education as well as travelling, brings new problems to the community and the characters. While it opens up new opportunities in business, it often leads to an estrangement with the native environment as in the case of Clym, Grace and Jude, who find themselves out of place because of their chosen path of education. By returning to their native community, both the community as well as the characters find themselves disrupted from their day-to-day life which tests "the resilience of that [the character's] identity" (Louw 100), questioning the relation of self to place.

The problem that arises from social mobility is that the characters become estranged from their native environment and find themselves without roots, both in their native community as well as in their new one because “the concept of community is

generally linked to the notion of belonging" (Louw 100). The characters are part of a particular community which gives them "the sensation of knowing, the sensation of being part of a known place" (Everndon 100), which equals the desire for 'home', to feel welcome and part of the immediate surroundings. As Everndon acknowledges, "knowing who you are is impossible without knowing where you are from" (101). Therefore, the relation of self to the place matches the sense of belonging to somewhere, a community which you share the same ecological, political or social ideas with: "in Hardy's novel [*The Woodlanders*], the naming of the community simultaneously evokes the natural environment and defines the people as a community which is set apart from other communities that do not share or belong to the same community" (Louw 100). This is why the notion of belonging is lost through movement which is in turn made possible by social mobility.

In Hardy's novels, Louw and Cobbett distinguish between natives, insiders who belong to a certain community and inhabit it, and those who can be labelled 'outsiders', the characters which are coming and going, only gazing at the community and their environment presenting itself before them. They differentiate between

a resident native gentry, attached to the soil, known to every farmer and labourer from their childhood, frequently mixing with them in those pursuits where all artificial distinctions are lost, practising hospitality without ceremony, from habit and not on calculation; and a gentry, only now-and-then residing at all, having no relish for country-delights, foreign in their manners, distant and haughty in their behaviour, looking to the soils only for its rents, viewing it as a mere object of speculation, unacquainted with its cultivators, despising them and their pursuits, and relying, for influence, not upon the good will of the vicinage, but upon the dread of their power. (Cobbett qtd. in Bate, "Culture" 553)

A third relation of self to place, and probably the most problematic one, have those characters which Louw labels borderline or transition figures (109): "within these two extremes [insiders and outsiders] is a continuum of people who move in and out of the forest and belong at different times. Their identity in some cases is closely formed by the forest, which gives them a sense of belonging" (Louw 101) but which never lets them view the environment with more than aesthetic appreciation. In the following part, these three types of relationships between self and place will be analysed more closely with regard to the characters of Hardy's novels.

The insiders of a community have an ecological bonding with their native community. They know their native environment by heart, sharing the same ideas about it. An example for this relationship is Giles Winterbourne, to whom the language of the wood is “the tongue of the trees and fruits and flowers themselves” (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 307), a trait that is shared by another insider, Marty South. Their knowledge of the woods is a 'natural' language, a tongue that can only be known through birth to the specific environment and the character's intimate connection to place. In Bate's words “for Hardy, to belong in a place means to know its history” (“Culture” 554) and this history can only be gained through birth to a designated community.

In contrast to the insiders, outsiders of the community have no connection to place at all. Insiders and the reader can often identify them as such from the first moment of their appearance by their behaviour and demeanour:

It could be seen by a glance at his rather finical style of dress that he did not belong to the country proper; and from his air, after a while, that though there might be a sombre beauty in the scenery, music in the breeze, and a wan procession of coaching ghosts in the sentiment of this old turnpike-road, he was mainly puzzled about the way. (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 6)

Their relation of self to place often lies with other communities and their mere exposure to a new one makes them lost for some time. For this group of people, Louw refers to the barber's relation to Little Hintock in *The Woodlanders*, a community in which he once lost his way. As he has no connection to this particular area, the loss of his way leads to a loss of spirit and even becomes a traumatic incident, which he has to recuperate from and which he refers back to later in the novel:

Ah – how's little Hintock folk by now!” he cried before replying. “Never have I been over there since one winter night some three years ago – and then I lost myself finding it. How can ye live in such a one-eyed place? Great Hintock is bad enough – but Little Hintock – the bats and owls would drive me melancholy-mad! It took two days to raise my sperrits to their true pitch again after that night I went there. (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 333)

This outsider has no ties to the place of Little Hintock except the business errand which he wants to carry out. This is analysed by Louw in terms of place and identity formation:

Hardy catches the tone of every urban dweller who feels out of place and superior to people living in a rural area. Without realising it, the barber [in *The Woodlanders*] reveals his own inadequacies as he says, significantly, 'I lost myself finding it'. Although he is referring to losing the way, there is on another level the sense of losing his urban identity for a while by being placed in a rural, forest environment. As he is a visitor for a short time, he cannot find a rural identity, and flounders in confusion and disorientation for some time before returning to his old self. (Louv 112)

This means that outsiders, like the barber, are without identity for the duration of the time they spend in the new environment. A social ecological approach hence raises questions of identity in relation to the environment and how they feel about their new place, for instance when Fitzpiers describes his relation to Little Hintock:

Winter in a solitary house in the country, without society, is tolerable, nay even enjoyable and delightful, given certain conditions; but these are not the conditions which attach to the life of a professional man who drops down into such a place by mere accident. They were present to the lives of Winterbourne, Melbury, and Grace; but not to the doctor's. They are old associations - an almost exhaustive biographical and historical acquaintance with every object, animate or inanimate, within the observer's horizon. [...] The spot may have beauty, grandeur, salubrity, convenience; but if it lacks memories it will ultimately pall upon him who settle there without opportunity of intercourse with his kind. (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 119)

It shows that Fitzpiers, as well as other outsiders such as the barber, do not feel comfortable without their native urban community. This reveals that in order to inhabit a community, there is a need for 'memory', or 'old associations', which are only present to those born there:

The presence of memory means that the countryside is inhabited rather than viewed aesthetically. The condition of the modern man, with his mobility and his displaced knowledge, is never to be able to share this sense of belonging. He will always be an outsider; his return to nature will always be partial, touristic and semi-detached. Fitzpiers is never without his eyeglass; he peers fitfully at his environment instead of dwelling steadily within it. (Bate, *Song* 18)

For Bate this means that forming an identity outside of the native community is not possible because of a lack of understanding of the new society:

The doctor is an outsider who always looks to mediate nature through technology. For the very reason that he has no commitment to environment, that he rejects local knowledge in the name of the Germanic metaphysics which prefers the ideal to the real, Fitzpiers does not belong among the woodlanders. (*Song* 17)

Fitzpiers thinks of the future only, not of the past, which makes it impossible for him to come to terms with the life in the rural community as he has no established relationship with the place. His non-understanding of the environment even goes so far as to fell the elm tree that is vitally important for the survival of John South:

"Fitzpiers' blindness to the virulence of the elm inadvertently kills the old man. [...] The consequence of felling South's tree, an act whose seriousness Winterbourne cannot as yet fully apprehend, clashes with the blackly comic effect of Fitzpiers' crass exclamation, "Damned if my remedy hasn't killed him!" (Radford 316-317)

Although Fitzpiers' technology helps him in the modern city, where progress is essential and happens really fast, it is of no use in the traditional and to him retrogressive Hintock and, as pointed out in South's case, can even become dangerous to others. Bate looks at him as

a professional man who has dropped down into the rural place 'by mere accident', he has no sense of the embeddedness of a community's history in its environment. Without this sense, he is told upon by loneliness. Those who truly dwell in the place are never lonely because they are attuned to collective memory, to 'old association – an almost exhaustive biographical or historical acquaintance with every object, animate or inanimate, within the observer's horizon'. (*Song* 18)

Differentiating between insiders and outsiders emphasises that these groupings have to be seen from a relative perspective, too: "Each newcomer is only relatively new" ("Maps" 271), depending on whether they are seen from an insider's or an outsider's point of view. While characters such as Dick Dewy, the reddleman and Winterbourne are indigenous people, who clearly belong to the group of insiders because they are rooted in their native environment, and characters like Fitzpiers are clear outsiders, a number of characters do not fit into either constellation. This third group comprises the returning characters, borderline figures, or, as Kerridge calls them, "alienated outsiders" ("Maps" 271), like Clym, Grace and Jude. They are native inhabitants who turned their back on the community and as a result lost their identity and their native status. But despite their loss of connection to the native community, these characters still seem to be natives to 'real' outsiders, like Fitzpiers. As in the case of Grace she is both insider and outsider: insider to a completely foreign Fitzpiers while

at the same time an outsider to the native Winterbourne (Kerridge, "Ecological Hardy" 271).

According to Siebenschuh, this third category of borderline figures complicates the readers' labelling of the characters as 'good' or 'bad'. For him, Hardy does everything to make the reader believe that there is only black and white, good and bad, using opposite character pairs like Venn and Wildeve, Oak and Troy and Winterbourne and Fitzpiers to demonstrate good and bad behaviour in nature (Siebenschuh 777). But "categorizing characters on the basis of opposites like continuity with nature vs. people on a false track -- the private dreamers -- inevitably oversimplifies" (Siebenschuh 778) because it would leave the reader puzzled of where to place the borderline characters. It therefore

does not easily accommodate a character like Clym Yeobright, who, on the one hand, can scarcely be thought of except in connection with his beloved heath, who is as in tune with its natural rhythms as Oak with Weatherbury, and yet, on the other hand, who is precisely the private dreamer, the native who has broken the connections with his birthplace and cannot return. (Siebenschuh 777)

These borderline figures find themselves in the difficult position of neither belonging to their native community though actually having a native knowledge about it. Their borderline status is established by means of "the gaze" (Louw 101), them being in part observer and observed, of "looking and being looked at" (Louw 101). While the observer gazes at the landscape, the observed inhabits the native community. The borderline figures find themselves in an in-between status, constantly shifting between gazing and inhabiting. They are born in the native community, but later on in their life leave it for education abroad and in the end return to the community, which complicates finding their place within the community on their return. Not only do they face spatial unrest but also cultural differences.

Rode argues that these cultural differences can especially be found in the character of Jude, whose difficult relation to place is reflected in his inability to find social and educational stability. Additionally to this spatial problems, which is reflected in topography, the constant travelling back and forth across the country, using the road system as a means "to solve problems of identity and subjectivity" (Rode 10), Jude faces educational unrest, wanting to become an educated scholar but finding himself unable to do so because of his social class (Rode 17). Insofar he is unable to become



part of a community (Rode 17) and remains homeless, as do other characters like Tess, Eustacia and Clym (Rode 68). All feel alienated and displaced from their native environment, unable to fit into their native communities because of their ideas and their relationship with place.

Jude and the borderline figures question their existence within the native community, feeling out of place, and feel their "existence to be an undemanded one" (Hardy, *Jude* 57) but for Rode it is "*Jude the Obscure* [which] shows Hardy's characters at their most unsettled and restless. A lack of permanent citizenship to a particular community constructs both Jude and Sue as "in-between" people, rootless and displaced" (Rode 94). Their spatial and social in-between status is found in them not having a rooted home as well as in their ideas, which are both old-fashioned and modern at the same time: they have progressive ideas on education but simultaneously old-fashioned views on married life. "Therefore as "nomads", their life of impermanent residence reflects a psyche vacillating between conventional and unconventional ideas, a process that ensures the destabilisation of identity" (Rode 94). Both Jude and Sue are unable to establish themselves neither in their communities, nor in their cultural aspirations and in the end they are denied stability with each other, too. They fail completely in the society they are born into and find themselves without identity (Rode 118). This nomad life is partly due to their modern ideas as well as "their inability to comprehensively understand one's own community" (Rode 118), an inability which is true for the cultured borderline characters who are unable to fully return because they find themselves at a loss in terms of their relation to place, an issue that will be explored in the next chapters.

#### **4.3.3.1 Nature and Culture**

The borderline figures' relationship of self to place is particularly found in their inability to combine modern knowledge with backwards thinking. Their new-found cultural education in the cities, Clym's in Paris, Jude's in Christminster and Grace's boarding school education, is unfit for the rural society of their childhood communities in which the knowledge about nature seems more important than everything else. This

leads to a clash between nature and culture, two concepts which for ecocritics like Bate and Buell are mostly opposed to one another.

As already established in the introductory part, nature and culture are often viewed as two opposing terms. Through the exposure to culture in the nineteenth century, which (should have) made education available to everyone, the perception of the environment changed from being a mere living space to being a domain which could be controlled by men's thinking and their inventions. From then on, nature was perceived as inferior, being dominated by culture (Ryle and Soper 16). In Hardy's novels, the focus lies on the acquisition of culture and what this means for the native community and the characters. The emphasis is mainly on borderline figures, struggling to combine the two concepts, and the problems arising out of the dominance of culture over nature as soon as the protagonists pursue culture.

#### **4.3.3.2 In Pursuit of Culture**

Although culture and social advance should have become available to more people than just the ruling classes in the nineteenth century, it was still exclusive and the "novels by Hardy [...] point to the inadequate scale of educational provision and its defective nature and quality" (Ryle and Soper 121). For Ryle, the chance to seek cultural fulfilment lies in the characters' social origin ("Organic Community" 20). He focuses on the economic relationships between the characters and takes as an example the difference between Grace Melbury, a woman of higher rank, and Marty South, a poor labourer, comparing their relation to Giles Winterbourne, an employer and craftsman. Ryle centres on the analysis of the terms 'nature' and 'occupation' and their relation to each other, demonstrating the first by showing the fate of Giles and Marty.

Working together, Giles and Marty are set against the economic changes portrayed in the novel. Both seem doomed because of their lack of capital which makes both characters appear noble. In the end, Giles' death and Marty's watching over his grave become the symbols "of the vanishing rural order" ("Organic Community" 20) though Ryle suggests that this reading of "rurality-as-nature" ("Organic Community"

20) is actually misleading. For him, Marty is doomed because her character and its development is limited by the social subordination to economic place which has nothing to do with her actual 'nature'. To read *The Woodlanders* “as a one-sided valedictory celebration of rurality-as-nature” is hence misleading because it is economy and not nature which constrains the character. This can be shown in one of the novel's passages:

As with so many right hands born to manual labour, there was nothing in its fundamental shape to bear out the physiological conventionalism that gradations of birth show themselves primarily in the form of this member. Nothing but a cast of the die of Destiny had decided that the girl should handle the tool; and the fingers which clasped the heavy ash haft might have skilfully guided the pencil or swept the string, had they only been set to do it in good time.  
(Hardy, *Woodlanders* 11-12)

In contrast to Marty, Grace Melbury has the possibility to enjoy the “pleasures as well as the pains” (Ryle, "Organic Community" 21) offered by cultural education and she can profit from mobility because of her father's wealth. This leads to her cultural and social emancipation which, as in the case of Marty, does not lie within her nature but is due to economic opportunities.

As far as 'occupation' is concerned, Ryle points to a passage in the same chapter where Hardy describes Marty's “present occupation,” the fabrication of wood sticks (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 11). Ryle is of the opinion that Marty cannot be reduced to manual work only, but that she could also be working on different things as she is not limited in her natural abilities to fulfil higher work ("Organic Community" 21). He illustrates that culture and nature are opposed to each other and that being born into a social class can be limiting. Marty's manual occupation is contrasted with Grace's education and knowledge, a knowledge which stands for the overall accomplishments of young ladies of the time but which does not help her in her native environment: “Here, [...], Hardy presents us with the paradox that the 'occupations' taken to represent cultural transcendence in general will also be those associated specifically with the leisured and privileged classes” (Ryle, "Organic Community" 21), a class which is the minority in Hardy's rural environment. By representing both nature and culture, Ryle argues that Hardy on the one hand did not want to focus too much on the cultural possibilities available while at the same time making the reader aware that “both the handicrafts of copsework and the 'type of men who engaged in them' had been 'almost extinguished’

by 1912" (Hardy qtd. in Ryle, "Organic Community" 22), because the pursuit of culture got more important.

In *To Relish the Sublime*, Ryle and Soper show that this pursuit of culture can also be found in *Jude the Obscure* in which the rural protagonist is led on by his aspirations to become a scholar although his background does not allow such an advance in society. Culture, which "is a dynamic of self-development, determining the social fates of characters" (Ryle and Soper 161), leads to the rise of a 'new' society, trying to aspire education and advance socially. This is what Jude wants to achieve: he tries to rise higher in society and leave the native environment behind. But this does not happen without consequences because "the pursuit of culture - whether or not it is successful - changes the protagonist's relation to the world: to acquire culture means to place oneself beyond, above or outside the everyday life of society" (Ryle and Soper 117), which in Jude's case leads to his inability to connect with any environment he places himself in. Soper and Ryle are of the opinion that Jude's quest for culture in the end leads to isolation, unhappiness and destruction because he wants to erase his rural knowledge. And even if Jude Fawley could break into this new society, he could not know what it would lead to. On the one hand it could offer new insights into the sought after culture while on the other hand it might still prove unsatisfying and destructive. Insofar, "individuals can indeed value cultural ideas for their own sake, but they exist socially only within the hierarchies in which they are embedded" (Ryle and Soper 118). And Jude is not part of the society he wants to belong to, being rejected by Christminster college with the following letter: "I venture to think that you will have much better success in life by remaining in your own sphere and sticking to your trade than by adopting any other course" (Hardy, *Jude* 167).

Although Jude as a stonemason still finds the time to read and educate himself, he is rebuffed at Christminster. Nevertheless, he can be read as a pioneer figure who knows of the chances that are 'out there'. He knows that "it was my poverty and not my will that consented to be beaten. It takes two or three generations to do what I tried to do in one" (Hardy, *Jude* 398). Although he finds himself unable to achieve cultural education, Soper and Ryle are of the opinion that Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* does not condemn the notion of culture because it offers new social possibilities to everyone. Both argue that Hardy never mocks Jude's cultural aspirations through the narrative

voice. As far as they are concerned, "Hardy is concerned not so much to judge whether Jude's cultural aspiration pursues a mistaken goal (or a correct one) as to show Jude as caught up in a historical process that is socially determined as well as individually chosen" (*Sublime* 152). Jude is trapped in a time when culture fails him and he should have stuck to nature. As he himself recognises, "I was, perhaps, after all, a paltry victim to the spirit of mental and social restlessness, that makes so many unhappy in these days" (Hardy, *Jude* 345). Insofar, Hardy does not question Jude's social aspirations but culture's ability to grant people's ambitions. The understanding for the desire for cultural education is, according to Ryle and Soper, found in the narrative voice.

According to them, author and protagonist are linked by a shared literary language in *Jude the Obscure*. That is to say, the narrative voice, which sometimes seems clumsy and unsophisticated, reflects Jude's own clumsiness in his strive for social advance. It also brings the author and the protagonist closer together as they find themselves on the same level. For them, this level of narrative voice "asserts the cultural and educational rights of outsiders" (Ryle and Soper 154) because the cultured and educated author does not put himself above his protagonist. Additionally, the narrative voice "expresses the utopian belief that cultural self-realisation is an intrinsically valuable goal, separable from the social advance that it often accompanies" (Ryle and Soper 154). This "cultural self-realisation requires intellectual effort, and may come about only under a certain duress" (Ryle and Soper 9). In the case of Jude, this self-realisation means that Jude appreciates education for itself instead of valuing it only for what it could bring him economically and socially. Ryle and Soper conclude from this that Hardy did not want his protagonist to become a writer like himself because this would conceal his "'purely' cultural desires" (155). This makes Jude Hardy's ideal protagonist, in contrast to Clym Yeobright who considers himself the same ideal as Jude but who in fact does not value education for itself rather than for social and economic benefits (Ryle and Soper 155).

By using this form of narrative voice so similar to the character, the protagonist and the rural environment which he comes from, are not perceived in a naive way. When Jude works as a stonemason restoring Christminster college, he finds as much worth in the building itself as in the thoughts by the scholars: "Here in the stone yard was a centre of effort as worthy as that dignified by the name of scholarly study within

the noblest of the colleges" (Hardy, *Jude* 137). But, as the narrator goes on, he tells us that Jude loses this way of thinking and places education and culture above everything else. As Ryle and Soper point out, this, together with Sue Bridehead's kind of self-realisation through education, does not work out because their culture-seeking makes them too vulnerable because it neither fits into the urban environment nor the rural countryside (*Sublime* 158). Insofar, "the novel which has offered the purest and most generous image of cultural aspiration [...] also offers the gloomiest and most absolute premonition of its redundancy" (Ryle and Soper 159). Hardy shows one of the main disadvantages of his time, which on the one hand wanted to open up and offer culture to everyone but on the other hand still remains exclusive, with culture and education being controlled by the privileged (Ryle and Soper 121). Culture and nature do not seem compatible for Jude and Sue. Furthermore, culture begins to dominate over nature because people from various classes become interested in education, showing that "culture is seen as threatened not by popular indifference but by the barriers of class and money which still exclude worthy aspirants" (Ryle and Soper 130). It shows the "limits imposed by the structure of the world [...] upon what it is possible for human beings to be and do" (Soper, *Nature* 34).

As already seen, Jude is not the only character seeking education as a countryman. Clym, too, travels to Paris to gain cultural knowledge outside his native community as well as Grace Melbury, who is sent to boarding school by her father to advance socially in the community. But while Jude is unable to advance socially, these other borderline characters are able to gain cultural knowledge and education, which in turn leads to different power perceptions of nature and culture on their return to the native environment as will be pointed out in the next part.

#### 4.3.3.3 Nature versus Culture: Fighting for Dominance

Existing side by side, nature and humans, lower and higher creatures, often have to face problems sharing their living space. Particularly, the dominance of men over animals and non-human beings leads to the exploitation of natural resources and in the following to the extinction of many species. What is more, the introduction of progress and modernity brings change and conflict to an environment that has stayed unchanged for centuries. This struggle for dominance and power can be found in *The Return of the Native* in which the heath and belief in progress are opposed to each other as can be seen in the first chapter: "Civilization was its [Egdon Heath's] 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. In its venerable one coat lay a certain vein of satire on human vanity in clothes" (Hardy, *Return* 12). In this tragedy, two opposites, nature and culture, good and evil, fight for dominance over the other and even try to destroy the other because they cannot exist side by side (Meeker 167).

Although nature can exist on its own, it has been cultivated by humans for centuries, leading to 'humanised nature'. This humanisation of nature is achieved through cultivation and technology, which in turn leads to the opposing concepts of nature and culture. While nature is mostly associated with terms such as unpremeditated, weak and unreflexive (Turner 42), culture is associated with human power and technology. The two terms are insofar said to be complete opposites leaving nature to either be exploited by men and their technology or designated as wilderness, being completely uninhabited and untouched (Turner 45).

In Hardy's novels, the power of both culture and nature are of importance, due to the fact that Hardy found himself trapped between the nineteenth and the twentieth century construct of nature: while "[...] the literary construct of nature during much of the nineteenth century mirrored that of a society with a profound need of nature as spiritual healer, [...] the literary conception of nature for much of the twentieth century mirrored that of a society which valued nature as an economic resource" (Deitering 201). The twentieth century construct of nature leads to the dominance of culture over nature, showing the power of education and scientific inventions over nature, which, it seems, cannot defend itself.

What Hardy catches in his novels is, as noted by Ryle, a “desire to 'lapse back' into a world of 'Nature unadorned', where 'occupation' would be a matter of tradition rather than of chance or choice” (“Organic Community” 22), imagining “social differences as natural, and the more 'developed' subject as further from nature” (“Organic Community” 22). For him, Hardy

stands out in the refusal to simply celebrate an earlier 'natural' (but actually historical) human relation to 'nature', and in its dialectical evaluation of 'artificial', developed forms of consciousness. He qualifies but does not invert the ideology of 'progress'; his novels show loss as well as gain, gain as well as loss, resulting from the historical dynamic that reshapes nature and human nature. (“Organic Community” 22-23)

For Ryle, this shows that culture does not stand in the way of nature, but it is clear that it reshapes nature and its inhabitants and has its price, that the arrival of outsiders will affect the lives of natives. In this sense, Ryle reads Hardy in the same way as do Kerridge and Bayer, who are also of the opinion that nature and culture are not opposed but complement each other. For both Kerridge and Bayer, Hardy tries to unite culture and nature by showing the struggle that the borderline figures find themselves in. For Kerridge, a defence for only nature or culture is quite problematic because of the juxtaposition of many of the characters. According to him, it is Hardy’s indeterminacy between old and new, nature and culture, which results in problems for the characters: Tess finds herself in an indeterminate position because she is at the same time aristocrat and poor labourer; Jude’s unrealistic aspirations put him in the middle of rural life and modern change and lead to misfortunes; and Clym feels trapped between his educated life in Paris and the rural, labouring life in Egdon Heath. “One can almost find in these stories a conservative nostalgia for an idealised feudalism in which people remained in one place and social positions were fixed and clear: a feudalism identified as a natural way of life. 'Social mobility brings disaster: do not long for it', would be the message” (Kerridge, “Maps” 271).

Although Kerridge admits that the novels could be read in this nostalgic way, he is aware of the fact that “the novels are a record both of the havoc wrought by such desires and the mortifying effect when they are thwarted” (“Maps” 271). In terms of the protagonists’ juxtaposition between nature and culture, Bayer agrees with Kerridge that the characters feel trapped as he sees Hardy divided between accepting modern



technology, such as the cider press in *The Woodlanders*, and being sympathetic with the rural traditions of the country labourers, as in 'The Dorsetshire Labourer', an essay in which Hardy contrasts the former idyllic rural life with the newly introduced harvesting machines (Bayer 88). Yet generally, Bayer reads Hardy's descriptions as a naïve way of looking at nature as he neglects the negative issues of the time:

In seiner verklärenden Sichtweise der Vergangenheit vernachlässigt er es weitgehend, sich mit der ökonomisch prekären Lage der Landarbeiter und deren Abhängigkeit von den Landbesitzern auseinanderzusetzen, obwohl ihm erst sein literarischer Erfolg den eigenen Aufstieg ermöglichte [...]. Hardy erscheint demnach am Scheideweg der Moderne, der er unentschieden gegenübersteht. Er ist zum einen nostalgisch der Vergangenheit verbinden und zum anderen erleichtert, ihren Unannehmlichkeiten entkommen zu sein. (Bayer 88-89)

Nevertheless, it is clear for Hardy, as well as to the reader, that social mobility and effects of new inventions and modernity cannot be delayed and can indeed have positive effects: "To read Hardy as conservative and hostile to social mobility is [therefore] to misrepresent him brutally" (Kerridge, "Maps" 271). On the contrary, it is a matter of fact that Hardy mentions these instances, new technologies and mobility which make himself, the characters and the readers think about everything. He does not deny or neglect change but includes it in his novels and although sometimes presenting them in a somewhat negative and ironic light he makes it clear that we cannot blend them out and just return to former times where nothing of this existed.

Kerridge suggests that Hardy's solution of the problem is harmony ("Maps" 271). In *Culture of Habitat* he has the vision that "a creative relationship may be possible between indigenous cultures of habitat and postmodern cultures of technology" (qtd. in Kerridge, "Maps" 271). This would of course imply that the usual cycle of technology destroying the habitat, which in turn is looked upon with nostalgic desire – and what becomes the fatality to Hardy's characters and characterises nature writing in general - could be overcome.

In this utopia (to sketch it a little flippantly), a postmodern Giles Winterbourne would not die of exposure, nor lose his dwelling because of a feudal property law. He would retain his native understanding of the woods and continue his sustainable forestry, protected by a modern health service and enjoying access to the wider world through television and the internet. (Kerridge, "Maps" 271)

Modernity and the 'primitive' would no longer stand in opposition to each other.

For both Kerridge and Bayer, the juxtaposition of nature and culture can be found on Clym Yeobright's return to Edgdon Heath: being introduced as a man of world coming from Paris, he trains to be a school teacher and ends up as a furze-cutter. Finding culture and education in the city, he is unable to combine nature with modernity (Bayer 88). Being forced to give up his studies due to the loss of his eyesight, Clym descends further and further down the social ladder. He finds himself stuck between modern world education and the rural knowledge that is needed to survive in the countryside. According to Kerridge, Clym accepts this struggle, which is reflected in his shifting positions between educated townsman and rural countryman, and still values the enrichment beyond the 'modern' ideas acquired in the city. As Kerridge mentions, "he [Clym] discovers, in work rather than contemplation, a release from self-consciousness and alienation. He has literally come closer to nature" ("Maps" 272) in which he "finds an unexpected happiness" ("Maps" 272). This is indicated by Clym becoming an indistinguishable part of the landscape. Still, this does not mean that he rejects culture in favour of nature because education changed his way of thinking forever, which, as a result, enables him to avoid looking at nature in a naïve and nostalgic way (Kerridge, "Maps" 272). Insofar, Kerridge points out that the reader can see two Yeobrights, who have learned to live together and accept their various positions, one representing culture, the other nature. None of them can be abandoned, although the reader is aware that it is only in his 'lower', fallen, position that he is accepted by the animals and allowed to return to nature. By renouncing his knowledge, "Clym is able to return to the Egdon of his childhood and to Paradise" (Kerridge, "Maps" 273).

The fact that Clym sticks to his modern views while at the same time celebrating nature, shows Kerridge that uniting nature and culture in a character is possible, even though he admits that Clym's return shows that the newfound culture results in consequences: he has to give up some of his modern ideas, such as educating the country-people and is punished with the loss of his eyesight for his belief in modernity:

Hardy is insistent about the cost of this return. This closeness to nature means loss of vision – loss, for example of the longer scientific perspectives that may now enable us to foresee and prevent ecological disaster. Yeobright becomes as vulnerable as an animal or insect unable to see further than its immediate surroundings. ("Maps" 273)

The character represents both ideas, uniting nature and culture within himself, but in order to do so he has to accept the consequences, namely the loss of some of his larger perspectives, that leave him with moderate ideas.

While it is possible for Clym to reunite nature and culture according to Kerridge and Bayer, Bate looks at Grace Melbury to demonstrate nature's triumph over culture. As in the case of Clym, Grace leaves the native community only to return years later, finding herself torn between rural tradition and modernity. For Bate, Grace "belongs to the locality, but has been educated abroad. She is 'flexible': she will either be drawn back to her roots or aspire upward towards social improvement and mobility" (*Song* 15). Her education allows her the mobility to move between the country and the city, between rural life and social rise. But her new culture also has its price: being educated means getting new ideas, which in turn leads to the loss of old ideas and knowledge; a knowledge that is of great importance in the local community. For Bate, this becomes obvious when Giles meets Grace coming back from boarding school and drives her home in his gig (*Song* 15-16):

"They had a good crop of bitter-sweets – they couldn't grind them all." He nodded towards an orchard where some heaps of apples had been left lying ever since the ingathering.

She said yes, but looking at another orchard.

"Why – you are looking at John-apple-trees! You know bitter-sweets – you used to, well enough?"

"I am afraid I have forgotten – and it is getting too dark to distinguish."

Winterbourne did not continue. It seemed as if the knowledge and interests which had formerly moved Grace's mind had quite died away from her.

(Hardy, *Woodlanders* 43)

While Giles knowledge is 'local knowledge', shaped by the local surroundings, Grace lost this intimate knowledge and thinks of different things after boarding school: "Grace is at this moment remembering 'a much contrasting scene: a broad lawn in the fashionable suburb of a fast city, the evergreen leaves shining in the evening sun'" (Bate, *Song* 16). For Bate, Grace's choice for humanised nature and culture instead of local knowledge shows that she is never able to fully return: "It was true. Cultivation had so far advanced in the soil of Miss Melbury's mind as to lead her to talk of anything save of that she knew well, and had the greatest interest in developing: herself. She had fallen from the good old Hintock ways" (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 45). This

new-found education of the mind leads to neglecting the 'real' earth and its cultivation. "The move from the state of nature to that of civility is likened to the fall of man" (Bate, *Song* 16). For Bate, her choice of culture over nature shows that Grace will never be able to wholly return to her native environment as "it is essential to Hardy's honesty as a writer that he recognizes that once we have left our native home and been educated into gentility, we can never return, save in the brief moment of blind passion, to the world of latent early instincts" ("Culture" 555). According to Bate, this shows Hardy's desire to highlight a nature which is lost to men but which they wish to return to, celebrating rural life and nature while condemning culture and progress, since for him,

Grace's tragedy is that her realization that she wishes to be a native who returns comes too late. At the pivotal point of the novel [...] the emotions of the plot are dramatized in the landscape. Fitzpiers disappears on the high ground as he rides away in the direction of his mistress, and in the next instant Giles 'arises out of the earth' below. (*Song* 18-19)

The constant opposition between the native Giles and the foreigner Fitzpiers leads to a dramatic ending, which Bate reads as triumph of nature over artificiality, as Grace is aware of her mistake to give up nature in favour of choosing Fitzpiers and the culture that he stands for (*Song* 18-19). According to Bate, these troubles also lead to the ending in which her choice for Winterbourne comes too late and she has to remain with Fitzpiers. This for him shows nature's triumph over culture, because Grace's lament over her choice for Fitzpiers shows her wish to lapse back to nature (Bate, *Song* 18-19).

As far as Grace is concerned, Ryle agrees with Bate over nature's triumph over culture. Ryle is of the opinion that Hardy demonstrates the impossibility of 'lapsing back' although there is the attraction to do so. The possibility of 'lapsing back' has passed for Grace because she has already made the choice for 'genteel artificiality' which she will not be able to throw off completely. This 'genteel artificiality' is her education at a boarding school to become a sophisticated lady, which, on her return, leaves her unable to find her place in her native community. Ryle mentions that Grace, like Clym, finds herself torn between nature and culture, getting "to know the pleasures as well as the pains of a degree of cultural emancipation" ("Organic Community" 21). And while Clym, according to Kerridge, is able to lapse back to nature as much as possible ("Maps" 273), Grace is denied this right because her marriage to Fitzpiers

distances her from the local inhabitants, separating new cultural knowledge from nature. This instinct also applies to Grace when

Her heart rose from its late sadness like a released bough; her senses revelled in the sudden lapse back to Nature unadorned. The consciousness of having to be genteel because of her husband's profession, the veneer of artificiality which she had acquired at the fashionable schools, were thrown off, and she became the crude country girl of her latent early instincts. (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 193)

As does Bate, Ryle reads Grace's desire to find her place in her native community as a triumph of nature because the wish for nature is stronger than the culture at her disposal. She again longs to be the 'crude country girl' that she once was, showing her desire to lapse back and return to nature (Ryle, "Organic Community" 21-22). For him, Grace Melbury is the perfect example of losing nature and turning to culture instead ("Organic Community" 21) but in the end lamenting her education because she feels homeless, especially when stating that "cultivation has only brought me inconveniences and troubles" (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 208). In the end, Ryle is of the opinion that Grace, if given the chance, would return to nature which shows nature's dominance over culture.

Bate's and Ryle's reading of nature's triumph is contrasted by Pite, who refuses their analysis of nature's dominance as for him, culture has at least the same power as nature, if not more. By taking Fitzpiers back in the end, Pite claims that "the novel includes the idea of Grace finding ways and means to carry that way of life on, in a modified (and adulterated) form. In doing so, she is following out the impulse to joy and to adaption which underlay the life of "old woodlanders" from the beginning" ("His Country" 142), which for her means turning to culture instead of nature. Grace's choice for Fitzpiers in the end is deliberate because he offers her the possibility of "a refined and cultivated inner life" (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 156). The wish for this new cultural identity disrupts the natural way of life, which for Bate and Ryle signifies nature's triumph, but which for Pite leads to culture's dominance over nature as it is deliberately chosen and re-enacted in the end, and it leaves nature's most important advocates, Giles and Marty, dead and childless in the end (Pite, "His Country" 142).

Culture's dominance can also be found in Jude's characters, who, though in complete harmony with nature and its 'lower' inhabitants, longs for cultural education at university. Bayer analyses, as does Kerridge, Jude trapped between his desire for ecological preservation, living in harmony with the environment, and him being ahead

of his time – dreaming of becoming a scholar - and therefore representing progress. Jude's sentimental distress at the pig's feelings is overruled by Victorian reality and he fails in his aspirations to combine the two. As Kerridge puts it: “Jude's concern for all creatures is scorned, like his aspiration to study at Christminster, as foolishness or vanity” (“Maps” 270). As Bayer points out, Jude's understanding of nature goes back to his professor's advice of linking culture and nature: “Be a good boy, remember; and be kind to animals and birds, and read all you can” (qtd. in Bayer 87). As can be seen here, there is an obvious link between nature and culture, which often stand in opposition: the professor's advice can be read as a counsel to also read everything about nature, suggesting that humans are not born with the instinct to care and know about their surroundings but also having to look at it from a modern point of view: learning how to live with it and even cultivate it instead of only relying on instinct and only being 'kind' to animals. Bayer reads Jude's delicacy of feeling as a link to former times, being more sensitive about what is going on and insofar representing a longing for nature, while his intellectual and social ambitions are ahead of his time and lead to cultural domination. Jude's juxtaposition between nature and culture is also reflected in Hardy's own life, as he found himself at the brink to modernity as well, being divided between his rural background and his elitist education and occupation (Bayer 86-87).

Generally, social ecocritics show that the fight between nature and culture is without a winner: culture triumphs over nature insofar that it offers new possibilities but at the same nature triumphs over culture because it makes the characters long for what they once had and cannot gain back. They show that it depends on the characters whether culture and nature can be combined or if one of the two concepts triumphs over the other by deliberately choosing it. The characters' personal choice makes the reader aware that in his own time it is him who has to make the decision of whether to choose nature over culture, but that he can use both nature and culture in a way to live in harmony with the environment because it is him who has to combine the two in a way that they do not exclude one another.

#### 4.3.4 Thomas Hardy as borderline figure

Like Hardy's characters, such as Clym Yeobright, Hardy himself is looked at in terms of his native background. Rooted in 'his' Wessex and Dorset area both in his thinking as well as in his literary setting, changing place to him would be a betrayal to his native region, as is shown in the punishment of his borderline characters. One could therefore assume that Hardy himself stayed true to his birthplace all his life; however, Hardy personally is closer to his borderline figures than to any of his novels' native characters.

Choosing to become an author instead of following in his father's footsteps as a stone-mason who was also one of the musicians in the local village church (a tradition reflected in *Under the Greenwood Tree*), he first became an architect and later a professional writer living in London where all the publishing houses were set (Bate, *Song* 20). He, like his borderline characters, is torn between the native community and a new, modern world, which offered him new possibilities and social change (Bate, *Song* 20).

Hardy's vocational choice is reflected in his novels, such as *The Woodlanders*, *Jude the Obscure* and *The Return of the Native*, adding to ecocriticism's nature/culture debate. As a professional writer Hardy chose culture's offers over the natural environment which he was born into, making him a man of culture. For Ryle and Soper, characters such as Jude Fawley, who finds himself torn between his background and his need for social ascent, are autobiographic and reflect the nature/culture dichotomy (*Sublime* 118). "The fact that these themes [cultural aspiration, social mobility and personal fulfilment] become central in a number of novels published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reflects the opening up during these decades of educational opportunities to people outside the established cultural élite" (Ryle and Soper 118).

But although Hardy made his readers aware of the new cultural possibilities available to everyone, he did not leave out the negative effect that he himself experienced firsthand: the loss of identity. Hardy is punished for his new life, like Clym Yeobright, because he cannot combine his old, rural way of life and his new identity, formed in a new and urban place. "Like his admittedly alter ego Clym Yeobright, Hardy was himself a native who could never fully return and be content to submerge in the

rapidly disappearing cultures he wrote about endlessly” (Siebenschuh 783). He cannot make the connection between being a native and a foreigner.

The constant opposition between country and city in his novels is affiliated to Hardy's own personal experience, both in country and city. Hardy “physically returned to his native Dorset but lived a life of the mind and the word that was always elsewhere” (Bate, *Song* 20). Edgong Heath, although part of him because of his native birthplace, existed in his imagination only. Characters like Winterbourne and the reddleman, who are part of nature, are completely foreign to Hardy, and most likely to the reader as well, existing in the mind only.

Siebenschuh is of the opinion that Hardy used this imaginary place and its characters to show the "relations among identity, community, and place" (Siebenschuh 774), all of which Hardy lost and tried to recreate through the various narrative positions of his characters. His lost identity made him as helpless and exposed to nature as his borderline characters, which causes the constant tension between old and new, history and modernity, analysed in ecocriticism. Without Hardy's own experiences as a borderline figure, his works would probably not hold the same ecological friction.

#### **4.3.5 Power Relations**

In an ecofeminist approach to Hardy, Hardy's novels are looked at in terms of dichotomies: nature/culture, society/individual and femininity/masculinity. These oppositions become interesting insofar as they are set against a changing society, from rurality to industrialism, which in turn are associated with femininity and masculinity. Within the environment that the characters are placed in, native inhabitants and outsiders are found on various levels that reflect their power within the community and the environment. This means that characters moving around the setting find themselves in various situations, in which they can exert more power over their peers and nature than in other situations and different environments.

Pite offers an ecofeminist reading of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. This reading can be set within social ecology, dealing with rural glorification of the environment or a



celebration of modernity. Pite looks at Tess as stereotypically constructed, “performed by the novel's male protagonists, both Alec and Angel” (“His Country” 141). In Pite's opinion, Hardy deliberately tried to gender the landscape in this novel, associating modernity with men and natives and rurality with females. He argues that this shows Hardy's endeavour to look at the landscape in an unidealised way, which is reached by crushing the rustic Tess:

The book (perhaps to counter the danger of nostalgia present in *The Woodlanders*) is an endeavour to reach an unidealizing regard for and of Tess – an effort to regard her as someone who is pure despite impurity, and as a person who represents “country” values not so much despite her being tainted by the modern as amidst that (historical and personal) process of metamorphosis. It may be that the modern will crush those human instincts, present in Tess, in the same way that the plot has her executed – this modern threat is something the plot suggests. (“His Country” 141)

For Pite it symbolises male power over women, just as modernity tries to outdo rurality: “Gendering the modern as male and the primitive as female allows this mythic narrative to support a masculinist self-image of the man as (tragic) conqueror and the woman as violated creature. It shows and shows up the colonizer's (self-)pathos” (“His Country” 141).

Pat Louw reads Thomas Hardy's *The Woodlanders* within the ecofeminist approach, focusing on the power relationship between the male and female characters in relation to the gaze: “In some cases the viewing relationship is gendered and voyeuristic where the man is the viewer and the woman is the object of his viewing pleasure without her being aware of it” (101). As nature is, according to Louw, dominated by men in *The Woodlanders* (although he also admits that nature has certain powers over men, too), this domination of nature leads to gender conflicts, resulting in the domination of women (102). In the opening passage of *The Woodlanders*, an obvious outsider comes to Little Hintock, looking for Marty South. For Louw, Marty, in contrast to the outsider, is embedded in nature by Hardy's anthropomorphic device, when describing her hair in detail, relating it to nature as it “is described in terms of the richness of nature” (105):

Thus she had but little pretension to beauty; save in one prominent particular, her hair. Its abundance made it almost unmanageable; its colour was, roughly speaking, and as seen as here by the fire-light, brown; but careful notice, or an

observation by day, would have revealed that its true shade was a rare and beautiful approximation to chestnut. On this one bright gift of Time to the particular victim of his now before us the newcomer's eyes were fixed.  
(Hardy, *Woodlanders* 12)

Not only does the male outsider intrude into new territory, threatening the existing environment, but also does the man gaze at an unsuspecting female victim, whose “association with nature at this point makes her vulnerable to the 'outsider'” (Louw 105), which shows men's dominance over women and nature. For the male outsider, the action of gazing at Marty coincides with him exerting power through the gaze because he is in this case representing the relationship of culture to nature, with nature being in the weaker position (Turner 42). As a consequence, the outsider, a barber, tries to dominate the environment in a double sense. Firstly he threatens the new environment by intruding and trying to take away natural treasures; secondly he tries to persuade Marty to sell him her hair, which is associated with nature, described as “unmanageable”, and related to trees through the use of the colours “brown” and “chestnut”. The outsider therefore tries to dominate nature via the unsuspecting woman (Louw 105-106). As Louw suggests:

His project is to tame nature, manage it, bring it under control but in the process turn it into something artificial and lifeless in order to enable someone with money to pretend that it belongs to her. Questions of belonging here become twisted and broken as what belongs to Marty is taken and given to someone else by people who do not belong. (106)

Insofar, it can be related to the cultural ecofeminist assumption that women equal nature, while men, who are completely devoid of any feelings towards nature, only try to destroy it.

This can also be found in Rode's reading of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, in which he applies the opposition between nature and culture to gender constructions. While Tess prefers to walk through nature, being in direct contact with the environment, her male counterparts prefer to use the modern railway. "These competing technologies oppose the more ancient and slow-moving pedestrian way that Tess utilizes to move from place to place" (Rode 60). It shows that nature and culture is gendered, with male culture dominating female nature. As suggested by ecofeminism, power relations become a central part in a novel's reading. As for Louw's and Rode's reading of the

passages, radical ecofeminism can be found at the basis, as men dominate women, which equals culture dominating nature.

The reader can find radical ecofeminism also in Louw's reading of a further passage, in which Grace Melbury is intruding and gazing at a sleeping Fitzpiers, which for a short moment puts her in a more powerful position:

Approaching the chimney her back was to Fitzpiers, but she could see him in the glass. An indescribable thrill passed through her as she perceived that the eyes of the reflected image were open, gazing wonderingly at her. [...] However by an effort she did turn, when there he lay asleep the same as before. (Hardy, *Return* 122-123)

For Louw this passage wrongfully suggests a power reversal, of women dominating men, because "Hardy, in a diabolical twist, shows her seeing Fitzpiers' reflection in a mirror, and in that mirror his eyes are open. It is as if he is watching her even when he appears to be asleep. The result is that she seems more vulnerable than ever to him [...]" (110). In her spying on Fitzpiers, Grace takes on both positions of nature and culture, firstly peering at him when he is asleep, secondly being observed by his open eyes which again shifts the power from Grace to Fitzpiers. This shows how her borderline status is confirmed not only by her position of self to the community but also by her taking on both positions of representing culture and nature, being dominant on the one hand while weak at the same time.

In another passage, Fitzpiers gazes at Grace Melbury driving in a gig, while she is again unaware of him looking at her, and, when she finally spies him, she is distressed because she did not notice him. Fitzpiers distresses and interrupts the natives' environment as well as Grace. This for Louw suggests how women are dominated by men, as nature is dominated by culture (110). The relation between insiders and outsiders in *The Woodlanders* and their relation to the environment shows the gender power relations and how culture dominates nature by taking from her and then leaving without looking back, as suggested in Fitzpiers' abandonment of Grace for another woman (Louw 110).

A different approach to Louw's reading of of culture's triumph over nature, is offered by Pite interpretation of Grace taking back Fitzpiers in the end suggests a different approach to the culture/nature dichotomy. He focuses on Grace Melbury's sexuality, which she openly acts out in *The Woodlanders* and which relates her to nature

through fertility. Some ecocritics, as already shown in Bate's reading, read Grace taking Fitzpiers back in the end as a lament for Giles passing away. But for Pite this shows that

Grace opts instead to take herself and her natural sexual instincts forward into a miscegenated future, and into a life of intimacy with both the modern spirit and the modern body of Fitzpiers. Alongside an elegy for the vanishing way of life, therefore, led by Giles (now dead) and Marty South (destined to be childless), the novel includes the idea of Grace finding ways and means to carry that way of life on, in a modified (and adulterated) form. ("His Country" 142)

This reading suggests, that women, by being related to nature through sexuality, can also triumph over men, as they see the need to reproduce and live on. This analysis disagrees with Louw's radical ecofeminist reading because the nature/culture and female/male distinction becomes dissolved. Although for Louw Grace can still be seen as related to nature in a biological sense, he does not relate her to nature spatially or culturally because— as suggested by social ecocritics — she has already lost her roots by leaving her native environment to become a transition figure. By losing the spatial dimension of nature, culture becomes more prominent, which results in the domination of nature. While women, according to Pite, are domineered by men, resulting in men's power over nature in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, this domination is diminished in *The Woodlanders*, in which Grace, by taking back Fitzpiers, triumphs over pure nature by finding her own way of coping with her loss. Generally, Grace Melbury depicts both power and weakness, both closeness to nature and culture. She finds herself in weaker situations when spied on by Fitzpiers, "quizzing her through an eyeglass" (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 65) and insofar being close to nature, as well as in a dominating position towards nature when coming back from her education abroad, looking at her unsuspecting parents through the open window before entering, which, in that moment, puts her closeness to culture.

Another critic focusing on an ecofeminist perspective is Stefan Horlacher, who analyses the Victorian opposition of the male and female gender roles in relation to the setting: "His reading of *Jude the Obscure* rests on the thesis that in the novel masculinity is a product of the sign systems stipulated by the protagonist's environment" (Müller-Wood 141). Horlacher sees the reason for these opposing roles, men being relegated to the public space and work and women being located in the private space only, in the disappearance of rural structures and the emergence of

industrialisation. According to Badinter, it is this change that led to the disempowerment of the patriarch:

Im Gegensatz zum 18. Jahrhundert teilt sich (...) die Welt in zwei völlig unterschiedliche Sphären auf, die kaum etwas miteinander zu tun haben: die private Sphäre des Heims, in der die Mutter herrscht; die Sphäre der Öffentlichkeit und des Berufslebens als ausschließlich den Männern vorbehalten Bereich. Auf der einen Seite die Frau als Mutter und Hausfrau; auf der anderen Seite der Mann als Arbeitender und Ernährer (breadwinner). (Badinter qtd. in Horlacher 131)

Men are disempowered as they only find themselves in the public sphere, without any control in the private sphere, becoming distinct father figures who only see their children at night (Horlacher 130). This leads to a growing influence of women over their children, including their sons, changing the concept of masculinity, as the main influence on children. Parham shares Horlacher's opinion on this nineteenth century division into public and private domain when writing in the introduction to *The Return of the Native*:

The fact that Clym's Prometheanism is intellectual and social while Eustacia's is sexual and emotional picks up those elements of a nineteenth century ideology of gender in which the mind and the public sphere are the preserve of the masculine, while the emotions and the life of the of personal relationships are the domain of the feminine. To Hardy's male hero belong modernity and culture, to his heroine a mythologized archaism and nature. (Parham, "Introduction" xxxi)

The growing fear of the influence of women, led to women being represented as inferior to men in the nineteenth century (Horlacher 133). This negative depiction of feminism is due to "a fear of nature out of control, a fear of the unconscious, of sexuality, of the loss of identity" (Huyssen qtd. in Horlacher 143). Generally, in nineteenth century society and in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, this leads to the fact that

in Relikten ländlicher Rituale, zwischen Restbeständen übersichtlicher und vertrauter Welt, (...) [treten] Figuren auf, die mit sich selbst nicht mehr zu Rande kommen und ihr Ende im Selbstmord oder in der Katastrophe suchen. Die etwa an Hardys *Jude the Obscure* erinnernde Konstellation des Mannes zwischen gegensätzlichen Frauentypen verschränkt sich mit Landschaft und Klima auf dunkle Weise. (Schenkel qtd. in Horacher 153)

For Horlacher, masculinity is therefore at a breaking point due to historical changes, hence the link to a dark and mysterious nature which Jude finds himself in. The link

goes on with the constant opposition of 'society versus individual', 'nature versus culture' and 'masculinity and femininity'.

Ecofeminism, as has already been pointed out in the theoretical part, links nature to femininity and culture to masculinity. Horlacher argues that each concept of the nature/culture dichotomy cannot be attributed to one side only as both are given to every human: men are embedded in a 'natural matrix' as well as culturally determined from the beginning and without its influence (161). This can again be linked to the society/individual dichotomy as every individual is – through cultural and natural determination by society – responsible for sustainability (Horlacher 159).

Consequently, Horlacher situates Hardy at the shift from a pre-modern view of thinking – valuing the control of behaviour in mainly local and rural cultural tradition – to a modern point of view in which the individual takes control and responsibility in an industrial and more urban society (159). For him, *Jude the Obscure* represents a good example of this shift of individuality from a male dominance to a female mannishness, becoming sensitive characters “die auch als weaklings umschreibbar sind” (164), as in the case of Jude.

Horlacher's *Masculinities* can be considered a social 'ecofeminist' representation. Ecofeminist is put under italics here because the author analyses the novels from a masculine point of view which in his opinion has been neglected in feminist and ecofeminist studies so far (171). Insofar, he shows the problematic distinction of masculinity and femininity in a socio-cultural ecocritical context based on the character of Jude. Victor Seidler ascertains that a masculine world is not necessarily a world “that has been built upon the needs or nourishment of men. Rather it is a social world of power and subordination in which men have been forced to compete if we want to benefit from our inherited masculinity” (Seidler qtd. in Horlacher 173). In *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy questions these ideas of dominant masculinity and explores what happens if men do not play by these rules (Horlacher 173). This continuing uncertainty of male/female boundary shifts is also ascertained by Horlacher who says that the differences between femininity and masculinity are still subjected to local cultural views, with the rural lacking behind:

Bei der Lektüre von *Jude the Obscure* muß jedoch beachtet werden, dass trotz Verunsicherung [...], die viktorianische Norm in den 'Nineties' keineswegs überwunden ist. Sie [...] beansprucht vor allem in der ländlichen Gegend, in der

das Handlungsgeschehen des Romans spielt, fast uneingeschränkte Gültigkeit. Vielleicht ist es genau diese zur Zeit der Abfassung von *Jude the Obscure* langsam auch im ländlichen Bereich zunehmende Verunsicherung, die sich in Hardys Experiment von neuen Konzeptionen von Weiblichkeit und Männlichkeit spiegelt. (187)

As in ecofeminism, in which women are mostly associated with nature because of reproduction and fertility, Horlacher points out common Victorian medical and biological rules, such as a smaller brain and asexuality, for women's subordination to men. Interestingly for ecofeminism, Mallett asserts that in nineteenth century belief it was common to think that "[I]f women expended their energies on higher education, they must expect to find their reproductive abilities stunted, if not destroyed – to become the mothers of 'a puny, enfeebled, and sickly race': 'When Nature spends in one direction, she must economise in another direction'" (Mallett qtd. in Horlacher 181). This point of view shows nature itself as the culprit of women's condition. In this sense, it would not only be men dominating women in a social sense but also nature in a biological sense. This analysis also makes a point for Victorian ecology due to the fact that knowledge about the brain and the body only got more precise in the nineteenth century.

Horlacher attributes the weakling's role to Jude, who finds himself in a position where he belongs to nowhere, neither to any family group nor any class system. He is trapped between an organic community which does not function anymore as it once did and a new mechanisation of the environment. And for him to move on, and especially to move from his native community to the city, he needs male connections, who are associated with the dominance of nature (Horlacher 198). In Christminster, Jude becomes the domineering character, not accepting the pregnant Sue's wishes to look for accommodation before watching a parade (Horlacher 226). Contrary to Sue, whose association to nature can be found in her reproductive role, Jude represents cultural power. He shows a different behaviour than in rural landscape where he cared for the weaker animals and could not stand their suffering: "Nature's logic was too horrid for him to care for. That mercy towards one set of creatures was cruelty towards another sickened his sense of harmony" (Hardy, *Jude* 57). In contrast to his rural behaviour, he shows different attributes in the city, where he strives for acceptance into the male community, leaving his family to look after themselves. In doing so, he falls back to the

stereotypical gender roles of men dominating women (Horlacher 225), while in relation to nature, his native environment, he shows what are usually considered female traits, caring and mercy for animals (Horlacher 196), being “a boy who could not himself bear to hurt anything” (Hardy, *Jude* 55). Still, these rural and female characteristics are undercut by Arabella, his wife, who dominates his female traits towards nature, while at the same time undercutting his male biological characteristics by throwing a pig's penis at his head (Horlacher 198). While Arabella acts within the principles of Darwin, the survival of the fittest, Sue acts more on selfish reasons, even narcissistic reasons, wanting to dominate Jude through his love for her although she has no feelings for him (Horlacher 249). Again, the dominance of female and male characters is reversed, with Jude representing a weaker sex. Nature and gender are in this analysis inevitably linked to social structures, biological determination (incest in the family of Jude's and Sue's ancestors) and cultural influences. All this leads to a questioning of stereotypes and how men and women are seen in relation to their environment.

#### **4.4 Representation of the Environment**

In ecocritical analyses, the main focus lies on the environment. In relation to the environment, which denominates "the surroundings of an individual person, a species, a society, or a life form in general" (Buell, *Future* 140), the ecosystem shows the "network of relations" (Bate, *Song* 107) within the environment, the interconnectedness of every living and dead organism.

For ecocritics, Hardy's novels of character and environment pose the question whether the environment is merely a backdrop for the characters' tales or if it can be considered a main character on its own and how the 'network of relations' between the organisms is represented. From a literary point of view, this analysis of the environment happens on the level of a novel's setting, distinguishing between the general setting, which denominates the "general locale, historical time, and social circumstances in which the action occurs" (Abrams 294) and the individual setting of a particular scene within the novel or poem which is "the particular physical location in which it takes



place" (Abrams 294). From a former point of view, it "deprecates what it denotes, implying that the physical environment serves for artistic purposes merely as a backdrop, ancillary to the main event" (Buell, "Representing" 177). In this sense,

the most ambitious monograph on place in literature criticizes Thomas Hardy's evocation of Egdon Heath (which 'almost puts his work into the kind of place-saturated fiction which is expressly devoted to the assault upon a mountain') and commends by contrast the Parisian chapters of Henry James's *The Ambassadors* as containing 'the barest minimum of detail and the maximum of personal reflection on these details. (Buell, "Representing" 177)

The fact that the last decades have seen literary theory moving from Marxism, feminism and other human sciences, marginalizing nature to the point where "attentive representation of environmental detail is of minor importance even in writing where the environment figures importantly as an issue" (Buell, "Representing" 177-178), suggests that the time was ready to move towards nature as the main point of focus, for the sake of the environment itself, instead of being used for formal, symbolic or ideological reasons only.

The reason why setting was, and still is, merely seen as a backdrop by many critics, is due to the fact that "the modern understanding of how environmental representation works has been derived from the study of the fictive genres rather than nonfiction" (Buell, "Representing" 177), favouring prose texts such as *Walden* by Thoreau. This is why Buell criticises modern critics, who read the environment as the 'setting' only, where the story is 'set' in instead of a character of its own. This general understanding of setting as a mere backdrop is also criticised by Birch, for whom the reasons for such a reading lie with other nineteenth century authors:

Other writers in the decades before Hardy had established their reputations by probing the man-community relationship in a variety of ways. These included the social realism approach of Dickens with his concern for the individual miseries of the industrial environment, and the unmasking of the hypocrisies of the social environment portrayed in Jane Austen's novels. Hardy and the other naturalist writers of the late nineteenth century needed, therefore, a fresh approach to fiction if they were also to succeed in attracting a readership. (Birch 353)

For Birch, Hardy's need for a 'fresh approach' was a need to survive in the literary jungle of the nineteenth century. As can be seen here, Hardy's contemporaries, as well as his predecessors, mostly focused on the social and economic relationships between the characters and the environment. Of course, as social ecology demonstrated, these

links can also be found in Hardy's novels yet what differentiates him from others is the importance which he attributes to the setting, becoming a character on its own that has the power to influence the characters. It is for this reason that Hardy attributes so much importance to Wessex because it offers Hardy everything he needs in terms of time, space, history and cultural practices to invoke the area with life. As Birch argues, he had to come up with a 'fresh approach' in order to set himself apart from other writers, such as Dickens or Austen. This 'fresh approach', namely the use of a fictional yet realistic setting as a strategic device in order to relate to apparent environmental ideas and concerns, is what led to Hardy's success. In this sense, Hardy fulfils Kern's notion of ecocriticism which for Kern is "a text's orientation both to the world it imagines and to the world in which it takes shape" (Kern 260). It bears witness that the imagined world and the world shaping it are closely interrelated, which firstly works as a stabiliser for the setting and secondly makes it more approachable. It is an "approach that Hardy was here developing [...] to make previously unsung environments offer literary and often, dramatic, possibilities" (Birch 353).

According to Buell, reader and writer have to bond over this agreement that the environmental setting is more than just a background. Buell argues that this 'environmental bonding' is achieved through aestheticism. An environmental text has to be an "energizer that disperses the reader's attention, in imitation of the poet's own, out of various points of environmental contact" (Buell, "Representing" 181). Through aestheticism, the reader is able to animate the ecosystem and make the animals and trees palpable ("Representing" 180). Only through aestheticism is the reader able to get closer to the environment of the novels, because the aestheticism of nature has the advantage that nature gets accessible for men (Byerly 55). The reader can relate to the human and non-human environment in a better way and, as a consequence, is able to envision that everything is dependant on each other, showing the interconnectedness of characters and environment, humans and the non-human. While some moments might be only a passing idea for the characters, such as Tess' thoughts on the processes and efforts of delivering milk to London people, who the labourers have absolutely no connection to, they can make the reader ponder more deeply on the subject. By reflecting on bringing milk to the city and driving through the moor in the rain, the reader is reminded of present day's problems of car pollution and globalisation problems (Kerridge, "Maps"

268): "Londoners will drink it at their breakfasts tomorrow, won't they?" she asked. 'Strange people that we have never seen. [...] Who don't know anything of us, and where it comes from; or think how we two drove miles across the moor to-night in the rain that it might reach 'em in time?'" (Hardy, *Tess* 240). The difference between the two ecosystems of country and city become obvious, as well as the differences between past and present environments. Although the environment of the characters is different from the readers', Kerridge observes that "she [Tess] might almost be imagining the life of her reader" ("Maps" 268). The reader is made aware of the ecological dangers awaiting his own environment.

Although Buell regards Hardy as a nature writer, he prefers the Romantic writers, such as Wordsworth or Richard Jefferies, as more ecocritical in terms of their environmental presentation because for him the link between Hardy's personal and Clym's story overshadows the importance of the environment (*Environmental Imagination* 255.) Relating his own history through Clym, the environment is subordinate to the characters' story, as the focus shifts away from nature to personal tragedy. In a sense, Buell thinks of Hardy less ecocritical than others, such as Kerridge or Miller, because "despite the depth of such environments as Egdon Heath, the "heath is in the long run ancillary to Clym's story", and the novel "is about people in place, not about place itself" (Buell, *Environmental Imagination* 255). Nevertheless, Buell admits that the connection between men and locality gets most apparent in *The Return of the Native* in which "a nonhuman entity like Egdon Heath might be a book's main "character" or agential force" (Buell, *Future* 4).

In contrast to Buell, Sanders is of the opinion that the environment plays a more important role than the characters in Hardy's novels. As he points out, "the human world is set against the overachieving background of nature. As in Hardy's novels, this landscape is no mere scenery, no flimsy stage set, but rather the energizing *medium* from which human lives emerge and by which those lives are bounded and measured" (Sanders 183). He accentuates that Hardy's setting is the most important element in his novels, controlling both the narration as well as the characters. This is also agreed on by Miller, for whom the evocation of the heath signifies that the "landscape in a novel is not just an indifferent background within which the action takes place" (Miller 16) but it is "an essential determinant of that action" (Miller 16). His

ecocritical reading stems from the heath's personification in the opening chapter, in which the heath is portrayed as a giant monster, that seems to absorb everything:

The place became full of a watchful intentness now; for when other things sank brooding to sleep the heath appeared slowly to awake and listen. Every night its Titanic form seemed to await something; but it had waited thus, unmoved, during so many centuries, through the crisis of so many things, that it could only be imagined to await one last crisis – the final overthrow. (Hardy, *Return* 10)

This awakening creature is not simply a mere background but rather a character, which exudes power over its inhabitants. It has the ability to listen and wait and probably strike back at its opponents.

Hardy's contemporary D.H. Lawrence, too, “argued that the controlling element in *The Return of the Native* is not the human action, but the setting where that action takes place, the wasteland of Egdon Heath” (Sanders 182). As Lawrence states about *The Return of the Native*:

What is the real stuff of tragedy in the book? It is the Heath. It is the primitive, primal earth, where the instinctive life heaves up. [...] The heath heaved with raw instinct. Edgon, whose dark soil was strong and crude and organic as the body of a beast. Out of the body of the body of this crude earth are born Eustacia, Wildeve, Mistress Yeobright, Clym, and all the others. They are one year's accidental crop. [...] Here is the deep, black source from whence all these little contents of lives are drawn. (Lawrence 27)

For Lawrence, the heath is the real power of the novel. Not only does it exist without the characters but it is also their mother and nurturer, with the inhabitants being not more than 'accidental crops'. Lawrence continues with the general representation of the environment in Hardy's novels:

This is a constant revelation in Hardy's novels: that there exists a great background, vital and vivid, which matters more than the people who move upon it. Against the background of dark, passionate Egdon, of the leafy, sappy passion and sentiment of the woodlands, of the unfathomed stars, is drawn the lesser scheme of lives [...]. Upon the vast, incomprehensible pattern of some primal morality greater than ever the human mind can grasp, pathetic pattern of man's moral life and struggle, pathetic, almost ridiculous. [...]. The vast, unexplored morality of life itself, what we call the immorality of nature, surrounds us in its eternal incomprehensibility, and in its midst goes on the little human morality play, [...]; seriously, portentously, till some one of the protagonists chances to look out of the charmed circle, weary of the stage, to look into wilderness raging around. (Lawrence 31)

The environment becomes a 'stage' for the characters, something that they have to distance themselves from because, as time passes, it becomes incomprehensible as the inhabitants are unable to relate to it.

Whether the environment is read as a background or a main character, it is in constant interconnection with its human and non-human inhabitants (Bate, *Song* 107). For Buell, Hardy achieves these connections through the use of "environmental evocations" (*Future* 55). The reader's imagination is linked to the poet's or author's, producing environmental bonding (Buell, "Representing" 181). For Kerridge, Hardy is able to achieve this environmental bond through ecology, "the study of relationships and interdependencies within shared local environments – and of the relation of such environments to larger ecosystems" ("Maps" 268) because "environmental writing and criticism offer the promise of [...] refocusing attention on place at the level of either the region or the transnation" (Buell, *Environmental Imagination* 82). Insofar, Buell admits that Hardy is "the greatest of all Victorian writers" (Buell, *Environmental Imagination* 83), using "object responsiveness and imaginative shaping" ("Representing" 181) as a means of connecting the reader with the environment. Hence the ecosystem does not only operate on the level of the novel itself but also between the novel's fictional environment and the readers' real surroundings.

The relationship between the human and non-human environment is not only achieved through aestheticism but also through the reflection of the characters' lives in nature. This can be seen in the climax of the *The Return of the Native*, when the deaths of Eustacia and Wildeve are reflected in nature: "In the drowning of Eustacia and Wildeve, the movement of the characters back and forth on the heath is replaced by the rapid coursing of a river" (Miller 49) Eustacia's desire, which is blocked throughout the novel, is reflected in the stream which flows even wilder in the end as it is finally released. Yet Hardy "also attempted to make her [Eustacia], like the "colossal" heath itself, a source of sublime aesthetic experience for the reader. She fulfils her course in her plunge into the water, to be joined by Wildeve in a love embrace that is also death" (Miller 49). This shows how the ecosystem's networks operate and how the environment reflects humans' lives and their fates. It also suggests that people's fates, no matter where they are located, are always determined by their immediate surroundings, making the environment the most important factor.

#### 4.4.1 The treatment of 'pure' nature

Within the realms of deep ecology, the main focus lies on 'pure' nature. 'Pure' nature signifies a nature that exists on its own, not needing human life to survive. It was here before men and "left to itself, [...] settles into a balance, a rhythm, that is eternal and unchanging" (Turner 42). This sort of nature, which is completely untouched, is difficult to find on earth, as humans have left their imprints on it over time. Pure nature, a nature which is completely devoid of human involvement, is very difficult to grasp, especially because without our seeing nature, the concept of nature cannot exist in our mind (Sugimura 3), which in turn leads to the question whether pure nature is even real or just a concept which we make up in our mind. This is what Soper establishes when she says that nature cannot exclude humanity because "we have thought, that is, of humanity as being a component of nature even as we have conceptualized nature as absolute otherness to humanity. "Nature" is in this sense both that which we are not *and* which we are within" (*Nature* 21). Still, critics say that humans have the power to imagine an intrinsic value of nature, which alludes to 'pure', or 'real' nature (Sugimura 4). Hence pure nature still exists: "For the most part, when 'nature' is used as the non-human, it is in a rather more concrete sense to refer to that part of the environment which we have had no hand in creating" (Soper, *Nature* 16) but which men try to destroy by using its resources, exploiting and demolishing what is 'natural', notwithstanding the possible consequences (Soper, *Nature* 17).

According to Sugimura, Hardy tries to depict real, pure nature through the eyes of his characters, taking into consideration that nature only becomes nature through humanity (6). These characters, which are tied to their native community (inhabiting it), as only they can see the real nature, can treat it in three different ways: firstly, they can fear it, secondly, treat it with pathetic fallacy, and thirdly, a mix between the first two: "Some characters in the novels of Hardy observe nature in itself or its pure otherness, while others impose their individual fantasy upon nature to the point of pathetic fallacy" (Sugimura 6). The fear of nature is present in John South's trepidation of the elm tree standing outside his house: "And at last it got too big; and now 'tis my enemy, and will be the death of me. Little did I think, when I let that sapling stay, that a time would come when it would torment me, and dash me into my grave" (Hardy,

*Woodlanders* 90). Although respecting nature as such, and knowing that his life is linked to his native environment through the elm, he still fears it for its power. And the fear of nature shall turn out to be true for him: John South dies together with the felling of the tree:

It was done at last; and the elm of the same birth-year as the woodman's lay stretched upon the ground. [...] As soon as the old man saw the vacant patch of sky in place of the branched column so familiar to his gaze he sprang up, speechless; his eyes rose from their hollows till the whites showed all round; he fell back, and a bluish whiteness overspread him. [...] He lingered through the day, and died that evening as the sun went down. (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 100-101)

In contrast to the characters in fear of nature, the reader can find other characters who treat nature with pathetic fallacy, for instance Sue Brideshead, who dotes on roses, and Jude, who feels sympathy for the pig. The pathetic fallacy which these characters feel for nature, derives from the fact that they are not inhabiting it and therefore do not have the same connection as do other characters.

A third type of character, including Winterbourne and Marty, is the one which treats nature neither in fear nor with pathetic fallacy. He takes nature for what it is, living with nature's 'decisions', of stormy weather or sunshine, but also using it to a reasonable advantage. This third type "neither apotheosises nature nor emotionalises its pure otherness, but endeavours to represent the real to the best of his ability" (Suigmura 7).

This analysis shows that pure nature, a nature without human influence, is depicted in Hardy's novels and plays a part in the lives of the characters. Though nature plays a central part, operating on its own and with quite some force as seen in the opening chapter of *The Return of the Native*, it is still seen from a human's perspective, through the eyes of the characters, who either fear it, look at it with pathetic fallacy or have found a way to live with it. Insofar it can be concluded that even the depiction and analysis of untouched nature is subjected to the realms of social ecocriticism.

#### 4.4.2 Biodiversity in Hardy's novels

As already established, the representation of the ecosystem is an important factor in Hardy's novels. In order to maintain the ecosystem, we need biodiversity: "biodiversity means that for most of the time the number of species on earth expands" (Bate, *Song* 230) and that all these species are maintained (Everndon 93). It involves both humans and non-humans, though humans have to be careful because "the species which destroys its ecosystem destroys itself" (Bate, *Song* 229), which is what ecologists call the "self-destructive or suicidal move" (Rueckert 107). In this sense, ecocritics are interested in how human and non-human creatures respect each other in order to maintain biodiversity and with it the biosphere. They also look at whether the ecosystem is represented on the same level as humans or whether it is portrayed as inferior to men.

According to Kerridge, the reader can distinguish between 'higher' forms of life, the characters of the plot, and 'lower' forms of life, such as the animals, found in the environmental 'subplot' ("Maps" 269). To Kerridge, these 'lower' forms of nature, are

the small-scale life at the margin of human affairs, flourishing in the absence of human intrusion. The activity of small creatures and the immense distances spanned in planetary observation both represent departures from the normal concerns of character and plot. Yet such moments are parts of the very plots they seem to escape. ("Maps" 269)

These forms of nature may be the maggots "heaving and wallowing with enjoyment" (Hardy, *Return* 270) watched by Mrs. Yeobright or the "huge flies, ignorant of larders and wire-netting" (Hardy, *Return* 247) swarming around Clym. Hardy, according to Kerridge, sardonically attributes happiness to these small, 'lower' creatures, who fail to see beyond their ecosystem while the higher creatures suffer. A possible explanation for the characters' and the readers' ensuing flight into these happy moments may be that they "provide momentary relief from the unhappiness that burdens 'higher existences'" (Kerridge, "Maps" 269).

By dividing the world into 'higher' and 'lower' forms of creature, the reader might question the ecocritical perspective of treating nature with respect, as it seems that the two forms are not on an equal footing. Still, living in harmony with the environment is not ruled out by distinguishing these two categories, because its treatment depends on the characters' relationship with them: Mrs. Yeobright does not



exact power over the 'lower' creature but delights in their happiness, Clym finds himself unrecognisable from the lower creatures, Jude feels that all of them have the right to live and Winterbourne's appearance is that nature itself. They all put 'higher' and 'lower' creatures on the same level, seeing "landscape not only as a collection of physical forms, but as evidence of what has occurred there" (Everndon 99).

This sympathy for non-human creatures is especially true for Jude, who could not himself bear to hurt anything. He had never brought home a nest of young birds without lying awake in misery half the night after, and often reinstating them and the nest in their original place the next morning. He could scarcely bear to see trees cut down or looped, from a fancy that it hurt them; [...] He carefully picked his way on tiptoe among the earthworms, without killing a single one. (Hardy, *Jude* 55-56)

Moreover, he feels sympathy for the pig when he has to kill it and the pig's "note changed its quality. It was not now rage, but the cry of despair; long-drawn, slow and hopeless. 'Upon my soul I would sooner have gone without the pig than have this to do!' said Jude" (Hardy, *Jude* 109). By showing sympathy for the pig, a 'lower' creature, Jude finds himself unfit for life among other 'higher' creatures, especially Arabella, who calls him "a tender hearted fool" (Hardy, *Jude* 109) and for whom the killing of the pig is merely a business.

Jude's relationship with the lower creatures is what puts him either ahead of his time – seen from today's perspective of treating 'lower' creatures with respect - or backwards in time, overruled by Victorian modernity in which power exertion is unavoidable. He stands in constant opposition to the economic-driven world around him, his aunt who expects the wages, Arabella, and Mr. Troutham, who "turned me away because I let the rooks have a few peckings of corn" (Hardy, *Jude* 56). Jude stands up for these creatures and gets punished for them, getting fired for his compassion and left by his wife. Kerridge reasons that he "attempts a Godlike compassion without the advantages of God's position. This human attempt at Godly omniscience is a reproof to a supposedly loving God who has not provided an economy merciful to all forms of life" ("Maps" 269). Jude takes all the blame himself, irrespective of his inability to save the victims. What Kerridge wants to show is not a man who suffers for everyone else and in the end despairs because of his failure, but a person who knows that acceptance takes its time ("Maps" 269-270). Instead of thinking of himself as an outcast, he finds

comfort in the idea of living in harmony with the lower creatures, believing himself to be ahead of time, saying that "it takes two or three generations to do what I tried to do in one" (Hardy, *Jude* 398).

Other characters who treat the ecosystem on the same level as humans, not feeling the difference between higher and lower creatures, are Giles and Marty, whose environmental knowledge and treatment of nature is associated with Ray Dasmann's 'ecosystem people'. These ecosystem people, who live in harmony with nature, have a practical knowledge of the woodlands that is attributed to communities "totally dependent, or largely so, on the animals and plants of a particular area" (Kerridge, "Maps" 270). They know of the nature-human dependency and treat the ecosystem with respect accordingly. Although they also use nature and its products for their own purpose of survival, they know that nature in Little Hintock "was vegetable nature's own home" (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 59) and that it does not pose a threat. These characters find themselves on the same level with nature and get their intimate knowledge of the ecosystem by working in it (Kerridge, "Maps" 270). This can be found in the instance after Giles' death, when the woods, whom he had served his whole life and which in turn had served him, accept him as one of their own:

The whole wood seemed to be a house of death, pervaded by loss to its uttermost length and breadth. Winterbourne was gone and the copse seemed to show the want of him; those young trees, so many of which he had planted, and of which he had spoken so truly when he said that he should fall before they fell, were at that very moment sending out their roots in the direction that he had given them with his subtle hand. (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 302)

In addition to being accepted by the woods during his lifetime, able to speak "the tongue of the trees and fruits and flowers" (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 307) and "spreading the roots of each little tree" (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 64), he is also greeted by them in death, making them one of their own. This harmony with nature shows how biodiversity is maintained, that non-human life and lower creatures are necessary for the whole ecosystem to remain and that higher and lower forms can live side by side without problems:

A few snow flakes descended, at the sight of which a robin, alarmed at these signs of imminent winter, and seeing that no offence was meant by the human invasion, came and perched on the tip of the faggots that were being sold, and looked into the auctioneer's face whilst waiting for some chance crumb from the breadbasket. (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 54-55)

It is not only humans that have to accept biodiversity but also animals and non-humans, who at first might feel frightened by the human invasion but in the course of time have to adapt to them by living together. This sharing of the living space in a harmonious way can be found in Little Hintock where one

could see various small members of the animal community that lived unmolested there - creatures of hair, fluff, and scale; the toothed kind and the billed kind; underground creatures jointed and ringed - circumambulating the hut under the impression that Giles having gone away, nobody was there; and eyeing it inquisitively with a view to winter quarters. (Hardy, *Woodlanders* 283)

The animals find peace and shelter in the home of one of the higher creatures, though only when Giles is gone and cannot frighten them. Both lower and higher creatures have to find ways to exist on in order for biodiversity to remain. The living space has to be shared and they have to find a way to co-exist.

Contrary to this harmony of higher and lower creatures, Hardy shows that this intimate knowledge of the ecosystem gets "lost when social mobility carries a person away from their community and work" (Kerridge, "Maps" 270) or when they cannot see their immediate environment as an equal partner, such as in the case of Grace in *The Woodlanders*, leaving the environment for education and forgetting the names of the native plants and trees, and Troy in *Far from the Madding Crowd* when he uses his sword to kill a small caterpillar, another form of 'lower' life:

It appeared that a caterpillar had come from the fern and chosen the front of her bodice as his resting place. She saw the point [of the sword] glisten towards her bosom, and seemingly enter it. Batsheba closed her eyes in full persuasion that she was killed at last. However, feeling just as usual, she opened them again. 'There it is, look,' said the sergeant, holding his sword before her eyes. The caterpillar was spitted upon its point. (Hardy, *Madding Crowd* 178)

In this instant neither Troy, nor Batsheba are in harmony with their environment, Troy by exacting power over the caterpillar by killing it, and Batsheba by letting him. For Troy, the animal does not serve any purpose on earth, hence the killing of it. He, as well as other characters, such as Fitzpiers, do not understand that each species "must share its ecosystem with other species" (Bate, *Song* 279).

Generally, Hardy keeps higher and lower creatures apart in his novels. The lower creatures seem strong enough to survive although some of the characters try to kill them without thinking about what their extinction would mean for them. According to

Kerridge, the difference in the treatment of the ecosystem lies in the characters' knowledge of it. The more they know about it, the better they treat it. They do not feel superior to the 'lower' creatures and would probably contradict Kerridge's differentiation between 'higher' and 'lower' forms. It shows that leaving the native ecosystem and not knowing about it from birth, results in the growing differences between nature and culture, leading humans towards culture. Hardy does not show the consequences of the extinction of any kind of species but it leaves the reader puzzled as to what would happen if the lower creatures were not present in the setting and the real world, raising once again our awareness for the ecological crisis and the neglect with which we treat nature. All in all, even a deep ecological analysis, which tries to look mainly at Hardy's presentation of pure environment undisturbed by human interference, cannot disguise the fact that an analysis of 'pure' nature and its biodiversity, that should focus on lower creatures only, seems nearly impossible as far as Hardy's novels are concerned because the human influence has already grown too strong in the setting.

## **5. A new Perspective on Hardy and Ecocriticism**

In order to come to a conclusion it has to be mentioned that in this study ecocriticism and Thomas Hardy have been touched upon from most angles which ecocriticism is concerned with: deep ecology, ecofeminism as well as social ecology. As far as Thomas Hardy is concerned, one additional area of interest needs to be highlighted here, which would benefit from further ecocritical analysis: green film studies, also known as eco-cinecriticism (Ivakhev 1).

One point which so far has not been looked at from an ecocritical angle is a study of space and the environment in the movie versions of Hardy's books. Though, as will be seen, nature itself is considered in Gatrell's analysis of the Wessex area in the 1997 BBC *The Woodlanders* version shot by Agland, there is still room left for ecocriticism to focus on the films. The demand for this field arises because "as ecocriticism develops in scope and in influence, it is spreading beyond its original home in literary studies and colonizing new niches in related fields. Among these is film

criticism" (Ivakhiv 1). Despite the growing interest in green movies, the main focus lies on environmental pictures, films conceptualised from a green perspective and depicting green topics, such as wildlife films and nature documentaries (Ivakhiv 1), neglecting motion pictures for the most part.

The reasons why ecocritics might not turn to Hardy adaptations in particular, might, as Gatrell analysis, be threefold: firstly, that historical reasons prevented to shoot the films in the Victorian setting described by the writer, secondly, circumstantial reasons, which means that the movie had to be made outside of England and therefore does not give a 'true picture', and thirdly, aesthetic reasons that would offer a deconstruction of the Wessex area ("Wessex on Film" 37).

As to what ecocritics could focus on in an ecocinematic analysis of Hardy, I want to point out Gatrell, who provides the reader with a description of the opening scene of *The Return of the Native* (1994), the aerial shots of the landscape, the zoom towards the waterfall and the lone figure in a blue hood traipsing through the vast area and in the end disappearing behind a brown hillside ("Wessex on Film" 42). The scene is shot on a sunny, partly cloudy day, not staying true to the opening scene of the book in which a lone figure is standing on the hill, only vaguely recognisable by the passer-by and the reader and later vanishing completely into the countryside. For Gatrell, this depiction of the environment still corresponds to the emphasis which Hardy put on nature ("Wessex on Film" 42) though this deviation from the writing and especially the length of the scene in the novel would suggest that Hardy placed more importance on the environment in the novel's opening scene than Gold did in the film.

One of the movies which could be of interest for ecocritics, is Agland's BBC version of *The Woodlanders*, which will be focused on in this part in order to point out how ecocritics could make use of it. As in the book, nature also plays an important part in the movie in which the characters are surrounded by woodland, which is sometimes portrayed as unruly and barren, while at other times depicted as an aesthetic landscape, that pleases both the viewers as well as the characters. An ecocritical point of view has the task to look at the differences in this portrayal, surpassing the question 'Is nature and landscape portrayed in the film?' and instead asking questions such as 'When, how and why are the woodlands portrayed as nature?' and 'When, how and why does the director show us an aestheticised landscape?' These questions could lead to social ecocritics looking at the positioning of the characters in the movie's environment, establishing the

protagonists' relation to the environment through the use of particular camera angles and shots in order to portray their closeness/distance to the woodlands. Another attempt could also include a difference in the portrayal of the environment between the book and the film. In the following analysis, I will focus on the above mentioned ecocinematic positions in the 1997 movie *The Woodlanders*.

One of the first scenes of the movie, shows Giles stepping into a yard to meet Grace's father to talk about his daughter's return to the native village. In the scene, the viewer can see a huge part of the long shot being taken up by the reaping machine steaming and heaving in the foreground, dominating not only the long shot but also the sound (00:05:05). As already pointed out by ecocritics like Bayer and Parham, Hardy does not leave out machinery and modern technology in the books, but it does not dominate any of the novel's scenes, but is instead found in the background. The dominance of the reaping machine in the movie scene would therefore suggest a bigger influence of machinery on men than portrayed in the book, showing that the lives of the woodlanders have already been disrupted and that they are already closer to 'modern' society than Hardy wants us to believe.

Overall, the positioning of the camera and the resulting angle of the shots is an important factor in an ecocinematic analysis. In Agland's *The Woodlanders*, each character is given different shots in order to establish his/her feelings towards the environment. While Winterbourne is mostly seen in long shots, leaving enough space for him to be surrounded by nature, which in the film is shown as a very barren and cold landscape, using dark colours for the portrayal of the woodlands, his counterpart Fitzpiers is only allowed medium shots, suggesting his restricted relation to the environment. Additionally, the camera angle also contributes to the characters' positioning within the native community. Winterbourne's position, which is found at the bottom of the social ladder, is established by means of the bird's eye shots, referring to his lower position in the community and people looking down on him, as found in the scene when he is conversing with Mrs. Charmond (00:26:12). Moreover, the bird's eye shot gives the viewer the impression that Winterbourne is routed in his native environment, while lower angle shots distance the characters from the soil and ground contributing to ecocriticism's nature/culture dichotomy. Therefore, Fitzpiers', Grace's and Mrs. Charmond's educated positions are elevated by the use of low-angle shots in order to portray their removal from the scenery.

Another important focus for an ecocinematic analysis is to ask which characters are placed in nature and why, as well as how nature is represented in certain scenes. Giles is generally the character that is most associated with nature, not only in the book but also in the film, for instance in an extreme long shot scene that shows him moving through the landscape with his horse cart (00:41:03). The purpose of this long shot is to establish his association with nature, with the main focus lying on the pure landscape surrounding him, depicted as a vast and open field instead of a closed and domesticated scenery. Marty, is, as is her friend Giles, shown in the woodlands in the movie, not scared of the dark and gloomy countryside, seemingly knowing her way around. For her, too, the shots used are long and medium shots, leaving room for the landscape in the background (00:45:07). Her association with nature is also shown by the non-apparent music, accentuating 'natural' sounds like the hooting of owls and the rustling of leaves. In contrast to these two characters, Fitzpiers is mostly shot inside various rooms in the house or in domesticated landscape, meaning that the viewer can usually see additional people or tamed animals like pigs together in the same scene.

The focus on Grace's film character might prove a bit different than in the novel, in which eccocritics establish her as a returning character that lost her knowledge about the environment and, though gradually regaining the native's knowledge again, is unable to return fully. The movie establishes Grace as a returning character as well but with the difference that she chooses nature over culture in the end by rejecting Fitzpier's and staying true to her feelings for Winterbourne. This changing attitude towards the woodlands, from her return from the city to the end of the film, is picked up in the various shots that are used to portray her feelings. While Grace's initial distance to her native environment is first shown by the use of medium shots which positions her in an aestheticised landscape, such as the flower bed when looking for her lost purse, (00:29:57), the environment she finds herself in at the end is the woodlands, pure and rough nature where she is for some time exposed to the elements when running through the rain (01:12:96-01:13:77). In this scene, the shots vary between long shots and medium shots, in most of which nature domineers the space. She continually gets closer to the environment and becomes part of the landscape, which can firstly be found in a shot in which the surrounding plants are nearly as tall as her, swallowing and immersing her completely (00:50:15) and secondly when she surveys the vast countryside on Fitzpiers' departure, a scene in which the camera shows the landscape completely from

her point of view, including the emergence of Giles from the mist in another long shot (00:53:23).

The above mentioned scenes from the movies *The Return of the Native* and especially *The Woodlanders*, shall give an insight into how movies can translate ecocritical novels into ecocentric images. From an ecocritical point of view, they can be analysed with the same questions in mind as when reading the books, including all the different sub-genres, deep ecology, social ecology and ecofeminism. Generally, the reader has to bear in mind that "filmed narratives give a more direct and vivid apprehension of immediate physical reality – of what we can see and hear" (Carroll 304), but also limits the viewers' imagination by providing images for him and that restrictions in filming, as pointed out before, can influence the viewers' perception of the setting.



## 6. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine the different ways in which Thomas Hardy is read within the relatively new ecocritical approach. The study set out to establish the theoretical background of different branches within ecocriticism, namely ecofeminism, deep ecology and urban ecocriticism, and how their ecocritical representatives interpret the category of place in its different forms, whether it is considered landscape, wilderness, biosphere, setting or environment.

The study demonstrates that, as far as these categories are concerned, there is no common consensus on what 'place' actually is. Different terms might exist but this does not mean that we can find clear cut boundaries between them. This mingling is also found in the approach itself, which combines various fields such as geography and feminism and puts them in relation to 'place'. It also shows that an approach which centres on the category of 'place' can effectively contribute to and even shed new light on the literary canon.

While the first part establishes a theoretical concept of the literary and cultural approach, the second part links its theories to Thomas Hardy's novels. The focus on Hardy is due to the fact that he himself contributed to the environment actively by making it on the one hand the centre of the content of his novels and on the other hand actively adding to it by using literary devices that show the importance of the environment. Whether the focus lies on social or deep ecology, the analyses portray how Hardy manages to raise the readers ecological awareness by both the content as well as the language. A focus on Hardy is generally valid as his novels give the reader the feeling of falling into a time that is long gone but which is worth keeping in order to maintain ecological order: a rural village that values the sense of community and nature's importance, a heath that seems wild and untamed and woodlands, which evoke the feeling that, no matter what might happen in the future, the big, beautiful and old trees will always withstand deforestation.

Thomas Hardy's novels, and a few of his poems, are in this study analysed from the above mentioned ecocritical branches, having taken into account the power struggle between culture and nature in ecofeminist studies, the focus on pure nature in deep ecology as well as the relationship between people and the environment in social

ecology. It establishes that the boundaries between the individual branches cannot be drawn easily, as they tend to mingle and refer to each other in the sense of agreeing with or contradicting each other. The ecocritical analyses of Hardy's novels convey the idea that Hardy's personal attitude towards his native environment, him on the one hand writing about his lost community while on the other hand living the modern life of a writer in a modern city, complicates the critics' and the readers' understanding of the setting, with the reading depending on whether Hardy looks at it from a naive point of view or uses it as a means to point towards present and future ecological problems.

Hardy's own point of view, especially his personal struggle as a borderline figure, is reflected in ecocritics' reading. The author's conflicted view is mirrored in the different character types, ranging from insiders, to outsiders and containing the so-called 'alienated outsiders' in between all of whose treatment of the environment sheds light on how Hardy's time was changing from rural to industrial and its implications for today.

Generally, it has to be said that the main focus of the readings can be found within the realms of social ecology. Even though ecocritics also highlight Hardy's depiction of undisturbed nature in his texts, focusing on the importance of the maintenance of the biosphere and insofar reflecting Hardy's need to immerse himself with nature from afar (the city), humans are always present, both in form of the characters as well as the readers, the two of them intruding on the setting's landscape by either the action of inhabiting or reading. This human intrusion shows that even in Hardy's times it was difficult to find pieces of nature which were pure in themselves, leading to the conclusion that social ecology overrules deep ecology as far as his novels are concerned. This focus on social ecology, as far as Hardy's novels are concerned, shows that Hardy is, with the exception of some parts of *The Return of the Native*, mainly read from the British perspective of ecocriticism, which concentrates more on the relationship between the characters and the environment rather than a wilderness area as in US ecocriticism. It demonstrates that ecocritics generally agree upon that Hardy's setting, whether the fictional Wessex or the real Dorset area, rather represents landscape than wilderness. But what ecocritics disagree with each other is whether his environmental setting has as much importance as that of the Romantics, suggesting that the Romantics still have more value than the Victorian writers. This leads to the fact

that some ecocritics do not lean towards Hardy as one of the main ecocritical canonical writers, preferring other authors, who in their opinion better fulfil the ecocritical notion of 'nature only'.

One point spared by ecocritics in relation to Hardy, but looked at in the last part of this study, is ecocinema. Despite the huge reader community of Hardy (as acknowledged by Bate), and the existence of various movie versions of the novels, this point comes as quite an astonishment. Of course this does not mean that Hardy's movies have never been the centre of attention before, but it has to be said that ecocritics, for whatever reasons, are apparently more interested in the novels than in the films. My final analysis of the 1997 movie version of *The Woodlanders* tries to show how the literary ecocritical principles can be transferred to an ecocinematic representation. Based on the ecological principles, such as ethical awareness, that is to say 'consciousness raising', and the culture/nature dichotomy, it can be argued that one can find an underlying ecocritical purpose in *The Woodlanders'* movie, for instance the directors' positioning of the characters in the shots, according to their attitude to the environment. Additionally, a direct comparison between the movie and the novel shows that a different ending leads to a different ecocritical reading: while Pite's reading suggests that Grace's reconciliation with Fitzpiers in the end demonstrates a tendency towards culture, I would suggest that the movie's different ending, in which Grace leaves her husband for good, suggests a return to nature instead.

To come to a conclusion, it has to be mentioned that although Hardy is often mentioned as one of the most important writers to look at for ecocritics, as the environment plays an important role in many of his novels, he is often only mentioned in passing by ecocritics. The main focus within the approach is still on the Romantics, marginalising Victorian writers such as Austen, Gaskell and Hardy himself. This can also be found when looking for literature on Hardy and ecocriticism: only two articles directly mention Hardy in relation to this approach, namely Kerridge's "Maps for Tourists" and "Ecological Hardy". Nevertheless, the author is mentioned in nearly every book on the approach, as ecocritics award Hardy the task of consciousness raising, especially because Hardy's own awareness of the biosphere and all the creatures that contribute to maintaining or destroying the biosphere seems a reflection of what was going on around him: on the one hand people moving towards the cities and distancing

themselves from their knowledge about nature, on the other hand those people staying in their native environment while missing out on the culture which was present to others. Whether he is considered old-fashioned and naive or modern and forward-looking, he definitely has to be admired for his effort and his achievement of pointing towards ecological problems and using them in a way to make even future generations aware of environmental changes and the role humans and non-humans play within.

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## Deutscher Abstrakt der wissenschaftlichen Arbeit

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit beinhaltet eine Analyse der Werke Thomas Hardys in Bezug auf die Methode der Ökokritik. Die Ökokritik setzt sich mit der Literatureinheit „Ort“ genauer auseinander und betrachtet diese Einheit unter dem Blickwinkel der sich ständig wandelnden Umgebung über die Jahrhunderte. Es handelt sich dabei, wie im Fall Hardy gezeigt wird, sowohl um eine formale sprachliche Analyse (beispielsweise des Anthropomorphismus, als auch einer inhaltlichen Analyse von Texten aus verschiedenen Epochen.

Bei der Arbeit handelt es sich um eine komparative Analyse zur Ökokritik in Bezug auf die geschichtliche Entstehung der Methode und ihrer verschiedenen Ansätze die mit Thomas Hardy in Verbindung gebracht werden. Von besonderer Bedeutung sind hierbei die Romane des Autors, unter anderem *Am grünen Rand der Welt* (Original: *Far from the Madding Crowd*), *Clym's Heimkehr* (Original: *The Return of the Native*), *Juda, der Unberührete* (Original: *Jude the Obscure*) und *Die Woodlanders* (Original: *The Woodlanders*).

In Bezug auf Thomas Hardy stellt die Arbeit verschiedene Ansätze der Ökokritik dar, insbesondere die der Sozialökologie, Tiefenökologie und Stadtökologie. Sie zeigt auf, auf welcher unterschiedlichen Art und Weise Hardys Texte gelesen werden können und mit welchen Mitteln die Ökokritik arbeitet. Hardys Romane beschäftigen sich zum Großteil mit dem Leben im ländlichen Raum, der oft im Gegensatz zur Stadt dargestellt wird. Dieser Kontrast spiegelt sich in der Konzeption der Begriffe Natur und Kultur wieder, die auf die unterschiedlichen Bereiche Land (Nature) und Stadt (Kultur) zurückgeführt werden. Die Arbeit zeigt, inwiefern sich diese Begriffe in Hardys Romanen vermischen und welche Auswirkungen dies sowohl auf Hardys Zeit als auch auf die Gegenwart bedeutet.

Außerdem wird ein Bereich der Ökokritik beleuchtet, der bezüglich Hardy noch kaum analysiert wurde: es handelt sich hierbei um den Bereich des Ökokinos (ecocinema). In diesem Teil wird die *The Woodlanders* Verfilmung aus dem Jahr 1997 (von Direktor Phil Agland) herangezogen, um den literaturwissenschaftlichen Bereich der Ökokritik mit Filmwissenschaften zu verbinden.



## Curriculum Vitae

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