

## **Urbanization Features in Hardy's Novels**

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### **Abstract**

This study sets out to explore the effect of urbanization from a purely literary view on nature chiefly guided by the beliefs of ecocritics. In the history of literature there is a deep link between eco-criticism and literature which goes as far back as the pre-Victorian era. However, as a scientific discipline, ecocriticism emerged in 1990s. Hardy was opposing the urban conception of life with his images of the lost rural community in England. The rural-urban dialectic is the chief organising principle of Hardy's fiction. There is no major Hardy novel but involves a sustained opposition between community and the individual, the land and the city, the native and the alien. This has been noted earlier in Hardy criticism, but in terms scarcely adequate to Hardy's imaginings. To read the novels rigidly as a response to the economic and political events of the years 1870-1902 is to falsify their sociology, and to impose on them a reductive time-scale. It is Raymond Williams's arguments that the rural society of Hardy's times consisted not of the noble peasantry but of landowners, tenants, and farmers and that all Hardy's characters fall into this class structure.

## Introduction

The time has come for a new idea and a new word to describe that idea. The new word “urbanature.” describes suggests that nature and urban life are not as distinct as human beings have long supposed. Urbanature (rhymes with “furniture”) suggests that all human and nonhuman lives, as well as all animate and inanimate objects around those lives, are linked in a complex web of interdependent interrelatedness. Let me explain. Hawks are roosting on skyscrapers along Central Park East and Central Park West. Peregrine falcons are feeding on the Flatiron Building, and owls are nesting throughout Manhattan (Yolton). Meanwhile, thousands of environmentalists are boarding carbongulping airplanes, flying hundreds of thousands of miles—carrying tons of petrochemical Gore-Tex—to get “back to nature” in Montana and Mauritius. At the same time, the World Wide Web tells us that Henry David Thoreau said, “In wilderness is the preservation of the world.” Over 600 websites say so. But Thoreau did not say, “In wilderness is the preservation of the world.” He said, “In Wildness is the preservation of the world” (“Walking” 273, my italics). That difference—between “wildness” and “wilderness”—makes all the difference. The interconnectedness demanded by urbanature insists that human beings are not out of nature when they stand in the streets of Manhattan any more than they are in nature when they stand above tree-line in Montana. When nature-lovers say that they long to return to nature, they are making what the philosophers call a category mistake. As Tyler Stalling has recently noted, “There is no ‘real nature’ to which to return. Rather, in the face of burgeoning technologies such as nanotechnology and genetic manipulation, the once defined border between nature and culture is obsolete” (“Lore of Humankind”). Urban culture and wild nature come to much the same thing: urbanature. So far, only a handful of artists and designers have invoked the portmanteau word “urbanature” to describe this important link between city-style and wild-style. The designer and illustrator Shawna L. Handke invoked the term in 2008 as the name of an online shop (“Urban is our nature. Design is in our nature”) she was opening “to create a world that shares life the way I see it. I get torn between the hustle and bustle of the urban world and the stillness that you can find in nature. Of course, if you look, you can find stillness anywhere you go” (“The Urbanature Way”). Urbanature is also the name of a group of landscape architects in New Zealand and Singapore who seek to exhibit the “interplay of nature in the urban city” (urbanature.org). A Seattle rock band has adopted the name Urbanature, and a German experimental electronic musician—Eoh Ganesh—calls himself UrbaNature. Most recently, Honda has announced “The UrbaNature Signature” in automobile design, an effort to combine sleek city-style with sustainable sensibility in its 2010 CR-V utility vehicle (“UrbaNature”). Until now, however, no one has offered this term as a way of pointing up the need for a less contested, more cooperative, relationship between urban-dwellers and wilderness

advocates. My coinage “urbanature” as a critical term has important connections to recent arguments about the need to rethink the idea of “nature” altogether. Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment ideas of “nature,” like a number of other concepts, have been invoked in so many differing ways over centuries that they are now past due for a rigorous verbal and cultural critique. A number of such ideas—my own list would include at least “imagination,” “identity,” “self,” and “consciousness”—are concepts that now seem worn down and enervated, often misunderstood and more often misapplied. A rigorous critique of “nature” is called for by a number of current scholars (William Cronon, Neil Evernden, and Dana Phillips, among others) and should also be of interest to all people who worry about their relationship to their nonhuman surroundings. This book will make use of numerous texts (Romantic poems, nineteenth-century nature essays, Victorian prose fictions, and contemporary ecocritical essays and books) as well as several methodological approaches (personal memoir, narrative scholarship, historical analysis, and ecocriticism) to argue for a rethinking of the idea of “nature” as it has been used since at least the mid-eighteenth century. Crucial to urbanature is the idea that human beings are never cut off from wild nature by human culture. This is the central truth of all ecology. Nothing I can do can take me out of nature. There is nowhere for me to go. I am a natural being from the moment I am born (biologically) until the moment I die (organically). Instead of describing the nonhuman world anthropocentrically—in human terms—there are now good reasons to describe the whole world ecocentrically [eco-: oikos, house]. In addition, the wild places that environmentalists have set aside to preserve nature, have allowed those same environmentalists to ignore the people who may have been living on those places already—as well as urban-dwellers in general—to assume that urban spaces were somehow beyond their purview, somehow someone else’s problem. As *Beyond Romantic Ecocriticism: Toward Urbanatural Roosting* will make clear, the nonhuman natural house I inhabit is the same place as my fully human, cultural home. The time has come to apply the concept of urbanature widely, from the semi-wild edges of the Himalayas to the ecologically contiguous villages of the European Alps, from the Pacific islands of Polynesia to the Middle Atlantic hills of North America. Urbanature accurately describes wide suburban-sprawls filled with millions upon billions of flowers, trees, squirrels, and raptors, reaching from the Pacific edge of the Americas to the Ural edges of Europe, from Asian steppes to Andean fastnesses. This linking of urban spaces with natural places must also include wild and semi-wild creatures: animals in zoo cages and pets in high-rise condominiums, creatures on sidewalks, roofs, and skyscraper ledges from Bombay to Caracas, from Beijing to Brooklyn. Urbanature includes the biggest of all big pictures—every gust of solar wind and every swirl of every galaxy, every mountaineer climbing a mountain and every chemist making a new medicine, birds on buildings and

fish in fishponds—as well as the smallest of all small pictures: rapidly evolving bacteria, pulsing microbes, and virulent viruses. The globe is now completely mapped, filmed, and photographed, from those 1960s snapshots of the delicate blue-green planet seen from outer space down to Google Earth shots of the smallest streetscapes and streambeds. With my own computer mouse, and with MapQuest or Google Earth, I can move from Mauritius to Manhattan in a minute; I can spin from the Seychelles to Seattle in a second. I can zoom down onto every housetop. I can see almost every car in every parking lot. But this is not a problem. This is not a loss. In fact, my ability to scan the surface of the globe with my computer in seconds is part of what assures me that I am linked to every living creature, and every material object, that surrounds me. Children like those to whom this book is dedicated—growing up in their twenty-first century world—will never be able to conceive of the idea of wilderness in the same way that their parents and grandparents did, as a space so vast that the edges of it can hardly be conceived, as a mysterious wildness with which humans have almost nothing to do. The Romantic idea of wilderness may be gone, but it has been replaced by an idea of wild spaces that need to be saved, places that have already been saved—or still need to be saved—for human and, much less frequently, nonhuman reasons: the good of the biome, the lives of other species that live there. Modern society has reached a moment when many scientists and environmentalists, as well as a growing number of politicians and private citizens, understand that it all needs to be sustained: the nonhuman and human, the wild and tame, the rural and urban. The entire planet depends on a new willingness to see urban and nonurban spaces as equally worth saving. Ecocritical awareness of the nonhuman world begins, in this sense, not with the environmental revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, but with a new definition of “Nature” first offered by Romantic writers in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. *Beyond Romantic Ecocriticism: Toward Urbanatural Roosting* examines a number of those writers and their ideas, and then charts a pervasive paradigm shift, a revolutionary turn away from a fallen version of “Nature” that was static and unchanging toward a Romantic “nature” characterized by dynamic links among all living things. This shift eventually leads toward a new emphasis on connections between nature and society. Current emphasis on evolutionary ecology arises not solely from a contemporary “Green” sense of the interdependence between organisms and their environments; it derives as well from Romantic and Victorian thinkers and their view of the interconnectedness of all living—and even nonliving—things. This book will thus link the zoological and botanical imagery of William Blake to the eco-awareness of William Wordsworth; it will connect the eco-sensitivity of John Keats with the eco-anxieties of Alfred, Lord Tennyson. By the twentieth century, the concept of Romantic natural history will allow for a critique of the eco-theology of Annie Dillard and a challenge to the eco-catastrophic thinking of Bill McKibben. Along the

way, a number of contemporary ecocritics—Lawrence Buell, Jonathan Bate, and Timothy Morton, and numerous others—will reveal where the dominant current view of nature has come from, especially since that idea of “nature” is not now the same as the “Nature” described by Aristotle, Isaac Newton, or even Charles Darwin. The “urbanatural year” chronicled in this book—from “Spring” to “Spring, Again”—links the ideas of Romantic natural historians and contemporary ecocritics to the pervasive current sense of an environmental crisis: Hurricane Katrina, the Gulf of Mexico oil-spill, climate change, species extinction, and an increasingly uncertain human future. A look at the legacy of Romantic natural history will move beyond the word “nature” as it has been employed since the Enlightenment—and beyond the nature versus culture split—toward the more inclusive idea of “urbanatural roosting.” Finally, I will argue that Romantic ecocriticism should now give way to a more socially aware version of environmentalism, one less tightly linked to narrowly Western ideas about the self, the “Other,” and the relationship between human beings and the natural world. Urbanatural roosting says that, if all humans are linked to each other and to their surroundings, then those same humans have clear obligations to each other and to the world they share. How might human beings “roost” on the world? To roost is to make a temporary home (oikos) in the surrounding environment, the way hawks and ravens roost. Most birds roost in trees, while some roost just as successfully on the ground. Bobwhites roost in fields and in meadows, while screech owls find hollow cavities in tall trees. This is just one reason why meadows and tall trees need to be preserved, since even apparently “useless” natural sites, with no human purpose, are roosting-grounds for countless birds of many species. Even wild turkeys find thick roosting-branches high up in those trees. A bird initially roosts for its own benefit, and for the benefit of its species, but roosting also has consequences for other species and for the wider environment. Roosts have an impact on the trees in which they exist, on high ocean cliffs and other such nesting sites. They can generate massive quantities of guano, sometimes to the point of becoming commercially viable fertilizer harvesting spots. A bird gathers food where it roosts, and it may also find its mate there. Many birds build their nests where they roost, or they hide themselves and their young from natural enemies there. Roosts are crucial to the life cycle of most avian species (White, Dolbeer, and Bookhout). A roost, in this sense, is also beneficial to humans. Of course, the ideas of “benefit” and “harm” are completely human constructions, but the word “roost” at least describes a home, a home that affects, and is affected by, its inhabitants and their wider surroundings. As humans, we roost no less than hawks, or eagles, or ravens. To roost is to know one place so well that you can create your home there, so well that you can use that local knowledge for your benefit and the benefit of those around you. Birds roost by using the natural resources around them, but they roost without harming those same resources—and those roosts—in the process. Human beings need to take a lesson from

the birds; they need to start roosting more carefully on the earth. The phrase “urbanatural roosting” allows for a closer link between cities and the wilderness, between high rises and wild places. It also recognizes close ties between those who live within the city limits and those who live beyond the city limits: in the suburbs, the small towns, rural areas, even out in the middle of “nowhere.” Roosting says that every “nowhere” is always a somewhere. Humans, like dolphins and dogs and mayflies, are natural beings. Instead of continuing to describe the nonhuman world anthropocentrically—in human terms—there are now important reasons to describe the entire world ecocentrically. This is part of the message about “nature” that poets like William Wordsworth, John Keats, and Percy Shelley began to offer to their culture. The scientist Charles Darwin understood these same links, as did the poet and novelist Thomas Hardy. The literary works analyzed in the following pages will provide an index to the emergence of a broadly ecological awareness in Western culture. At the same time, the scientific works examined here will offer a revealing look at links among aesthetics, emotions, and the natural world over the past two centuries. Many of the great “nature” poems of the Romantic era were actually written in the suburbs, in the back gardens of great cities, or in the midst of the largest urban space on the planet at the time: London. To be “natural” originally meant, not to be nonhuman—as it now often seems to mean—but, “to be born”: *natura*, “birth,” and also “essence,” as in “the nature of the problem.” Beyond Romantic Ecocriticism will return the term to these original meanings: “nature” is about things that are born and about the essence of things, not a dubious philosophical essence, but simply the heart of the matter, the center of the issue (i.e., “what is the nature of the problem here?”). The human-made object is no less natural because human beings have shaped it, no less “born” or “essential” because it has been fashioned by human hands. The bird makes a nest, and that nest is just as natural as the bird herself. Human hands make a house, and that house is no less natural than the materials that fashioned it, or the human hands that shaped it. So where does my concept of urbanatural roosting begin? It begins with a bit of Romantic natural history, with William Blake claiming that “A Robin Red breast in a Cage / Puts all Heaven in a Rage” (Blake, “Auguries of Innocence” 5–6). Around the same time, William Wordsworth read Erasmus Darwin’s natural philosophy and used his psychological theories in lyric poems. Meanwhile, this earlier Darwin (Charles’s grandfather) wrote book-length poems of botanical observations in heroic couplets, while his good friend Joseph Priestley penned theological essays at the same time he was discovering oxygen. The poet Percy Shelley experimented with chemical and electrical equipment in his rooms at Oxford—he almost blew them up!—and Mary Shelley was talking about the Italian electrical scientist Luigi Galvani on the night she initially conceived Victor Frankenstein’s monster. Samuel Taylor Coleridge sought poetically and philosophically for the “one Life, within us and abroad” (“The Eolian

Harp,” 26) that would unify the apparently disparate elements of creation: And what if all of animated nature Be but organic Harps diversly fram’d, That tremble into thought, as o’er them sweeps, Plastic and vast, one intellectual Breeze (36–39)Galvanic nerve responses, luminous plankton, sensitive plants (Mimosa), poison trees (Bohun upas), intelligence in animals and sexuality in plants: ideas and images like these fostered poetic reflection and scientific lyricism throughout the century before Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859). This link between science and poetry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is a crucial aspect of the origin of current ideas about environmental sustainability. These ideas continue to suggest close links among various parts of the natural world but also close connections among the natural, social, and urban worlds in which these versions of nature are, more than ever, being described. All of these nineteenth-century nature writers—and their “Major Lives and Letters” as this current Palgrave Macmillan series suggests—along with their successors down to the present day, reveal ways that human beings are part of a vast urbanatural web of organic interrelatedness. From William Blake to Lawrence Buell, from Alfred, Lord Tennyson to Terry Tempest Williams, poets and prose writers have come to understand that humans share one finite globe with all other living things: not one world called “nature” and another called “culture.” This is why the “lives and letters” of these writers link directly to my assertion that humanity’s material and nonhuman “house”—once called “nature”—is the same place as its fully human and cultural home. Scientists now know that I share genetic information with chimpanzees and crustaceans. They have mapped the human genome down to the precise gene for breast-cancer, or the specific genes that make my brain a human brain and not a chimpanzee brain. They are on the verge of transplanting animal organs regularly from nonhuman species into human beings. Surgeons can already insert human genes directly into other species and vice versa. Each living being is genetically related to every other species in countless ways: humans to gorillas, whales to dogs, fish to foxgloves, fungi to bacteria, and all of these to each other. The family of “man” has become the family of all living things. By the time a fully developed ecocriticism emerged in the twenty-first century, some ecologists and social critics had already begun describing the “death of environmentalism” or even a “post-environmental world” (Nordhaus and Shellenberger 2004). One ecocritic and environmental activist described the “end of nature” (McKibben 1989) and six years later his “hope” for some ongoing and successful version of urbanature (Hope, Human and Wild 1995), while another has posited the end of the very idea of nature (Morton, *Ecology without Nature* 2007). In *The Abstract Wild*, Jack Turner says, “I do not believe that modern convenience is incompatible with the preservation of the wild because I have a good deal of both in my life”; although Turner loves his “Ford 4x4 truck [. . .] Powerbook [. . .] Zeiss binoculars [. . .] and E-mail,” he is nevertheless able to call for “a culture that

deeply loves the wild earth” (xvii). A sense of honest balance and proportion like Turner’s will be required by urbanaturalists in the coming decades. Michael Bennett, in “Urban Nature: Teaching Tinker Creek by the East River,” notes the tendency of traditional—I would say “Romantic”—ecocriticism to “romanticize natural environments without realizing their connection to larger socioeconomic forces” (54). Bennett argues for “an ecocriticism which blends a traditional focus on ‘wild’ nature with the diverse ecology of urban environments” (56). Bennett anticipates my emphasis on urbanature in many ways. Such post-Romantic and urbanatural versions of ecocriticism echo Andrew Ross’s criticism of the “powerful sway of neoromanticism over the ecology movement,” on a Romantic version of ecocriticism that has too often ignored, for example, “the environmental racism practiced upon targeted populations of color” (9). As early as 1981, the urban-planner Kevin Lynch called for accepting “that the city is as natural as the farm and as susceptible of conservation and improvement”; once ecocritics and planners do so, he noted, “we work free of those false dichotomies of city and country, artificial and natural, man versus other living things” (Stein 475). Nature lovers from Ralph Waldo Emerson to modern deep ecologists have too often embraced the wild at the expense of the tame; they have emphasized the nonhuman at the expense of the human. My emphasis on urbanature and roosting emerges out of my own contention that gentrification, postindustrial waste, environmental racism, and other forms of urban degradation can come about when land-use urban planners or environmentalists say that wild nature takes precedence over urban wastelands: “well, vast tracts of wild forests and wilderness areas have been saved; what difference does it make what happens to a few under-resourced, devastated sections of this postindustrial city?” This assumption is especially easy to make when those same planners or environmentalists are describing vast sections of once-great cities that upper middle-class “nature-lovers” will never visit. In this regard, my argument echoes David Orr’s emphasis on the “new urbanism,” a movement that seeks to bring numerous urban life-activities physically closer together: “housing, employment, shopping, culture, public spaces, recreation, and health care” (Design 52) instead of having them sprawled out over vast sections of the landscape. Orr has also called for an educational system based on “global ecological enlightenment,” one that will allow students to see how closely their human lives are linked to the nonhuman world, how “all education is environmental education” (Earth 12). In *The Nature of Cities: Ecocriticism and Urban Environments*, Michael Bennett—author of the quotation on environmental racism in the previous paragraph—and David W. Teague link an uncertain ecological future to several urbanatural solutions: (1) the preservation of urban gardens on once “wasted” ground (think Detroit, Pittsburgh, or Akron); (2) ecofeminisms that emphasize nurture in urban planning; (3) nature writing in the city and the suburbs; and, (4) the term “park” as a



word that reaches from Frederick Law Olmsted's "Central Park" to F. V. Hayden's and Ulysses S. Grant's "Yellowstone," from the earliest urban parks of Europe to the carefully planned Kaza Park, a twenty-first century game-reserve in southern Africa that will be roughly the size of Italy. A final example of applied urbanature comes from Terrell Dixon. In his collection *City Wilds: Essays and Stories About Urban Nature*, Dixon reveals ways that "the wild—once we choose to recognize it—inhabits the city as well as the country" (xiii). As is so often the case, the truth is simply a matter of people opening their eyes and seeing what has been right there in front of them all along. One element of Romanticism has contributed to the problem that urbanature seeks to resolve. This idea underpins a version of environmentalism that has held powerful sway for more than two centuries. In this view, nature is somehow opposed to urbanity, the wild is what the city gets rid of, human culture is the enemy of nature. Adam and Eve were the only threat to a once pristine (nonhuman) Garden of Eden. According to this narrative, human beings tore down their garden; they messed in their nest. Wordsworth's poem "Nutting" chronicles this myth in detail: "Then up I rose, / And dragged to earth both branch and bough, with crash / And merciless ravage" (41–43); the result of this violence is that the elements of nature give up "[t]heir quiet being" (46), while the ravenous intruder learns that "there is a Spirit in the woods" (54). Yet, that harmonious Garden of Eden, Wordsworth's "one dear nook / Unvisited" (14–15), never existed in the first place. Nothing more than careful roosting is required to clean up that messed-up nest for good. This earlier Romantic version of environmentalism—the one that saw human beings as the problem—revealed serious limitations whenever it was applied to a world in which "nature" and "culture" merged into a unified vision. Humanity now inhabits a unified organic and inorganic biosphere, one that all of its members need to learn to care for and share. At the same time, the immediate needs of social and ecological—that is, human—justice reach well beyond Romantic ecocriticism. Twenty-first century humans should live closer to the ways that animals live, that is, in harmony with their surroundings. From a Darwinian perspective, human beings are genetically related to every other creature on this shared planet. The human species now needs to roost with its fellow species, no longer to have dominion, no longer to dominate. If I take any lesson from my fellow creatures, I should learn that the planet is here not for my ruling but for my roosting. One final example of urbanatural roosting will conclude my prologue. Where would we be without penicillium, that invisible fungusspore that flew through Alexander Fleming's window in his London laboratory—in 1928—and led to penicillin, a drug that has saved millions of lives? Was Fleming functioning in wild nature or in urban culture when he came upon that fungus? He was operating in both. A purely natural object (the airborne penicillium) had landed on a purely cultural production (a Petri dish smeared with agar) and the result was penicillin, a natural product of human culture that has

changed life on this planet forever. Behind Fleming's discovery of the penicillium-mold were almost two centuries of debate (c. 1750– 1930) about medicines possessing aspects of nature that could change human existence: the microscopic world, germ theory, the immune system, and vaccination. Ahead of Fleming's production of penicillin stretched another century of debate about the results of these discoveries. Who should have access to such biological lifesavers? Which societies would control the natural knowledge that might save lives or might lead to the loss of millions of other lives? Would the power of such knowledge reside only with the developed world, only for the benefit of the cultures that had created such advances? Or might there be a means of moving from a monocultural view of nature to a multicultural one, from a world of self-isolating societies to a world of unified and unifying cultures? As the discovery of penicillin suggests, urban culture and wild nature once again come to much the same thing: urbanature, a new model for roosting on the planet that each of us shares with other human beings and also with the rest of animate nature.

### **Statement of the Problem**

To study Thomas Hardy in relation to ecocriticism, a critical theory introduced in the 1990s can be a challenging question. The problem with this issue is that literature is never viewed as one of the instruments which can be exploited to find solution for ecological problems. Man's struggle with nature is as old as the creation. Reviewing some old chronicles of ancient civilization will reveal how harsh was nature on prehistoric man who was not well armed to withstand its cruel grip. Sometimes man's suffering mainly comes from interfering with nature. The overlap between man and nature has been noticed in ancient human inscriptions and drawings, as in ancient China, ancient Egypt or the ancient civilization of Babels. Since that early period of time man has been glorifying and even worshipping different aspects of natural features. The 'mysterious' nature has attracted man throughout history, and the link between them continues to environ and govern the mystic relationship thereon.

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

### **Objectives**

This study takes as its objectives the following points

1. It can be proved that literature has a central role to play in providing solutions to many ecological problems afflicting the world today through its viable handling of these issues.
2. Literature has precedence over empirical science in addressing environmental issues as was reflected in the writings of novelists, like Thomas Hardy, Dickens and even Shakespeare.
3. There is a close interrelationship between literature, nature and culture and each variable affects the other ones quite considerably.

### **Significance of the Study**

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

### **Hypotheses**

1. Passing of new global ecological bills is not enough for the protection of our environment.
2. Literature, through rekindling our deeper feelings and closeness to nature, can be a rich spiritual source that can make a significant contribution to the global efforts exerted to conserve nature.
3. Ecocriticism, by addressing relevant literary works, has proved much more effective in reawakening our spirits and love of nature than global ecological laws.

## **Methodology**

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

## **Urbanization features in Hardy's novels :**

The novels of Thomas Hardy are inescapably an evocative cultural statement about the quality of life in a rural community. They do relate to the condition of rural England in the latter half of the nineteenth century as acknowledged not only by some of Hardy's famous critics but by Hardy himself. But history, truth, fiction are problematical concepts and much of the wonder of Hardy's enduring fictions depends on the way in which they extend, complicate, and wrestle with the meaning of these concepts. The Wessex novels take the form not of historical fiction, but of fiction as research into the history of rural culture. It would not do, therefore, to place them in a given historical context. Critical accounts which proceed from such an historical context miss out on the obliquity of Hardy's historical imagination. Hardy's fiction involves, but is not conterminous with, the factual history of Dorsetshier in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. In making local history their primary focus Hardy's historical critics have misjudged the creative centre of his fiction. They have paid insufficient attention to Hardy's metaphor-making powers and his astute understanding of the inherence of metaphors in the workings of folk consciousness. I shall argue that Hardy's novels celebrate a wider rediscovery of the metaphor of rural community in life and art in the nineteenth century, that they are indeed the finest flowers of this pervasive sociological apprehension. For a supporting context, let us consider some peculiarities of rural sociology, the dominance of the metaphor of community in the nineteenth-century sociological imagination, and Hardy's own revealing asides on history, truth, and fiction. One important sociological characteristic of rural England, as of most rural societies, is that it seems always to have been looking back to an ideal past. This has led some to doubt if

rural England ever existed in its pristine, un spoilt form, which is a legitimate suspicion. There can be little doubt, however, that for better or worse the English countryside had entered a new phase of civilization in the nineteenth century and, consequently, there came about during this century an increasingly nostalgic quest for a lost rural identity. The resurgent rural consciousness is touched with a new sense of crisis and self-awareness. It is so central a consciousness in much of the most remarkable literature and social thinking of the century that it assumes the

pervasiveness and force of a vital tradition. Nineteenth-century rural literature, therefore, is not a pastoral survival but a correlate of contemporary structures of feeling. It is the product of perceived experience. It does not fall back upon stereotype images of an immobile rural existence but is adequately motivated by the felt particularity of its own cultural situation. It is self-validating. The impossibility of a precise pinpointing in history of the 'organic rural community' has made some recent historians of culture dismiss the rural-urban differentiation as a romantic error. Because it is not possible to prove statistically the existence, at any point of time, of a village answering to all the attributes of the metaphorical village of the nineteenth-century rural conception, the rational historian concludes with faultless logic that rural society never had a fully differentiated sociological identity. If rural England was always an uneasy coexistence of conflicting interests, which it was in this view, the notion of the break-down of the rural community in the nineteenth century is indeed a myth. Though Raymond Williams, who is a proponent of this view, admits that in the period from George Eliot to Hardy the English countryside underwent radical changes, he seems more concerned with the economics of the change than with its emotional and psychological consequences. We shall return to this view of rural history in the second half of this chapter. There was what might be called an inner sociology of traditional rural communities which would not lend itself to the categories of chronological, linear history. In many such communities, for instance, the past persisted in the most irrational, historically unaccountable manner. Writing about oriental rural life Sir H. S. Maine observed: 'We find it to be not wholly a conceit or a paradox to say that the distinction between the Present and the Past disappears. Sometimes the Past is the Present; more often it is removed from it by varying distances, which, however, cannot be estimated or expressed chronologically.' Although this is said of the Indian village the author believed that village communities in the East and West were in all essentials identical: 'It does not appear to me a hazardous proposition that the Indian and the ancient European systems of enjoyment and tillage by men grouped in village communities were in all essential particulars identical.' This is a belief Hardy shared, as a diary entry of 1890 suggests: 'Mr. E. Clodd this morning gives an excellently neat answer to my question why the superstitions of a remote Asiatic and a Dorset labourer are the same: "The attitude of man", he says, "at corresponding levels of culture before like phenomena, is pretty much the same." The archetypal structure of rural life was progressively eroded by the passage of time. One does not have to believe in the English village as an earthly paradise to be able to comprehend the rural-urban polarization of feeling caused by the climactic transformation of the countryside in the nineteenth century. There is a compulsive quasi-metaphorical use of the rural community in the writings of Cobbett, Clare, Jefferies, Strutt, as well as in the passionately rural point of view of such rural historians as Arthur Young, Joseph Arch,

H. Rider Haggard, to name only a few. The rural-urban 'dissociation of sensibility' is reflected also in the Reports of Parliamentary Commissions such as *Throne on the Employment of Children, Young Persons, and Women in Agriculture* which contains the testimony of Reverend William Barnes of Dorset, friend of Hardy, to 'the qualities of West English land folk'. The point I am trying to make is that this metaphorical or quasi-metaphorical view of rural life was not a literary stance but a habit of sociological imagination that extends to the rural people themselves. We can see this emotive view of rural life in the petition submitted to the British Parliament by the people of Raunds in Northamptonshire as early as 1797 against the impending enclosure of their village." The metaphor of community was exploited and articulated by the literary imagination, but its roots went back to the native soil of rural experience. The rural-urban polarisation was not peculiar to England. In fact, it dominated the European sociological imagination of the nineteenth century. Tocqueville, Toennies, Weber, Durkheim, and Simmel all used, in new and unexpected ways, the commonplace opposition between the city and the village. In their metaphorical use of the rural community the sociologists were not creating fictions but only expressing the fictions inherent in the shapeless conduct of historical process. The symbolism of community in Toennies, for instance, resulted from his experience of the stable rural culture of his native province Schleswig-Holstein, but the historical form of his province is transformed in his master work into a universally applicable sociological metaphor." Similarly, many of Durkheim's or Weber's insights into alienation were the consequence of their personal experience of fragmentation in specific historical contexts, but rather than offer the statistics of alienation in a particular city they created metaphors to communicate their sense of the correlation between alienation and the modern metropolis. Whether or not the 'coherent and self-explanatory village' ever existed in history, the fact remains that there was a potent belief in the nineteenth century in its one-time existence. History is not complete unless it takes into account what men believe to be true in times of crisis as well as the objective truth. The later nineteenth century was an age of social experiment and innovation. It upset the traditional mind and necessitated a search for a 'substitute', for an ideological armor against the chaos of contemporary experience. The rural writer found his 'substitute' in atavistic memories, in the myth, as it was fast becoming, of a historically discredited and moribund social order. During the 1880s the sociologist Toennies was evolving a far-reaching sociological distinction between *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (corporation) while the novelist Hardy was opposing the urban conception of life with his images of the lost rural community in England. II The rural-urban dialectic is the chief organizing principle of Hardy's fiction. There is no major Hardy novel but involves a sustained opposition between community and the individual, the land and the city, the native and the alien. This has been noted earlier in

Hardy criticism, but in terms scarcely adequate to Hardy's imaginings. To read the novels rigidly as a response to the economic and political events of the years 1870-1902 is to falsify their sociology, and to impose on them a reductive time-scale. It is Raymond Williams's arguments that the rural society of Hardy's times consisted not of the noble peasantry but of landowners, tenants, and farmers and that all Hardy's characters fall into this class structure. In strict socio-economic terms Tess is not a peasant, but the daughter of a life-holder; Grace Melbury is not a country girl, but the daughter of a timber merchant; Henchard is destroyed not by alien forces, but by the hazardous nature of his own trading. All this is true as far as it goes. But in this translation of Hardy's protagonists into their precise socio-economic stations one has somehow lost touch with their deeper motivations and responses, with everything that makes them somewhat anachronistic, historically and socially indeterminate, but nevertheless very real human beings. In examining the causes of the decline of Henchard's trading balance-sheet one has completely forgotten his personality. Williams's thesis that rural society was riven by the incompatibility of its different classes ignores the overriding sense of a collective moral and emotional identity that characterises members of a traditional community. It is precisely this sense in Hardy's world which cuts across class barriers. At highly significant moments, despite all their socio-economic disparities, there is a community of feeling between Michael Henchard and Abel Whittle, Grace Melbury and Giles Winterborne, landlady Bathsheba and shepherd Oak. Williams has nothing to say about Henchard's character, a focal point of Hardy's novel, or Tess's challenging purity of consciousness, or Oak's evident superiority despite his 'class'. He also ignores the parabolic quality of Hardy's idiom and the primitivism of his dramatic scenario which, in my view, symbolise Hardy's interest in the enduring structures of rural life. The Roman ruins and barrows and the pre-historic monuments in Hardy's landscape are visual symbols of his sense of the contemporaneity of the past. And if one is to come to terms with this sense of the continuing tribal past of Wessex, which relates to the heart of Hardy's sociological fiction, one should be prepared to go beyond the calendar of contemporary events. Hardy was much exercised about views of history, about the different perceptual filters through which history is seen. He was aware that there are varieties of historical experience. 'Wemay say', he wrote in his journal, 'that three kinds of men write history: the gazetteer or annalist, the statesman, and the philosopher.' Here fused to write the gazetteer's the annalist's history. When asked by the Dorchester Town Council to write an introduction to an official Guide to the town, he replied that he was not in a position to do so, 'adding that he had said all he needed to say about Dorchester under the pseudonym of 'Casterbridge' and that was it.<sup>10</sup> Clearly, Hardy was averse to documentation and historical scientism. He had an historical vision, a feel of the place

and its people, a tenacious memory of cultural idiosyncrasies. Hardy's approach to history cannot be explained better than in the following words of W. H. Auden:

In grasping the character of a society, as in judging the character of an individual, no documents, statistics, 'objective' measurements can compete with the single intuitive glance. Intuition may err, for though its sound judgement is, as Pascal said, only a question of good eyesight, it must be good, for the principles are subtle and numerous, and the omission of one principle leads to error; but documentation, which is useless unless it is complete, must err in a field where completeness is impossible.

It is also Auden's view that the advent in the nineteenth century of the new rationalist and analytic doctrines caused a final divorce between the historian and the poet in the human psyche and that this divorce led to a fractured sensibility in the literature that followed: The marriage in each of us whether as writers or readers, between the Historian and the Poet, first began to run into serious difficulties in the seventeenth century, but it is only in the industrialized societies of the last hundred and fifty years that, by the time most of us are twenty, the two have divorced. The consequences are only too obvious. The primary world, as perceived by the divorced Historian, is a desacralized, depersonalised world where all facts are equally profane. Human history becomes a matter of statistics in which individual human beings are represented as faceless and anonymous puppets of impersonal forces. The characteristic virtue of the historian, his impartiality, which refrains from intruding his own moral values upon events, leaving that duty to the reader, becomes meaningless, for moral judgements can only be passed on personal deeds, and in the world he depicts, men are incapable of deeds and only exhibit social behaviour. The divorced Poet, on the other hand, can find materials for building his secondary worlds only in his private subjectivity. In Hardy there is no such divorce between the Historian and the Poet. Social reality for him is not a matter of statistics but resides in the underlying rhythms of life-style, culture, and character. Nor does he build a private fictional world out of his own subjectivity. In fact, his narrative world repeatedly invokes communal rather than personal structures of feeling. His self-explanatory eloquent tableaux, his reliance on culturally sensitive material, his alignment of important psychological and emotional events in the novels with such common cultural landmarks as Christmas or May Dance, all speak of a narrative psychology attuned to a community sensibility. His is not a literature of personality. Despite a commanding authorial presence and the famous 'raids of philosophical speculation' his great stories leave a final impression of balladic simplicity and impersonality. Hardy sees history as a drama of warring values. He cannot bring to his consciousness of history, therefore, the clinical detachment of the 'divorced' historian. Historical intelligence for him is inseparable from a capacity for a principle of moral choice, a point of view. He jotted down a comment on the moral and



ideational centre of Carlyle's French Revolution from a contemporary article, with apparent approval: 'most perfect-epic-organic creation-"the central idea, the animating principle round which the matter gathers and Imagination develops into shape"...his historical workmanship is sound to the core.'<sup>13</sup> It was this kind of 'central idea' or 'animating principle' which gave to the nineteenth-century sociologists their ideal typology. Hardy was after the same animating principles of history and culture. In novel after novel he sought the sociologically submerged sources of feeling and action in a rural community rather than scratch the historical surface. He found Zola unbearable because of the latter's concentration on the gross phenomena, because, in one sense, of his historical materialism. 'You mistake in supposing I admire Zola. It is just what I don't do. I think him no artist and too material.'<sup>14</sup> Hardy was neither a historiographer nor a pedlar of Erewhonian myths, but a novelist with an unerring sense of history. The Preface to *Far from the Madding Crowd* offers important clues to Hardy's understanding of rural history. Borrowing some of his terms from an anonymous article in *The Examiner* entitled 'The Wessex Labourer' he obliquely pleads guilty of 'the anachronism of imagining a Wessex population living under Queen Victoria...a modern Wessex...'. The point of the *Examiner* article was precisely to refute the charge of anachronism against Hardy's nineteenth-century Wessex communities, and assert the strange contemporaneity of the past in the region he was writing about: 'Time in Dorset has stood still; advancing civilization has given the labourer only lucifer matches and the penny post, and the clowns in Hamlet are no anachronism if placed in a West country village of our own day.'<sup>15</sup> The contiguity between the past and the present may not be, after all, a trick of Hardy's imagination but a sociological characteristic of certain isolated rural communities. However, Hardy takes complete responsibility for reducing the gap between the centuries. It is 'a partly real, partly dream country' he has created and he wants his readers 'to refuse steadfastly to believe that there are any inhabitants of a Victorian Wessex outside these volumes in which their lives and conversations are detailed.' But he ends the Preface by making the contrary claim that there had been in the recent past 'a sufficient reality to meet the descriptions both of background and personages'. It may be safely said, then, that while keeping clear of any responsibility for historical accuracy, Hardy would not have his novels read without the assurance that they are imaginative reconstructions of a lived pattern of life and society. The pattern may not always be corroborated by text-books of history, but it is authentic in the sense that it is inevitably led up to by the structure of experience in the novels, which are in Hardy's words 'circumstantial wholes which, when approached by events in real life, cause the observer to pause and reflect, and say, "what a striking history!"'<sup>16</sup> To Hardy the truth of fiction was more complete because it was based on a structural consistency often absent from life and history: 'It must always be borne in mind, despite the claims of realism, that the best fiction, like the highest artistic expression in

other modes, is more true, so to put it, then [sic] history or nature can be.'<sup>17</sup> Fiction for Hardy was a criterion of truth. In life and history there are inevitable impediments to perception, 'hitches in the machinery of existence' which it is the business of the artist to overcome. In the great works of imagination the missing clues are fully grasped so that fictions educate our notions of reality: 'what is called the idealization of characters is, in truth, the making of them too real to be possible.'<sup>18</sup> 'Attention to accessories' in Hardy's view, was justified only to the extent that it led to 'the elucidation of higher things.' Hardy's aesthetic of fiction rejects orthodox realism after conceding minor triumphs to it:

To return for a moment to the theories of the scientific realists. Every friend to the novel should and must be in sympathy with their error, even while distinctly perceiving it. Though not true, it is well founded. To advance realism as complete copyism, to call the idle trade of story-telling a science, is the hyperbolic flight of an admirable enthusiasm, the exaggerated cry of an honest reaction from false, in which the truth has been impetuously approached and overleapt in fault of flight on. But Hardy clearly and emphatically wants the novel to be a discovery of truth. In fact, the novelist's opportunity for getting at the whole truth is immense since 'the novel affords scope for getting nearer to the heart and meaning of things.'<sup>23</sup> An extended comment by Leslie Stephen on the question of historical truth in fiction, transcribed by Hardy in his notebook, is worth quoting because it so well sums up his own deepest convictions on the subject: The novelist, as Fielding often tells us, is the true historian of the time. He tries to show us the real moving forces in the great tragi-comedy of human life. He has to make the world intelligible to us, & the deeper & truer his insight, the greater his permanent power...He reveals to us certain aspects of the world in which we live & the men who live in it...truths capable of being proved by direct intuition...certain facts as they appear to him. If we are so constituted as to be unable to see what he sees, he can go no further...But, on the other hand, so far as we are in sympathy with him, the proof-if it be a proof-has all the cogency of direct vision. He has couched our dull eyes, drawn back the veil which hid from us the certain aspect of the world, & henceforward our views of life & the world will be more or less changed, because the bare scaffolding of fact which we previously saw will now be seen in the light of keener perceptions than our own. It was Hardy's belief that the novelist was better equipped to understand social reality than the historian. Nor was Hardy alone in this belief. The idea that the truth of poetry is superior to the truth of history, as we all know, goes back to Aristotle. And even formal historians have had to admit from time to time that poetry (meaning imaginative literature in general) was relevant to the concerns of history. F. M. Powicke observed in one of his lectures: 'The relation between poetry and historical material proper is close, for-although I should be the last to forget its immediate, its timeless, appeal to us-poetry, in the broadest sense of the word, comprehending much prose, is

in itself a social expression.<sup>25</sup> In the same lecture Powicke went on to assert that the 'historical sense' in Thomas Hardy was superbly developed: 'The only relief which he (Hardy) permits himself in his analysis of the plaything man is the pleasure of the historical sense.'<sup>26</sup> Hardy's 'partly real, partly dream' Wessex was a product of sociological imagination. It was indeed a harvest of the closest observation of historical facts, but owed its total ambience to an imaginative response to those facts. Hardy's unwearying interest in local history cannot be denied. One has to see his *Commonplace Books* to believe how assiduous a student of local history and culture Hardy was. His fiction was a quest for the inherent but undiscovered forms of this history and culture. Wessex was a fictional world, no doubt, but a fictional world informed by Hardy's awareness of the fictional form of apprehended social reality. A true historian, Hardy is not only concerned with social data, with gross historical references, but with the elusive shape and rhythm of historical and social reality. Wessex is an emotive model for the discovery and communication of forms of social reality which are seldom acknowledged or felt by factual historians. It is true fiction which, as Michel Zeraffa points out in a recent study, need not be a contradiction in terms: 'A life and the history of society simply the props of the forms of fiction? Or are these forms already present in society? Critical study of the novel too often wavers between these two questions, which constitute a false dilemma.'<sup>27</sup>

## References

- 1/ Raymond Williams, 'Literature and Rural Society', *The Listener* (16 November 1967).
- 2/. Henry Summer Maine, *Village Communities in East and West* (London: John Murray, 1871), p. 7. 3. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
- 3/. See Florence Emily Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1928*, p. 230.
- 4/. 'Commission on the Employment of Children, Young Persons, and Women in Agriculture (1867)', *Parliamentary Papers* (1868-69), p. 7.
- 5./ See *Journal of The House of Commons*, Vol. 52 (19 June 1797), p. 661.
- 6/ Ferdinand Toennies, *Community and Association (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft)*, 1887, tr., Charles P. Loomis (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955).
- 7/. See Raymond Williams, 'Thomas Hardy'.

8/Thomas Hardy, *Commonplace Book I*, p. 270. The letter is in the Dorset County Museum.

9/ W. H. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays* (London: Faber & Faber 1963), p. 313.

W. H. Auden, *Secondary Worlds* (London: Faber & Faber, 1968), pp. 82-3.

10/ . Hardy, *Commonplace Book I*, pp. 189-90. 14. Hardy made this remark in a letter to Florence Henniker. See Evelyn Hardy and F. B. Pinion, eds., *One Rare Fair Woman* (London: Macmillan, 1972), p.63.

11/ *The Examiner*, No. 3572 (15July 1876), p. 793. 16. Thomas Hardy, 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction', *ThomasHardy's Personal Writings*,ed., Harold Ore1, pp. 121-2. 17. *Ibid.*, p. 117. 18. *Ibid.*