

# Bleak Prospects: Wasteland and National Identity in Thomas Hardy's *Return of the Native*

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Plunging and labouring on in a tide of visions,  
Dolorous and dear,  
Forward I pushed my way as amid waste waters  
Stretching around,  
Through whose eddies there glimmered the customed landscape  
Yonder and near.

Thomas Hardy, "In Front of the Landscape" (1913)

MIDWAY through *The Return of the Native* (1878), Damon Wildev and Diggory Venn sit in a clearing in the gorse, playing dice. As the light fades, Venn enlists a number of glowworms to illuminate the stump that serves as their table. Curious ponies are drawn to the noise, populating an uncanny audience for the pair of antagonistic gamblers. With understated humor, the narrator notes: "the incongruity between the men's deeds and their environment was great."<sup>1</sup> Such incongruity between the activity of humans and the environments in which they live is a central concern of Hardy's novels. His writing attends to the fluctuating intimacy between spaces and people, and the profound alienation that this dynamic relationship can incur. His skilled transcription of the experience of a dramatically changing world draws from the affordances of the novel form itself, which addresses individual and communal forms of experience with particular attention to the representative problem of scale.

Novels from *Jane Eyre* (1847) to *Bleak House* (1853) to *Middlemarch* (1871–72) navigate the spaces between the personal and the political, the national and the global, the domestic and the public. Hardy's Wessex novels operate at the limits of this dialectic. His novels meticulously index the traditions of a particular region of rural England while also, as Gillian Beer puts it, embarking on the task of "finding a scale

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for the human.”<sup>2</sup> Hardy’s fiction offers some of literature’s most imaginative attempts to reconcile individual experiences with the political, economic, and environmental structures that so often determine them.

How is it that Hardy’s novels, which seem so carefully attuned to the local, always seem to be scaling up?<sup>3</sup> This article seeks to reconcile the environmentalism and transnationalism of Hardy’s work with the rural tradition from which they both developed in order to theorize the relationship between land use and the history of the novel. Hardy’s descriptive sensitivity to landscape advances an admiration for the parsimonious modes of use that characterize common-law right. This admiration is motivated by a rejection of cosmopolitan modernity and capitalist extraction. However, as the novel seeks to make the history of this kind of use coherent, a logic of traditional English community emerges. This logic—specifically, the premise that frugal respect for the land allows one to extract enough value to live without destroying the environment—then becomes a moral abstraction of English ruralism that subtends multiple formations of English nationalism. Hardy’s representation of authentic English life on the heath establishes a continuity between the aesthetics of wasteland and the production of English identity. This article traces the resulting discursive interdependence between the environmentalism of the commons and the expansion of nationalist ideology.

The environmentalist register of Hardy’s novels emerges from a more traditionally Marxist concern with the conversion of land into property. While the relationship between capitalist development and rural life is frequently characterized through the opposition of the city and the country, Hardy’s novels take care to show that the process of agricultural development had local characteristics independent from the influence of nearby urban centers. This historical dynamic is most comprehensively described by Raymond Williams in *The Country and the City*. Williams charts the diverse and sometimes contradictory narratives of the “English countryside” as it was put to different cultural uses across the advent of British modernity. While country house poems praised the paternal custodianship of ancestral landowners newly acclimating to an early capitalist market, others recorded the details of destruction and dislocation that this market occasioned. At the same time, the concept of “untouched” nature emerged as a moral standard against which urban development and industrial agriculture might be judged. Although this figuration of nature was sometimes a relatively superficial icon of purity, it also enabled romantics like John Clare to produce a materially sensitive critique of the effects of enclosure and improvement on the former

English peasantry—transformed suddenly into vagrants, trespassers, and poachers. As the realist novel rose to ascendancy, writers from Austen to Eliot struggled to find an aesthetic perspective capable of registering the contradictory realities of country life. By Williams's account, Hardy's fiction best captures the complex temporal and aesthetic realities of rural England. Hardy, as both "the educated observer and the passionate participant, in a period of general and radical change," manages to represent the entangled dynamics of education, class, lineage, labor, and technology in his Wessex novels.<sup>4</sup>

Although Williams is more focused on the gathering sense of opposition between civilization and nature, waste is also key to the ideological exchange between country and city. The history of development that Williams describes had two major components: the enclosure of open arable fields, which accounted for "some four million acres," and the enclosure of the "wastes," which accounted for "some two million acres" (101). The two forms had different techniques of implementation and affected different communities. The enclosure of arable fields, Williams wagers, would have destroyed close-knit, nucleated village economies that subsisted on limited systems of exchange within an otherwise feudal world. The enclosure of the wastes, by contrast, would have suppressed the "marginal independence" of "cottagers, squatters, isolated settlers in mainly uncultivated land"—a broader and more diverse population including former peasants, itinerant laborers, vagrants, and others with less clearly defined roles in the changing social landscape of the countryside (101). This is the world that Hardy describes in *Return of the Native*—a world in which the many versions of nature that Williams recounts, and the material histories to which they correspond, are being actively navigated within the context of a new kind of English modernity. In this world, to live on a "waste" is to be newly relegated to the past, as the major activities of English enclosure had drawn to a close. Egdon Heath is neatly captured by Williams's distinction between the "residual" and the "archaic": a society that "has been effectively formed in the past, but . . . is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present" (121). Residual cultural formations are thus capable of carrying multiple meanings, those assigned by dominant culture in the context of the past and those newly formed and reformed in the present.

Hardy's use of "waste" in the novel is similarly amorphous: the term adapts to describe the heath, the losses and failures of personal life, and the refuse and detritus that accompanies human existence. However, in

this article I am focused particularly on the historical category of “waste-land” described by Williams, J. M. Neeson, Vittoria Di Palma, Ann Bermingham, E. P. Thompson, and other historians of the English countryside. While this “waste” is historically specific, it also draws strength from the structures of feeling that Williams so elegantly describes. The idea of unused, unproductive, unpeopled lands authorized the violence and theft orchestrated by the rising class of landowners. This kind of imagination connects Egdon Heath with other territories threatened by various institutions of accumulation, from the Highland Clearances in Scotland and British imperialism in America and Australia to the Israeli apartheid state and Robert Moses’s urban planning commission.

Marx provides the rubric of this historical narrative in the eighth part of *Capital* (1867–94; English vol. 1, 1887). His ironic description of the “secret” of primitive accumulation discloses the routine process of expropriation obfuscated by economic accounts of the gradual ascendance of a “diligent, intelligent, and above all frugal elite” above a group of “lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living.”<sup>5</sup> Marx corrects this “theological” fantasy, arguing that “so-called primitive accumulation . . . is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production” (875). He takes the English history of land enclosure as its “classic form” (876). Marx describes how the gradual theft of common land from peasants in the sixteenth century became institutionalized in the eighteenth century’s “Bills for Inclosure of Commons” (855). In concert with this institutionalization, those living on the land were gradually cleared away by force, precipitating the migration of the rural proletariat into cities. While this “bloody legislation against the expropriated” effectively destroyed the English peasantry, it also produced the conditions for proletarian solidarity that led to the revolutionary movements of the early nineteenth century. This dialectical relation between the peasantry and the proletariat, in which inchoate freedom emerges from the transition of the laboring class from one form of bondage to another, shapes Hardy’s nostalgic account of rural precapitalist communities. Further, Marx’s argument that “primitive accumulation has more or less been accomplished in Western Europe” establishes demand for related modes of exploitation that were being refined in the colonies (935). Precapitalist nostalgia and colonial speculation, then, are linked together through this material history of territorial expropriation.

Marx frames primitive accumulation as the original sin of capitalist development; subsequent scholars have elaborated on this claim by

tracing the various effects and transformations of British enclosure. Feminist and postcolonial scholars have contested the priorness of primitive accumulation by showing that the enclosure and privatization of territories, bodies, and forms of life are integral to the continued operation of capitalism. In her classic refusal of Foucault's discursive history of sexuality, for example, Silvia Federici shows that much of what constitutes modern gender and sexuality emerged from the forms of control that accompanied the transition to a capitalist system predicated on the ownership of land as property. Defamiliarizing both property and the gendered body, Federici describes primitive accumulation as a contentious process of resistance and repression centered around both land and biological reproduction. Women's bodies thus effectively became a substitute for the commons in the early modern era. Reproductive capacity was redefined as a natural resource available to capitalist consumption. Simultaneously, reproductive labor was coded as nonlabor. In this way, Federici and other feminists contest primitive accumulation as a precapitalist phenomenon. In doing so they also reaffirm that the illusion of geographical "pastness" upon which the narrative of primitive accumulation relies obscures a much more contemporaneous and entangled nineteenth-century global economy.<sup>6</sup> More recently, Robert Nichols has written about the history of land theft in the American colonies, which he describes using the concept of "recursive dispossession": European colonizers generated property by stealing something that had not previously been "owned."<sup>7</sup> Only after taking control of land was it recognizable as property, leaving Indigenous Americans with the fraught task of retrofitting nonpossessive modes of relating to the land in order to claim prior ownership. In all its permutations, capitalist primitive accumulation disguises itself in legality by producing new legal codes that permit new techniques of expropriation. This makes community efforts at resistance and residual forms of communal existence more difficult to register. In addition, the perpetual self-erasure of primitive accumulation contributes to its apparent precapitalist position on the timeline of human civilization. This further absolves the executors of capitalism by banishing their crimes to a precivilized world. Hardy's novels can be understood as fracturing this timeline. Part of his project in *The Return of the Native*—a project harmonious with much of Marx's theoretical work in *Capital*—is to depict the ongoingness of primitive accumulation despite the onset of modernity. Just as Federici shows the relation of English land enclosure to contemporary debates over access to abortion, or Nichols marks the homophony between seventeenth-century English

peasant revolts and recent protests over the Dakota Access Pipeline, Hardy uses the novel form to highlight the temporal slipperiness of lived experience on the unenclosed heathland of Egdon.

As a mediation of these ongoing historical processes of accumulation both in England and on the scale of empire, Hardy's descriptions of Egdon Heath assume a special importance. While passages describing wasteland may seem secondary to character description and supplemental to narrative development, landscape description—in fact, landscape itself—is a key site for the elaboration of British discourse on enclosure, improvement, and the history of the commons. The rustic landscapes described in British fiction reflect the aesthetic principles of the landscape garden, which emerged as a material and aesthetic response to British land enclosure. Ann Bermingham has convincingly argued that the cultural idea of the rustic landscape developed across the eighteenth century as intensifying land enclosure made the English landscape unrecognizable.<sup>8</sup> Landscape gardens, and then landscape paintings, and finally landscape description in novels developed to provide an aesthetic supplement to the material deficiency in natural British countryside. The privatization of common land precipitated a number of historical phenomena that became central to national identity: English industrialism was imagined as a collective result of civilization, ingenuity, and modernization; the expropriation of land and labor that supported this economic transition was also marshaled into the narrative of national identity. Elegized and nostalgically simulated even as it was being seized and privatized, the “lost” commons served as a kind of mythical origin for English social values and a test against which the corruption of urban development could be measured.

The realist novel is another product of the privatization, individualization, and mechanization that attended English enclosure. But the novel and the landscape garden are more than just parallel effects of England's transition to capitalism. Nineteenth-century British writers recognized landscape gardens as rich symbolic repositories of national culture and as aesthetic objects with similar structural logics to realist novels. Both the English landscape garden and the novel, as we have seen from Defoe to Austen to Eliot, build worlds that attempt to disguise their own artifice. A critical element of the aesthetic success of the landscape garden is its approximation of ecological reality, just as a crucial element of the novel is its representation of social reality. The tension between the complex formal infrastructure and naturalistic verisimilitude of both the landscape garden and the realist novel make them aesthetic siblings.

Descriptions of landscape gardens in realist novels, then, can be understood as a kind of autotheory: that is, they articulate the aesthetic project of realism and contextualize this project in terms of a specific political history. These descriptions offer evidence of how the violent aspects of the novel's history, from land enclosure to colonialism, can be mediated into a more "natural" form. Just as the landscape garden neutralizes the perceived loss of the commons, the realist novel neutralizes some of the losses of previous forms of collective lived experience.

If the landscape garden is a particularly resonant site for the analysis of the history of enclosure in English literature, the wasteland operates in an adjacent position. The aesthetic of the landscape garden nostalgically refers to the lost commons. The wasteland, by contrast, is an actually unenclosed landscape that has persisted because of the difficulty and expense it would require to enclose and improve it. Vittoria Di Palma describes wasteland as a "landscape that resists notions of proper or appropriate use."<sup>9</sup> Some wastelands can be thought of as commons that have survived, yet they bear little aesthetic resemblance to the idealized features of the commons as simulated in the form of the landscape garden. Whereas the landscape garden participates in a nostalgic and nationalistic record of English country life, the wasteland is a relic of that past which remains potentially enclosable. Wastelands may have changed little since the thirteenth century, but perhaps only wait for the right technology to "improve" them for modern usage. In sum, the wasteland and the landscape garden both refer to the history of the commons, but the wasteland preserves some of the actual practices of common land use.

This resistance to enclosure is part of what impels Hardy to find in Egdon Heath an authentic repository of Englishness and to situate this wasteland at the symbolic and narrative center of *The Return of the Native*. This reorientation from pasture to wasteland, I want to suggest, distills the activity of a certain kind of rural labor as a fundamental feature of English social life. Landscapes, both actually existing and novelistic, index the presence of this kind of labor and situate it within the larger ideological project of English national culture. By resituating authentic English life on the heath, Hardy fuses the aesthetic affordances of wasteland with English identity—generating a powerful tool for the extension of nationalist ideology. This article traces the surprising continuity between that nationalism and the wastelands of the English countryside.



## THE CHASTENED SUBLIME

The opening article of *The Return of the Native* speculates that humankind may be entering a new era of aesthetics. “Orthodox beauty,” the narrator suggests, might be “approaching its last quarter” (9). The aesthetic category for the modern subject is a “chastened sublimity” that can be found in such unappealing spots as the barren landscape of Thule and the chilly seaside of Scheveningen. Instead of invoking the more familiar telos of a classical preoccupation with beauty that progresses toward a mature modern taste for sublimity, the narrator suggests that modernity is characterized by moderate displeasure. The landscapes that satisfy the modern subject are more like the “façade of a prison” than the “façade of a palace.” The narrator explains that a place that is “too smiling” risks causing its spectators to experience a sense of “mockery,” while an “oversadly tinged” environment doesn’t highlight the inevitable misery of the person who moves through it. The narrator describes this historical transition in terms of human development: this “oversad” aesthetic was “distasteful to our race when it was young.” But the maturity of humankind helps the modern subject, apparently so browbeaten by life that beauty seems to mock him, to appreciate the subdued and subtle pleasures of a place like Egdon Heath. While the aesthetic effects of Egdon Heath can be intense, these intensities are reached “by way of the solemn” rather than “by way of the brilliant” (10). This muted intensity is “perfectly accordant with man’s nature—neither ghastly, hateful, nor ugly: neither commonplace, unmeaning, nor tame; but, like man, slighted and enduring; and withal singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony” (10). Modernity is a bleak prospect, and Egdon Heath is the prospect of modernity.

Many Victorian novelists embraced the concept of moderation; George Eliot’s validation of the “middling” and Charlotte Brontë’s valorization of Jane Eyre’s physical “plainness” come to mind. But Hardy idiosyncratically links aesthetic moderation to deep time. The opening article goes on to describe the heath as one of the oldest things in England: “ever since the beginning of vegetation its soil had worn the same antique brown dress” (10). It is matched only by the “stars overhead” in consistency across time. Neither the sea, nor the fields, nor the rivers, nor the villages, nor the people around Egdon can claim such “ancient permanence.” The heath features only two alterations, an “aged highway and a still more aged barrow,” and even these are “almost crystallized to natural products by long continuance” (11).



How can Egdon Heath be at once the icon of modern aesthetic sensibility and a rare artifact of “prehistoric times”? What does this resilient landscape of the past have to offer the exhausted sensibilities of the nineteenth-century British viewer?

By way of an answer, Hardy points the reader toward life on the heath to indicate that resistance to civilization, rather than improvement, is a fundamental characteristic of modernity. If the “orthodox beauty” of more civilized landscapes, as the opening pages suggest, is reaching its “last quarter” (9), the novel illustrates this hypothesis by staging several conflicts between traditional rural ways of life and failed attempts to improve those traditions. Eustacia’s longing for city existence destroys her lonely but powerful country status; Clym’s dreams of education cannot satisfy him like the labor of furze gathering. In contrast, Diggory Venn, who retreats from farm life to the even more quaint activity of red-dle sale, finds success. The opening passages of the novel offer an aesthetic lesson that is then dramatized in the plot: to be modern is to celebrate the meager pleasures of the past.

This way of seeing asks viewers to slow down, expect less, and make more of the little that is offered. The narrator wants to convince the reader that Egdon Heath is worth looking at, even if learning to look is difficult. The marks of historical change scarcely register on the face of the heath. “Civilization is [the] enemy” of this untamable landscape (11). The “trifling irregularities” that can be found are not “caused by pickaxe, plough, or spade” but the “finger touches” of the “last geological change” (11). Egdon Heath is not just remarkable for having been preserved but also because its presence in the present is newly valuable for aesthetic consumption both to readers and the citizens who live on its face. History has not made a mark on the land, but the narrator notes that the perpetual “condition” of the landscape has been recorded in the primary document of English property ownership, the Domesday Book. The land is described there as “heathy, furzy, briary wilderness” (10). From the time of William I in 1086, then, Egdon Heath has not changed much: the record of the “length and breadth” of the area is slightly uncertain, but “it appears from the figures that the area of Egdon down to the present day has but little diminished” (10). The Domesday Book also notes that the landscape holds the common right of “turbaria,” or cutting turf. Commoning and modernity are brought into an unlikely relation here: just like the ancient barrows mottling the surface of the heath, the traditions of common right seem out of joint with the modernity that Hardy ascribes to Egdon.

It is precisely the parsimony of commoning, however, that has preserved the material condition of the heath across centuries—and it is because the heath is thought of as a “waste” that it has survived land enclosure. The unique qualities of the wasteland are thus refracted through the legal restrictions governing its use. The heath continues to exist because the rights of turbary and estovers have allowed for minimal impact on the sturdy fields of gorse; the common right continues to exist because the heath is so difficult to convert into an arable field or grassy pasture. While commons in more welcoming environments were vulnerable to improvement, the unique relation between waste and common right preserves the spatial and social formations of the past. The wasteland is unique as a temporally consistent space. Hardy delineates some of the aesthetic and social affordances of spatial consistency across time and then shows that this consistency is an effect of common right. The description proffers a recommendation of the past, rather than a simple record of it. In fact, the record can only survive by virtue of historical common right’s persistence across time. In a world increasingly beleaguered by the alienating effects of cosmopolitan urbanization, Hardy offers waste as a therapeutic prospect.

The aesthetic experience of the heath is tethered to ownership: because no one seems to own it, everyone can enjoy it. Divorced from the exclusionary marks of property, it seems that “nature” can be more authentically experienced on the heath.<sup>10</sup> Comfortingly, Egdon Heath produces a feeling of “natural right” in those who wander it. Hardy situates aesthetic pleasure as a compensatory site of ownership: “colours and beauties so far subdued were, at least, the birthright of all” (10). The muted nature of the heath makes it available to everyone, as its range of intensities (its “mood touch[ing] the level of gaiety” only on summer days, its “intensity . . . more usually reached by way of the solemn than by way of the brilliant”) are detached from human taste and situated on a climatological scale. Traditional British landscape aesthetics from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries emphasized the individual position of the viewer in order to indicate the importance of ownership, but the heath affectively distributes aesthetic experience across various scales—rearticulating “natural right” at the level of perception.

The scale of the wasteland, meanwhile, dislocates humans as the primary focus of narrative description. The novel’s first three articles position the heath at the intersection of various scales of experience: geological, national, biological, and communal. The first article describes Egdon Heath, the “face on which time makes but little impression.”

The second introduces a number of anonymous humans, who appear on the scene “hand in hand with trouble.” The third welcomes the reader into the close-knit circle of villagers clustered around a bonfire on a barrow. The series of articles enacts a persistent feature of Hardy’s fiction: the articulated scales of human experience, the natural world, historical time, and community life. Instead of scaling “up” or “down” to find the protagonist, Hardy casts a descriptive gaze across a scene, introducing some secondary characters and leaving main characters unnamed, offering the “face” of the heath as much attention as the men who walk upon it. While the narrative ultimately settles on a primary cast of human actors, the destabilizing scalar gestures of these opening articles remain active as the heath itself is imbricated in the more human-sized plots of romantic intrigue and personal failures.<sup>11</sup>

By jumping between scales that alternately correspond to such varied subjects as human love, national history, climate patterns, and geological movement, the novel manages to isolate that which has been consistent across time. The slow growth and imperceptible change of fields of gorse enable this visualization of stasis. The relative infertility of wasteland greases the gears of historical time. The narrator notes that the barrow upon which people have gathered is still a perfect globe, untouched by plough in the centuries since it was “thrown up.” Land can exist in this state of preservation when it offers no significant value for exploitation. “In the heath’s barrenness to the farmer lay its fertility to the historian. There had been no obliteration, because there had been no tending” (17). The technologies and practices of agriculture are linked to “obliteration.” The barrenness of the heath is both what has remained consistent across time and why it has remained consistent across time.

The aesthetic, spatial, and affective dynamism of waste demands a movement away from the center. Much as the novel’s setting avoids the metropolitan center of industrial British society and keeps a distance even from provincial town life, its descriptions of that remote and austere setting keep their distance from familiar accounts of human subjects’ sensory and emotional responses to environments. To be at the periphery is to find the greatest level of connection between different scales. On Egdon Heath, at what seems to be the edge of the civilized world, Hardy locates the outliers of modern moral, spiritual, and aesthetic experience but suggests that these outliers are central to Englishness: “The instincts of merry England lingered on here with exceptional vitality,” the narrator remarks of the extant pagan elements of seasonal rites such as May Day (376). Why is it that the wasteland convenes such a

scene? Because, as Hardy suggests, it connects different economic, environmental, and social histories as it equalizes their divergent sizes. His use of the wasteland as a mediator of scale demands an analytic that centers the fringes of marginality. Archaic and residual structures become the sites of the most intimacy between seemingly divergent scales of experience. But the critique of the “dominant” nestled in Hardy’s care for the unacknowledged carries its own implicit endorsement of “Englishness” as a mediator of social experience. In fact, the role of the wasteland in the text is to imagine Englishness as a historical abstraction that can be visualized on a global scale. To understand the development of this iteration of nationalist ideology, it is necessary to define the concept of waste.

#### WASTE AND THE NOVEL

Waste is a constitutive part of the history of rural space, and it determines much of the language of rural description. The differentiation between areas like wilderness, waste, pasture, and garden hinges on the degree of cultivation and utility offered by the land. This aspect of landscape description is latent in most nineteenth-century novels. Occasionally, though, it is more explicit. The moors of *Wuthering Heights* (1847) situate the stagnant lineages of the Lintons and the Earnshaws on similarly barren land. In *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), Eliot transforms the unused Red Deeps into a spatial expression of socially repressed sexual desire. Exploring a different kind of waste in *Hard Times* (1854), Dickens integrates the industrial waste of the previously rural land around Coketown into the sensational plot: the upright Stephen Blackpool is literally swallowed up by an abandoned mineshaft in the devastated English countryside. *The Return of the Native* offers a more comprehensive and explicit engagement with wasteland, providing insight into the articulation between waste, nineteenth-century capitalism, and the novel form. These connections allow the concept of waste to be scaled up and abstracted. As an abstraction, waste takes on an important role in both novelistic form and economic theory.

In *The Return of the Native*, characters and things as well as land are used or underused in ways that seem to the community on Egdon Heath, and often the narrator, to be a waste. Wasted time, wasted expectations, and wasted potential are amplified by the novel’s frequent comparison of human beings to elements of landscape. The reciprocal anthropomorphization of the heath and “landscape-ification” of humans draw attention to the material histories of land use that contribute to the

existential crises the characters experience. Much as the opening of the novel strategically anthropomorphizes the “face” of the heath, rendering it legible as a living form, the human characters are reciprocally often realized with the language of landscape description.<sup>12</sup> Diggory Venn has eyes as “blue as an autumn mist”; Mrs. Yeobright’s face “concentrated” the “solitude exhaled from the heath”; the “groundwork” of Thomasin’s “country face” reposes in a “nest of wavy country hair” (12, 32, 37). The lengthy introduction of Eustacia Vye makes her nearly indistinguishable from the heath, until a burning ember is brought near enough to illuminate her face (52). Later, after the misunderstanding between Eustacia and Mrs. Yeobright during Wildeve’s visit, when Wildeve runs to the window, “instead of there being before him the pale face of Eustacia, and a masculine shape unknown, there was only 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” (286). The impassive face of the land stands in for Eustacia, intimating the final placidity of her corpse.<sup>13</sup>

The wasted human life, the wasted human body, and the wasteland crystallize in Eustacia’s death. In a passage that characterizes the landscape as a field covered with rotting bodies, Eustacia runs across the heath to meet Wildeve and stumbles “over twisted-furze-roots, tufts of rushes, or oozing lumps of fleshy fungi, which at this season lay scattered about the heath like the rotten liver and lungs of some colossal animal” (293). Her corpse will soon join this grotesque field of rotten body parts, but the narrator suggests that in death, her body has achieved a comfortable complacency that she could never achieve in life: her “stateliness” had been “almost too marked for a dweller in a country domicile” and in death finally finds “an artistically happy background” (313). The biological capacities and aesthetic form of the human body operate like land: it rejects improvement.

The relationship between the capacities of the human body and the availability of land for use draw together a close but not coextensive relationship between the exploitation of people as a labor force and the exploitation of land. While Hardy frames waste as a form of resistance to the coercive directives of improvement and productivity, the wasted lives of the novel make it clear that wasteland, too, is an integral part of the dynamic of capitalist expansion. Indeed, waste features prominently in Marx’s breakdown of surplus value. In the fifth part of *Capital*, Marx argues that the appropriation and reinvestment of surplus

value is the fulcrum of the process of capitalist production (653). “In a capitalist society,” he writes, “free time is produced for one class by the conversion of the whole lifetime of the masses into labour-time” (667). Surplus value is generated through the exploitation of time and the careful elimination of waste. This capacity to compel workers to sell their labor power relies on the reserve armies of labor composed of relative surplus population. The capitalist strategically eliminates the “waste” of leisure time and the “wasted” energy of inefficient production. What the capitalist sees as “waste” the worker might see as “life.” If the exploitation of surplus value in workers relies on the elimination of wasted time, it would seem as though the spatial analogue to the process must rely on the elimination of wasted space. But, like the workforce, the exploitation of the land actually relies on a carefully maintained reserve land.

Surplus value, an abstract and fundamentally social form, cannot truly be spatialized, but mapping absolute and relative surplus value onto spatial concepts allows the relationship between waste and profit to emerge more clearly.<sup>14</sup> Surplus value is best known in the familiar terms of the equation between labor hours worked and the relative increase of productivity and intensity of work *during* those hours. As Marx shows in volume 1, the apparent “surplus” from which profit is derived relies on this material exploitation. In terms of territory, the capitalist generates absolute surplus value by owning as much land as possible, and relative surplus value by exploiting the land as efficiently as possible. Enclosure seems to expand absolute surplus value, and improvement seems to expand relative surplus value. If the exploitation of surplus value in workers relies on the elimination of wasted time, the spatial analogue to the process relies on the elimination of wasted space. In general, wasteland costs too much to improve to generate any surplus value. Draining the fens or clearing the heaths is too expensive to generate a profit. Eventually, as enclosure consumes more and more land, and as technologies of improvement develop, the wasteland will become profitable. Until that moment it waits, like the floating reserve army of labor, to be “employed.” This metaphor has its limits: while the reserve army of labor drives down wages by ensuring that workers can always be replaced, wasteland can devalue surrounding property and can obstruct its potential improvement. However, wasteland is also subject to changing technologies of production—as shown by the history of the “real” Egdon Heath—which was cleared and planted for lumber in the 1920s before a nuclear power plant was built in the 1950s, now in the

process of being dismantled. Parts of it might be incorporated into some aspects of capitalist production, like the latent reserve army of labor, as small portions are converted to farmland. Other portions of waste may be used only temporarily and infrequently, like the stagnant reserve army. Waste is an integral part of the exploitation of the land and bears a functional resemblance to the group of people who are most vulnerable to capitalist immiseration but perhaps most resistant to capitalist exploitation.

These reserves of space and of people provide an opportunity for the most efficient exploitation of wage labor and the most profitable recirculation of surplus value. While *The Return of the Native* does not suggest that the unemployed are concentrated on the waste, its focus on wasted lives emphasizes that the heath, with its great capacity for resistance, is still incorporated into the mechanism of English capitalism. Emily Steinlight's work on population in the novel suggests that surplus, especially surplus population, is the "enabling condition" of Hardy's fiction.<sup>15</sup> This is true of *Return of the Native*: those who do not give up their vocations willingly, like Clym and Diggory, give up their lives unwillingly. *Return of the Native* is a novel built around the lives of people who see themselves and each other as cast-off remainders, either left out of the center of society or retreating from it. Steinlight shows that surplus is not a "quantitative problem to be remedied by population control nor a symptom of bourgeois ideology but an indispensable literary condition." Writing about *Jude the Obscure*, she argues that Hardy's novel "stakes the very meaning of literature on the surplus it creates."<sup>16</sup> If surplus is at the heart of the general form of capital and the literary form of the novel itself, then "waste" names the places and people the novel is not meant to include. Most novels, Steinlight suggests, are about exceptional characters who escape the general tendency to become part of the surplus mass. Against this trend, Hardy tends to narrate the wasted life while refusing to redeem it. Hardy's fiction attempts to penetrate the ideological obfuscations of waste and situate it at the heart of the system that produces it as a thinkable category.

Wasteland is not a byproduct of the interrelated systems of land enclosure, improvement, and agricultural capitalism; it is an engine of the dynamic process that fuels all three. The aesthetic features of the wasteland can thus be thought of as fundamental qualities of the experience of nineteenth-century English capitalism. Hardy both describes the "chastened sublime," with its experiential moderation and disorienting scalar form, and models its lessons in the formal scope of the novel.



The rich detail and symbolic economy afforded by Egdon Heath suggest that it has not been wasted at all but instead highly valued through Hardy's narrative prose. Like the furze cutters who make something from what at first seems to be nothing, Hardy distills value from what, at the opening of the novel, seems to be a deserted and desolate place. The ability to derive this value from waste is marked as historically English; because it is not merely a feature of the land but a product of character and labor, one aspect of this value is that it is portable. Because the origin of the English novel is closely tied to the process of enclosure, it follows that many of its key features—its attention to detail, its celebration of the moderate, and its refusal of classical idealism—reflect the developing tropes of a particularly English relationship to the land. Despite Hardy's commitment to communal forms of life that exceed the atomization of capitalist modernity, the conventions of the novel form nonetheless enlist this communalism in a fantasy of English national identity.

#### CONSERVING NATIONALISM

It is in fact the centripetal force of nation formation that grounds the unruly representational scales of *The Return of the Native*. Toward the end of the novel, the narrator notes:

The instincts of merry England lingered on here with exceptional vitality, and the symbolic customs which tradition has attached to each season of the year were yet a reality on Egdon. Indeed, the impulses of all such outlandish hamlets are pagan still—in these spots homage to nature, self-adoration, frantic gaieties, fragments of Teutonic rites to divinities whose names are forgotten, seem in some way or other to have survived mediaeval doctrine. (318)

The fractured and hybrid traditions of the past have been consolidated at the rural outskirts of English space and have, the passage implies, been lost in urban centers. At the same time, these rural places are “outlandish”—a word for foreign habitually invoked in English descriptions of non-English commodities, people, and ideas. Englishness is thrust away from the center of England into the periphery. The “symbolic customs” have an “exceptional vitality” despite being fundamentally fragmented: the traditions are built from “homage to nature, self-adoration, frantic gaieties, [and] fragments of Teutonic rites” (318). The fragments have endured across time, surviving “medieval doctrine,” to become coherent only at the outskirts of English national space. This passage proffers an

affectionate respect for the traditions of rural society, especially in opposition to the alienating and historically alienated social life of the city. Often, the anthropological impulse of Hardy's novels seems to yearn for something beyond both national culture and capitalist structure. But by reaching into the complex past in order to validate the rural culture of the nineteenth century, Hardy endorses the kinds of imagined communities that are best understood as nations. These prenational and precapitalist pasts are to be understood as nations on their own terms, but the fact of their survival provides a contextual ground against which the nation is formed. A version of history is preserved on the wasteland that resists full incorporation into the nation formation.

If the waste, as I have suggested, sustains some of the labor practices of a commoning community and the social structures that accompany them, the nation form recontextualizes this commoning practice as a prehistory of the frugality and technical expertise of capitalist improvement. The fantasies of historical development that Roman and Anglo-Saxon history provide are literalized in the movement from the cosmopolitan city to the prehistoric country. Significantly, Hardy's location of precapitalist England frequently seems to be figured through Teutonic, Celtic, and Roman lineages. This extends to the residual physical elements of previous eras: from Stonehenge in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) to the ring of the Roman amphitheater and graves of Roman soldiers littering *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886). Williams writes that these apparently "timeless" aspects of rural England—"the barrows, the Roman ruins . . . the tablets and monuments in the churches"—only convey "history" after Hardy's characters have been exposed to education (206). The self-conscious narrator or the upwardly mobile protagonist—like Tess or Clym—is tasked with interpreting these monuments as evidence of national history. However, Hardy also offers many vivid accounts of the deep historical memory and self-conscious experience of history that agrarian communities develop in relation to rural space. The opening articles of *The Return of the Native*, especially the account of the bonfire on Rainbarrow, offer just such an account. As Alicia Christoff argues, Hardy's description of this scene "adds to the history" of English rural life: "Pagan ritual, dominant religion, and conservative and radical political commitments alike shine out from Hardy's fires."<sup>17</sup> Hardy's image of the scattered bonfires on the heath as so many figures on an enormous clockface suggests that, both in terms of historical time and the map of empire, Egdon is located at the center. The heath operates as a stable physical site for the fundamentally mobile nation to locate itself across

both feudal and capitalist modes of production. A distinctly racial logic emerges in this autochthonous linkage between land and population. Whether passed from person to person or preserved in the landscape itself, the waste will always mold the present into a form related to the traditions of past inhabitants. In this way, the centrifugal force of contemporary culture produces a teleology of the outlandish, wherein deviation and exoticism are consolidated in a national type. This racial way of thinking collapses the labor practices that a certain kind of landscape demands with the kind of person who lives on that land. This dynamic is a fundamental characteristic of British imperialism.

The nation form incorporates precapitalist modes of life into a narrative of development and deploys a racial logic to tether this temporal narrative to the relation between city and country. This relation can then be abstracted to broader networks of social formation, notably including empire. Toward the end of *The Country and the City*, Williams writes about the analogic relationship between city/country and metropolis/world. The “metropolitan” societies of western Europe and North America, he writes, seem to be the industrialized centers of economic, political, and cultural power, existing in sharp distinction from the rest of the world. This relationship is temporalized through industrialization: the metropolis appears developed and the rest of the world underdeveloped or developing. “Thus a model of city and country,” writes Williams, “in economic and political relationships, has gone beyond the boundaries of the nation state, and is seen but also challenged as a model of the world” (279). But this is a model used to produce descriptions of the world. Williams explains that the “real history of city and country” is not a case of successful development in some places and failure to develop in others; rather, “what was happening in the ‘city,’ the ‘metropolitan’ economy, determined and was determined by what was made to happen in the ‘country.’” The country, just like the city, is developed, but to support the city rather than itself; the colony is developed in a similar way. This symbiotic model, which Williams claims began in England as the earliest form of the now dominant model of capitalist development, has expanded outward from England: “thus one of the last models of ‘city and country’ is the system we now know as imperialism” (279).

Nation-based analyses collapse time and space. The city becomes the present, and the country becomes the past. But in many ways, agricultural development signals the developmental future. Creating other units of analysis can rectify some of the warped perspectives that attend a focus on the nation. Wallerstein argues against modes of historical analysis,

like Williams', that take the nation as their primary unit. This unit produces false concepts that coalesce in the "non-problem" of national economies that seem to "skip" presumed stages of production.<sup>18</sup> Wallerstein describes two alternative units of totality: the minisystem and the world system. As minisystems seem to be extinguished by global capitalism, he proceeds to describe the characteristics of the world system.

Wallerstein's concept of minisystems, self-contained economic societies that are gradually incorporated into the larger networks of world capitalism, could frame a certain strain of Hardy scholarship that focuses on the isolated and declining agrarian lifestyle as emblematic of precapitalist modes of production succumbing to industrialization.<sup>19</sup> Against this understanding of Hardy's Wessex as a remainder of past economic systems, I want to emphasize the ways that Hardy embeds the English countryside in global systems.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, for Wallerstein it is agricultural capitalism that is first articulated on a global scale, rather than industrial modes of production.<sup>21</sup> As Robert Nichols and Patricia Seed have noted, many of the same legal and bureaucratic strategies deployed by agricultural capitalists in the acquisition of arable British land were being used simultaneously by British colonists in the Americas.<sup>22</sup> In Wallerstein's account of world historical development, it is the "geographic expansion of the European world-economy" that leads to the "elimination of other world-systems as well as the absorption of the remaining mini-systems."<sup>23</sup> The countryside of the early nineteenth century that Hardy describes was deeply entangled in this world system of agricultural exchange.

The traces of global systems that Hardy embeds in the text are visible in the relationship between his characters and the land itself.<sup>24</sup> These traces take various, and sometimes contradictory, forms. While Wessex sometimes figures as land under threat of colonization, at other times the heath seems to convert English figures into foreigners. There are some explicit moments of anti-imperialist rhetoric woven into the working of the heath. The narrator explains that "Wildev's patch" was:

. . . a plot of land redeemed from the heath, and after long and laborious years brought into cultivation. The man who had discovered that it could be tilled died of the labour: the man who succeeded him in possession ruined himself in fertilizing it. Wildev came like Amerigo Vespucci, and received the honours due to those who had gone before. (36)

This description, which ironizes Wildev's lazy acquisition of the fertile plot, also suggests that the heath resists the kinds of colonization initiated by Vespucci and those who came before him.

The metaphor of the heath as *terra nullius* activates one vision of global space. Working the land is coded as English, but the land itself has no nation. Elsewhere, the modes of working the land seem to belong to other places and other times. Descriptions of Diggory Venn and his career are riddled with this kind of contradiction and exceptionality. Not only are reddlemen “old school” and “seldom seen,” they have been nearly wiped out by the “introduction of railways” (71). Even though the reddleman is a traditional figure who had comprised the “threat of Wessex mothers for generations,” he also lives an “Arab existence” whose respectability is only “insured by the never-failing production of a well-lined purse.” The reddleman is compared to a range of “anti-English” figures, from the devil to Napoleon Bonaparte. He lives “like a gipsy; but gipsies he scorned.” The “stock” of the reddleman is “more valuable than that of pedlars,” but the residue of their product “spreads its lively hues over everything it lights on, and stamps unmistakably, as with the mark of Cain, any person who has handled it” (71). The forms of nationalism that cluster around Venn concede that the modes of life dictated by waste have transnational siblings. Rather than producing a sense of transnational solidarity, however, the conventions of the novel—to make the individual stand in for the whole, and to make the local a figure for the global—enlist moments like these to imagine Englishness on a global scale.

Like the heath itself, Venn seems to have an almost supernatural attachment to the environment of Egdon. He epitomizes the peculiar kind of nationalism at the core of Hardy’s endorsement of wasteland. This version of Englishness is idiosyncratic, quaint, and threatened by modernity. Diggory’s lifestyle may seem “Arab” and he may seem to be a “Gipsy,” just like Egdon is said to be like both Egypt and Tempe (293, 9). The novel is filled with these kinds of pseudoracialization: from Eustacia Vye’s Turkish disguise to the “wild Ishmaelish” heath itself, English figures frequently take on non-English characteristics. Alicia Christoff borrows the term “colonial object relations” from David Eng to describe these overlaid and entangled racial and imperial histories that are ultimately washed white (in the case of Diggory Venn) in the “conventional domestic order” of the novel’s conclusion. By the ending, “gone is Eustacia’s outsized desire, gone are bright colors, gone are now-outmoded ways of life,” replaced by an “order marked by loss, by exclusion, by violence, and by a ‘blanching process’ that renders life safe but artificial.”<sup>25</sup> Hardy indicates the entanglement of the spatial and temporal processes by which this “blanching” occurs. The numerous

pseudoracializations that take place in the novel can thus be understood as a set of departures and returns. If the imperial model of the country and the city is one of periphery and center, then the relationship between wasteland and city ratifies the endurance of English identity. The wasteland provides a sense of what Englishness is in its barest forms. It foregrounds two major characteristics: resiliency and particularity. This Englishness survives across time and can be tested against other world cultures that Venn's "gypsy, Arab, Bonaparte" aspect cannot fully disguise. From this standpoint, the arabesques of scale described in the opening of this article can be thought of as ideological exercises for the imagination of Englishness on a global scale. It is this exercise that Hardy indeed performs in the opening articles, as he produces an account of the aesthetic utility of chastened sublimity and attaches this aesthetic to a landscape routinely ignored in traditional novelistic description.

*The Return of the Native* substitutes the more familiar conventions of the landscape garden, which imitate the commons in an attempt to obscure the history of enclosure, with the waste, which bluntly signifies the history of expropriated land. Rather than decentering Englishness from the novel, therefore, this substitution bestows a new flexibility onto the idea of Englishness—both for readers of the novel and for characters within it. If novels set in country houses offer intoxicating fantasies of material wealth and romantic partnership, they also tend to bind their protagonists to the houses that represent that wealth. In contrast, wasteland engenders a fantasy of mobility fitting its history of vagrancy and trespass. Infatuated with Clym because he represents all that she desires about a glamorous metropolitan life, she asks him to "speak of Paris" (169). Clym reluctantly describes the ostentatious display of wealth in the Galerie d'Apollon, "a fitting place" for Eustacia to live. Rather than "gorgeous rooms," Clym would rather talk about Little Trianon, which "would suit us beautifully to live in, and you might walk in the gardens in the moonlight and think you were in some English shrubbery." Eustacia hates to think of herself in the "English" part of Paris, preferring to imagine spending her time in spots like Fontainebleau, St. Cloud, and the Bois, wasting her "English Sundays" in the French manner. Eustacia is so enamored with Clym's description of Paris that she feels confident he will "never adhere to [his] education plan," and so she promises to be his "for ever and ever" (169).

This dialogue reworks some of the conventions of the marriage plot, which often uses the landscape garden as a site of resolution and a

metaphor for the harmonious compromise of an engagement. Clym uses his knowledge of Paris, which Eustacia desires, to lure her—but he attempts, even while describing the glamour of the Louvre, to situate Eustacia within the familiar frame of the English garden. At the same time, he claims that he has to refuse this life to follow his vocation in Egdon. The tantalizing interplay between Paris and Egdon seems to intensify his desire for her: as the narrator quips earlier, “the only way to look queenly without realms or hearts to queen over is to look as if you had lost them; and Eustacia did that to a triumph” (64). Damon Wildeve uses a similar tactic of national comparison to tantalize Eustacia:

“God how lonely it is!” resumed Wildeve. “What are picturesque ravines and mists to us who see nothing else? Why should we stay here? Will you go with me to America? I have kindred in Wisconsin.”

“That wants consideration.”

“It seems impossible to do well here, unless one were a wild bird or a landscape painter.” (78)

For Damon as for Clym, the only way to imagine Eustacia as his wife is to imagine her elsewhere. Here, though, the heath is disqualified for scenes of courtship by its very outlandishness: a wild landscape painting devoid of human life.

These oscillations are not just imaginary attempts to escape the oppressive atmosphere of Egdon. Such moments emerge from the gathering force of a global British consciousness and authenticate cosmopolitan visions of British identity. Christoff describes this effect as “colonial object relations” in order to foreground the material histories of psychoanalytic concepts. In addition to her assessment that the “wide ranging figurations of space in this novel . . . begin and end with empire,” I am suggesting that the historically particular relationship to English wasteland I have described is responsible for this imperialist state of mind.<sup>26</sup> The waste itself becomes a tool for the incredible scope of Hardy’s characters’ cosmopolitan imaginations. In the moments before Clym and Eustacia meet for their scene of engagement, this mental tourism is displayed in an even grander capacity:

The sky was clear from verge to verge, and the moon flung her rays over the whole heath, but without sensibly lighting it, except where paths and water-courses had laid bare the white flints and glistening quartz sand, which made streaks upon the general shade. After standing awhile he stooped and felt the heather. It was dry, and he flung himself down upon the barrow, his face towards the moon, which depicted a small image of herself in each of



his eyes. . . . More than ever he longed to be in some world where personal ambition was not the only recognized form of progress—such, perhaps, as might have been the case at some time or other in the silvery globe then shining upon him. His eye travelled over the length and breadth of that distant country—over the Bay of Rainbows, the somber Sea of Crises, the Ocean of Storms, the Lake of Dreams, the vast Walled Plains, and the wondrous Ring Mountains—till he almost felt himself to be voyaging bodily through its wild scenes, standing on its hollow hills, traversing its deserts, descending its vales and old sea bottoms, or mounting to the edges of its craters. (167)

The spot on the barrow gives Clym an astral opportunity to travel the landscapes of the moon itself, “till he almost felt himself to be voyaging bodily.” Egdon Heath yokes together the distant and the local without sacrificing the particularity of the English subjective experience. By inserting a wasteland where a garden typically figures, Hardy indicates the ideological function served by landscape in the novel. In his attempt to dislodge the fantasies of national continuity promised by the landscape garden, however, he endorses an abstraction that all too easily cedes to the pressures that English nationalism exerts on the novel form.

The description of landscape is a crucial aspect of the British novel. Hardy’s focus on the wasteland in *Return of the Native* is an attempt to critique the industrial development of capitalism, champion the cultural value of rural labor, and problematize the expansion of English cosmopolitanism. At the same time, this focus on wasteland in the novel produces an abstract version of Englishness that can be imagined on a global scale. Hardy issues a challenging corrective to the obfuscating techniques of the English novel: a form indebted to the gradual eradication of common land by enclosure and the reproduction of the common in a carefully aestheticized garden. Hardy upends this tradition of misdirection by directing readers to a site of surviving common life in the wasteland. In doing so, he conceives of an aesthetic strategy for understanding the layered scalar relationships between land and environment, nation and empire, and the individual and world system. Despite the explicit anti-imperialism and trenchant sympathy for the destitute figures in his novels, the novel’s relation to enclosure nevertheless reproduces the ideological work of English capitalism. By abstracting a space with a particular history of exploitation in order to produce an aesthetic mode suited to modernity, Hardy provides a form for national identity to inhabit. In Hardy’s Egdon, the waste is not only quintessentially English; it is also a tool for imagining Englishness elsewhere—from Wisconsin to the moon.

## NOTES

1. Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, 186. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
2. Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, 223.
3. Scholars have noted the role of the environment in Hardy's scalar maneuvers. These accounts draw from Gillian Beer's now classic analysis of the impact of Darwinian thought on Hardy's representations of sexuality and gender as well as on his conception of scale in narrative. Benjamin Morgan, Jesse Oak Taylor, and Elizabeth Carolyn Miller have related Hardy's ecological thought to his concern with scale. Others, like Anna Feuerstein and Elisha Cohn, attend to the environmental ethics that underwrite Hardy's attention to nonhuman animals. Anna Burton, William Cohen, Megan Ward, and John Heaney all focus on the different ways that plant life informs Hardy's writing.
4. Williams, *The Country and the City*, 206. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
5. Marx, *Capital*, 874. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
6. Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*.
7. Nichols, *Theft Is Property*.
8. Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*.
9. Di Palma, *Wasteland*, 4.
10. John MacNeill Miller argues that the aesthetic techniques in *The Return of the Native* are not part of an ecological awareness of the natural world because they "tend to result in a unilateral view of environmental relations, one where an amorphous and increasingly horrific nature figure dominates and subordinates the individual will" ("Mischaracterizing the Environment," 152). While this serves as an important corrective to hyperbolic characterizations of Hardy's environmentalist ethos, it is also possible to read the "horrifying" aspect of nature not as an example of sublime nature appearing to "rob individual lives of significance" but rather a testament to the collective power of rural labor (166). Regardless, MacNeill makes it clear that Hardy is less interested in the "nonhuman" aspect of ecological systems, focusing more persistently on the human relations at work on the land.

11. Benjamin Morgan, in “Scale in *Tess* in Scale,” argues that Hardy’s fiction demonstrates the relative, and multiple, intersections of scale in a way that provides special applications in imagining planetary crises like climate change. While Morgan suggests that this scalar multiplicity is largely imperceptible to human experience, one aspect of the effects of Hardy’s description of the heath is to entangle human scales with others so that, while individual human plots are too “small,” the concerted force of human activity across time is relatively “large.”
12. See J. Hillis Miller in *Topographies*, who suggests that the relation between face and landscape in this comparison signifies a fundamental disjuncture between the two objects.
13. See Daniel Wright’s “Thomas Hardy’s Groundwork” for more on the frequent use of “groundwork” in Hardy’s fiction. Wright reads the opening articles of *Return of the Native* as an example of Hardy’s metaphysical conception of realism, which he argues is a problem of form and totality.
14. In his description of differential rent in *Capital Vol. III*, Marx suggests that relative surplus value can be produced not just through the technological advance of machinery but also the competition between machinery and natural resources. For example, a capitalist will continue to rent land where there is a waterfall as long as the waterfall is a more efficient method of generating power than a steam engine. Rent is still socially constructed by the relation of labor power, not some other mode of valuation. While it may seem like rent is excluded from the surplus value model of generating profit, it is still primarily determined by the relation between paid and unpaid labor time.
15. Steinlight observes that “surplus population, though structurally necessary to the novel, denotes what the protagonist by definition must refuse to be” (“Hardy’s Unnecessary Lives,” 228). Hardy’s fiction is especially dense with second wives, unexpected and illegitimate children, and redundant lovers. But the detail that really separates Hardy’s characters from earlier redundant lives in nineteenth-century fiction is “that they recognize themselves as disposable” (229).
16. Steinlight, “Hardy’s Unnecessary Lives,” 227.
17. Christoff, *Novel Relations*, 131.
18. Wallerstein, *Modern World System*, 4.

19. In addition to Raymond Williams's famous readings in *The Country and the City*, critics from Virginia Woolf to J. Hillis Miller have focused on his detailed representation of English local traditions and economic structures. See Woolf, "The Novels of Thomas Hardy"; Gatrell, *Thomas Hardy's Vision of Wessex*; Miller, *Distance and Desire*; Keith, "A Regional Approach to Hardy's Fiction."
20. In her recent book on enclosure in English fiction, Carolyn Lesjak also presses against Hardy's "identification with regional writing and a nostalgia for rural England" in order to argue that Hardy's realism of the commons "mines the past for its archival evidence and traces of another world" in order to "define a world in the thick of being privatized" in a way that resonates with the "'new enclosures' of our contemporary moment, thereby offering suggestive lines of thought for theorizing the commons today" (128, 127). See Lesjak, *The Afterlife of Enclosure*, 125–70.
21. Wallerstein, *Modern World System*, 16
22. Nichols, *Theft of Property*; Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession*.
23. Wallerstein, *Modern World System*, 27.
24. See Abravanel, "Hardy's Transatlantic Wessex."
25. Christoff, *Novel Relations*, 175.
26. Christoff, *Novel Relations*, 110.

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