

Cobbled Memory Paved Borderscapes in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

Sajoe Monica U¹, Dr. S. J. Kala²

¹Research Scholar PG & Research Department of English, Fatima College, Affiliated to Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India

Email: sajoemonica01@gmail.com

²Associate Professor & Dean of International Collaborations, PG & Research Department of English, Fatima College, Affiliated to Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India

Email : kalaalbert2oct@gmail.com

Received: 10 Jun 2026; Received in revised form: 07 Jul 2026; Accepted: 11 Jul 2026; Available online: 14 Jul 2026

©2026 The Author(s). Published by Infogain Publication. This is an open-access article under the CC BY license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Abstract— The culmination of topographical boundaries and human psyche is illuminated through interdisciplinary the concept of 'mnemonic borderscapes'. The reverberations of the borderscapes are heard in literature that reflect the life and thoughts of human beings. Writers of fiction use the physical landscapes to portray human life and its complexities. The study aims to analyse the presence of mnemonic borderscapes in Thomas Hardy's fiction, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. It attempts to identify the social distinctions of the Victorian society as a contested space where people compete for power and delineates the depiction of borderscapes as sites of trauma and grief. The study employs narrative inquiry methodology that identifies how mnemonic borderscapes channelise one's action based on the past memories. The scrutiny of Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* will foster the comprehension of the temporal nature of borderscapes that becoming inexorable components of human life.



Keywords— Boundary, landscape, memory, mnemonic borderscape, topography.

I. INTRODUCTION

Human beings considered as the advanced species of earth occupy microscopic space in its vast canvas. Identified and analysed through the relationship between themselves and the other entities inhabiting the earth, human beings have become inevitable in the study of origin of civilisations. The gradual evolution of human society has further brought out the innate bond between land and human life situating the landscape at a key position of preserving the culture of the people, pertaining to a particular topographical space. The traditional practices of people exhibiting their culture also vary based on the place they belong to. Landscapes can therefore be observed as significant markers in the individual and social life of people.

The multifarious significance of landscape in the life of human beings is reflected through the media of art and

literature. Literature uncovers the intricate layers of human existence by placing its emphasis on setting of the plot. Landscape is employed in literature as a reflection of the characters' personality as well as to identify the socio-political scenario of the historical timeline: "Landscapes are at once geographic and historical, natural and cultural, experienced and represented, and present a spatial interface between human culture and physical terrain" (Carrol, 2011, p. 12) [1]. The imagined literary landscape modelled upon real landscapes rooted in culture and history are used as essential literary tools to depict the tone of the text.

II. LANDSCAPES IN LITERATURE

Landscapes in literature, at times, become repository sites of memory that bring out an individual's nature. It serves as the backdrop of the plot knitting the characters together

with the society in which it is set. The physical terrain utilised in literature influences the actions of the characters as it reminds them of their past endeavours and their consequences. The locale thus influences their personality, while retitling the social scenario of the historical time period:

The complex of identity is connected with global histories of the movement of land masses, genes, peoples, their regimes of cultural signification, and the political strategies for resource management and control. (Tolia-Kelly, 2010, p. 6) [2]

The geographical location in some instances occupy greater importance as they steer the actions in a plot. They are also personified and presented as human individuals who possess rationale as well as emotions. Landscape also reflects the relationship between individuals in a family as well as society. Therefore, it occupies a prominent space in literatures that explore human minds.

III. VICTORIAN LANDSCAPE

The unravelling of human psyche through landscape is evident in the literature of the ancient times. Its importance is exemplified in the Romantic age when writers used natural landforms to portray the thoughts of individuals. While Romantic literature utilised topography to present the pleasantries of life, the Victorian age showcases the complexities of life through geographical landscapes. The natural landscape undergoes unrecognisable transformations while retaining its natural past in the Victorian era: "Authentic Victorian landscapes require generous grounds, a large number of plants and skilled maintenance. The practice of surrounding a house with sheared evergreen 'foundation plantings' dates to the Victorian era" (Buchanan, 2000, p. 86) [3]. The Victorian landscape depicts the chaos of industrialisation and modernisation as well as captivates the natural landscape of the Victorian classical world previous age. The structural set up of cities serves as a reflection of social groups that existed in the age

The Victorian landscape can be analysed as a reflection of the memories of the age. The influence of historical events is evident in the literature of the age. The age is marked by the transition from the rural life closely knit with nature to the urban life that is associated with industries and machinery. It is also characterised by the expansion of the British empire accelerated by sea voyages that resulted in the widespread phenomena of colonisation. The continuous changes that happen inside the boundaries of the empire and beyond it are documented by the writers of the age: "For others, a more photographically exact portrayal of place yields a greater reward often these

writers draw upon a personal topography, recreating the intimate corners of their own uniquely felt experiences" (Sutherland, 2018, p. 3) [4]. The literary history of the Victorian age engulfs various genres of literature but the genre of fiction emerges as the prominent form that captures the essence of the age. Victorian writers of fiction like Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë and George Eliot adeptly the influence of physical landscape on human memory through their works.

IV. LITERARY TAPESTRY OF THOMAS HARDY

The culmination of geographical location and human psyche is vividly depicted in the literary creations of Thomas Hardy, the frontman of Victorian fiction. Hardy's early childhood in Higher Bockhampton located in the rural parts of England attributes to his extensive use of the locale in his fiction and poems. He focusses on the hardships of the people belonging to the middle and lower classes whose lives are dictated by their positions in the society:

In his writing Hardy engages with the ideas and trends of his age: developments in science, new philosophies...the growth of a radical politics that gave expression to the striving of the working class for social equality and democracy, the struggle for a new status for women, and the effects of the First World War. (Harvey, 2003, p. 5) [5]

His fiction illustrate all the all the concerns of the Victorian age presenting a vivid picture of the social reality of the age. The most prominent fictions of Hardy include, *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1876), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895) that penetrate deep into the human perception.

Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* [6] is a picturesque depiction of the agrarian life in rural England. The story is centred around the life of Tess Durbeyfield, the eponymous character who faces a turn of events that determine the direction of her life. Hardy sets the narrative during the early phases of feminist movements in England. The scrutiny of "... Tess of the d'Urbervilles as a novel in which questions of history, geography and class are almost as emotion-laden as those involving the fate of the charismatic heroine..." (McEathron, 2013, p. 15) [7] aids in understanding the impacts of social scenario on Hardy. The fiction begins with the happy and care-free life of Tess and gradually moves forward to depict the complexities of her life. Over the course of time, she meets Mr. Alec d'Urbervilles, the son of Mrs d'Urberville whom Tess's

father mistakes to be their relative. Her bitter memories with him continues to haunt Tess and she is constantly reminded of the horrors even when she has physically moved away from that vicinity. Her emotional scars resurface when she sees Alec again after years and she attacks him fatally. Hardy thus presents the ultimate failure of social systems through *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*.

V. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hardy's works are examined in the light of many contemporary theories from varied disciplines. Geoffrey Harvey's *The Complete Critical Guide to Thomas Hardy* published in 2003 investigates Hardy's works in toto as a historical account of the Victorian age. The reflection of history in his literary works is outlined in Fred Reid's *Thomas Hardy and History* (2017) [8], where he states, "What is less widely recognised is that Hardy always regarded England's struggle with France as a source of patriotic pride" (p. 143). Michael Millgate's book titled, *Thomas Hardy, A Biography Revisited* (2023) [9] also enumerates the social scenario of the age that coloured Hardy's literary career. The bond between human and non-human entities in Hardy's fiction is depicted in Anna West's critical work titled, *Thomas Hardy and Animals* (2017) [10]. Jane L. Bownas's book titled, *Thomas Hardy and Empire: The Representation of Imperial Themes in the Work of Thomas Hardy* (2016) [11] throws light upon the colonial history of the nineteenth century.

The universality and popularity of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman* have given rise to a number of scholarly researches that look into it from a variety of perspectives. The feminist readings of the fiction such as, "Tess's Silent Cry: The Vocal Object in *Tess of the d'Urberville*" (2008) [12] by Annie Ramel also point out the signs of early feminism in it. The article titled, "Tess as a Kaleidoscope of Socially Constructed Images in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*" (2021) [13] analyses Hardy's characterisation of Tess as a woman who is bound by social restrictions. The linguistic inquiry into Hardy's fiction in the article, "Re-Creation of a Classic Novel through Transmedia Storytelling: Cross-Cultural Learning Focusing on *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*" (2024) [14] by Kwang-Soon Lee affirms his mastery over English language.

The intertwining of human memory and the division in landscape is also evident in the arena of literature. Gordon Hutner's study titled, "In the Middle: Fiction, Borders, and Class" (2001) [15] describes the significant role of borders in shaping the literature of America and Canada. The impact of borders in creating the memory of the characters is stated through Jennifer Yusin's "Beyond Nationalism: The Border, Trauma and Partition Fiction" (2011) [16].

Gerhard Genis and Melanie Moen's article titled, "War Poetry of the Angolan/Namibian Border War: Remembering Poetic Bodies through Textual Limbs" (2024) [17] brings out the association between human beings and landscape that gets reflected in literature. The role of boundaries in the formation of memory is elicited through Chikodi Adeola Olasode's "Imagined Spaces and Memory in Walcott's Poetry" (2025) [18].

VI. RESEARCH GAP

The existing literature on Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* provides insights into the multifarious analysis of the text from the perspectives of culture studies and feminism. It delves into the character of Tess Durbeyfield as a Victorian woman who is challenged by the social and cultural norms of the society. The inquiry into the narrative techniques employed by Hardy reveals the transformation in the literary form of novel. Tess's exploration of her true self is also uncovered through the analysis of the text. Similarly, the concept of mnemonic borders is explored through the lens of geographical studies that deal with the structure of landscapes. The convergence of memory and borders is observed in ancient poetry and fiction that deal with the themes of war and conquest. However, the review of the secondary sources brings to the fore, the dearth of studies that explore the presence of mnemonic borders in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*.

VII. OBJECTIVES

The present study is an attempt to identify the characteristic features of mnemonic borderscapes in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. It sets out to decipher the social distinctions that influence the choices of people in a historical period of time. It lays its emphasis on the need to contest for power in the hierarchy of society in order to establish oneself.

VIII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The inquiry is a qualitative research that concentrates on how borderscapes become the sites of trauma and grief that continue to haunt individuals through the tale of Tess. It employs narrative analysis method that deciphers how borders construct and alter the concept of memory in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. The paper thus aims to stress the temporal dimension of mnemonic borders as the memories of the past influence the actions of the present thus bringing to limelight its dynamic nature. The research begins with the omnipotent presence of mnemonic borders in the life of human beings. It

proceeds further by identifying the features of mnemonic borders and their role in constructing the social and individual identities of people in Hardy's fiction.

IX. MNEMONIC BORDERS

The term 'mnemonic' is widely employed to denote things that aid in the recovery of memory. Akin to people and materialistic things, the natural soil also plays a vital role in shaping one's experiences in the world. It also assists in the formation of an individual's perception of oneself and of the other elements that belong to the environment. The topographical borders that form integral parts of the instinctive geography also exert its influence on the human mind. Borders considered as markers of division compartmentalises memory based on the movement of an individual in the physical landform: "However, while dissonance may be harmonized through minor changes in key, the notion of borders of memory reflects that shifts within individual claims to heritage will not be sufficient to overcome the mnemonic borders staked out between different memory communities" (Boyle and Ivings, 2023, p. 11) [19]. Mnemonic borders thus serve as elements of cultural heritage that depict the uniqueness of a community of a particular geographical location.

Hardy presents the life of Tess beginning from her adolescent years to her maturation into a woman. The spectacular event of May Day dance takes place in the village of Marlott where Tess is born. The entire village assumes the sheer of the custom of 'club-walking', an annual ceremony in which the women of the place participate. The geographical space is isolated from the rest of Wessex as it is guarded by its natural boundaries:

This fertile and sheltered tract of country, in which the fields are never brown and the springs never dry, is bounded on the south by the bold chalk ridge that embraces the prominences of Hambledon Hill, Bulbarrow, Nettle-combe Tout, Dogbury, High Stoy, and Bubb Down. (p. 13). [6]

The custom of May Day dance is a celebration of welcoming spring where young women adorn themselves in white clothes inviting the season of joy with flowers. Tess also happily interacts with her friends on the day of club-walking. The village of Marlott thus becomes a symbol of cultural harmony, unique to the village and it becomes a spectacle for those who do not belong to it.

Tess reaches a dairy farm called Talbothays Dairy where she tries to rebuild her life without the influence of her past. The farm located in the Valley of the Great Dairies is described as a place that exhibits happiness and fertility through the green pastures and healthy livestock that

produce large quantities of milk. The pastoral setting of the farm is further emphasised thorough the rustic tales of Mr. Crick, the master dairy man who takes care of the farm and the songs of the milkmaids and other workers: "Songs were often resorted to in dairies hereabout as an enticement to the cows when they showed signs of withholding their usual yield; and the band of milkers at this request burst into melody..." (p. 134) [6]. The workers tell Tess how songs and instruments like harp and fiddle increase the milk production. She also listens to the story of a man named William Dewy whose fiddle calmed a raging bull. The valley that is distinct from her birthplace Marlott chronicles her life in the dairies that transforms her into a cheerful individual through the calmness it provides and through the stories and songs that praise the history of the place, people and cattle.

X. IDENTITY AT BORDERS

Borders that play a prominent role in marking the cultural festivity of a place also wield influence on individuals who practice the traditions. The identity of a person gets formed and reconstructed through their interaction with the varied components of the society. It influences their everyday activities and instils a sense of self in them. The self that gets created through borders relies on the social conditions of the specific geographical area:

... every person produces a personal version of a given situation, on the bases of material and immaterial social guidance, that one could call culture, and on the basis of the spatio/temporal conditions in which the experience takes place. (Tateo et al., 2021, p. 20) [20]

The individual identity becomes constrained by the cultural practices that limit human autonomy. The individual is thus conditioned to act in a precise way as one belongs to a certain culture. Culture is a space-bound phenomenon and therefore the locale in which a human being resides also become a determining factor for identity formation.

The initial stages of Tess's life is spent in the village of Marlott. Tess possesses a joyful demeanour that attracts everyone in the village during that period. She is portrayed by Hardy as a young girl who is just out of her childhood phase and is genial with her friends as well as the people of the village. She also takes care of her siblings when their parents are unavailable due to their chores. Tess's loving nature and her concern for the people around her get mirrored in Marlott's landscape. Hardy describes the village with striking hues that reflect the freshness and liveliness in Tess: "The atmosphere beneath is languorous, and is so tinged with azure that what artists call the middle distance partakes also of that hue, while the horizon

beyond is of the deepest ultramarine" (p. 14) [6]. Tess is filled with the dreams of her future but she is also contented with her life in Marlott with her family. She is occasionally troubled by her father's drunkenness but she does not lament over it. She takes the responsibility of her father when he comes home drunk. The countryside village of Marlott is a space that highlights Tess's character as a young girl who is trustworthy and good-humoured.

Contrary to her personality in Marlott, Tess transforms into a stoic individual when she leaves the place. Tess's father becomes obsessed with the lineage of d'Urbervilles. A stranger tells him that their family has the possibility of being associated with the knightly family of the d'Urbervilles. Mr. Durbeyfield and his wife Joan Durbeyfield send Tess to Trandridge to seek the help of the d'Urberville family. She is assaulted by Mr. Alec d'Urberville when she travels to Trandridge. The incident alters her joyful personality forcing her to withdraw herself from the society and her friends. Though she ignores all the accusations and gossips about her, she still turns into a dejected individual who isolates herself:

She knew how to hit to a hair's-breadth that moment of evening when the light and the darkness are so evenly balanced that the constraint of day and the suspense of night neutralize each other, leaving absolute mental liberty. (p. 104) [6]

She is comforted by solitude amidst the turmoil of life that are the results of prejudiced human interaction. The forest in Trantridge converts the identity of Tess from an innocent girl to a woman who is treated as impure by the community.

The Talbothays farm marks another phase in the life of Tess and her journey to the farm causes changes in her personality. She becomes more resolute and decides to move forward with her new life. She consciously displays her milking skills for Mr. Crick to notice and she also tries her best to relate cordially with her co-workers. The change in atmosphere induces the transformations in her attitude towards life. When she crosses the boundary of Trantridge, she intentionally leaves behind her gloom and desolation. The pleasant appearance of the Talbothays farm encircled with lush meadows and cattle gives purpose to her life: "It is interpretation and narrative that gives identity and it is identity that transforms space into place" (Hague and Jenkins, 2005, p. 5) [21]. Tess strives to establish her new identity in the place and also hopes for a better future for herself. She tries to overcome the guilt through her interaction with the other members of the farm. She appears as a woman filled with zeal for success within the periphery of the dairy farm.

XI. DIVISIONS OF POWER

The enclosed space with human beings belonging to different strata of society gets further divided due to the difference in their social position. The dissimilarities are the results of the uneven distribution of power among individuals. This disparity initiates the struggle for power in those regions:

The ways in which borders are constructed and their role in the production of meanings and values have been questioned in relation to a range of areas: crucially, the constitution of fields of knowledge, the establishment of meanings as truths, the composition of the human subject and the workings of power. (Altink and Weldon, 2010, p. 5) [22]

The power is analysed through the economic prosperity, education, social rank and also through the gender of individuals. The individuals who exercise the power do not acknowledge the inequality as they are in the privileged position. However, the majority of population, the common folk, do not enjoy the same rights as the others. This polarity causes conflict between the two groups as they fight with each other to uphold their equal access to power.

The mansion of the d'Urbervilles known as 'The Slope' is located in Trantridge and it represents the wealth of the family. Tess's house in Marlott, Hardy's pictorial representation of the Victorian peasants, symbolises their continued strife in grappling with poverty. When Tess leaves Marlott and arrives at the d'Urberville's residence, she understands the unfathomable fissure between both the families. The house of the d'Urbervilles exhibits sheer extravagance, that she has never seen in Marlott and she calls it a house built for enjoyment: "Everything looked like money-like the last coin issued from the Mint. The stables, partly screened by Austrian pines and evergreen oaks, and fitted with very late appliance, were as dignified as Chapels-of-Ease" (p. 43) [6]. She begins to comprehend her mother, Joan Durbeyfield's urge to claim their d'Urberville lineage. Though she does not align with the ideologies of her mother, she visits the d'Urbervilles and gets employed at their farm. The distinct boundary between the two families is re-affirmed through Mrs. d'Urberville's enticing job offer to work in their farm.

Hardy distinctly projects the supremacy of the patriarchal society of the Victorian age that suppresses the voice of women. Mr. Alec d'Urberville, the sole heir of the family, takes up the role of an employer and manages the finances while his mother becomes an observer who subserviently approves all his actions. His interactions with Tess and his role in employing her reveal his authority as a man: "Gender interacts with nationality, ethnicity, income, and

other factors in ways that illuminate comprehensive coverage of power in space" (Staudt, 2018, p. 3) [23]. When Tess leaves Marlott and travels to Trantridge, the boundary of the d'Urbervilles, Alec becomes empowered through his masculine identity. He attempts to outsmart Tess by teasing her when she asks him to drive the cart slow. Alec, unmindful of her request, continues to drive fast instilling fear in her. Though Tess is perturbed by his condescending demeanour, she remains composed throughout their journey in the forest. Hardy projects her insecurity through her subdued reactions to Alec's behaviour.

XII. BORDERSCAPES AS SITES OF TRAUMA

The existence of power struggles within the bounds of society is beneficial to one at the expense of the other. The profited group cherishes the power of victory and rejoices over it while the other group gets dominated and is suppressed due to the divide in the social structure. When the rights of individuals are violated in a geographical location, it becomes the locus of the trauma as they are haunted by the memories of the depravity: "The trauma crosses a topographical border between the body and its outside, or a symbolic border between the psyche and its outside" (Schimanski, 2019, p. 41) [24]. The geographically encompassed space becomes the memory site of grief as well as trauma when there is prolonged suppression. The geographical location constantly triggers the past traumatic memories, forcing people to flee from their recurrent memories. The recurrence of bitter memories within the bounds of a locale emphasises the role of borders in shaping human memory.

Tess's pleasant memories in Marlott are juxtaposed with her journey to the market with her brother Andrews. They leave at night on the wagon drawn by the horse named Prince that she cherishes. Tess sees how Prince struggles to pull the cart over the slopes with no light but she continues to tread on as they need to reach their destination earlier. When the mailcart approaches near their cart, Tess notices that Prince is injured by it: "The pointed shaft of the cart had entered the breast of the unhappy Prince like a sword, and from the wound his life's blood was spouting in a stream, and falling with a hiss into the road" (p. 36) [6]. Tess becomes startled by the accident and becomes numb. When she recovers from it, she rushes to Prince and presses her hands against his wounds. She watches him fight for his life and blames herself for the situation. The road located on the outskirts of Marlott, past the town of Stourcastle, turns to be her site of grief. The pain of Prince's death gets ingrained in her memory and it also gets transformed into guilt that foreshadows her life.

The forest of Chase is a pivotal topography that determines the turn of events in Tess's life. Tess's mother persuades her to work in the d'Urberville's farm as it will benefit their family economically and improve their social position. Alec constantly tries to get closer to Tess during their travel to Trantridge through the woods. However, Tess becomes worried by his advances and even voices her discomfort. Alec ignores her resistance and assaults her while she rests under a tree in The Chase. "Above them rose the primeval yews and oaks of The Chase, in which were poised gentle roosting birds in their last nap; and around them the hopping rabbits and hares" (p. 88). The dense forest of the Chase becomes a locus of trauma that creates lasting impacts on Tess. The horrifying memories of the incident that happens in the place, continues to impact her actions throughout the course of the fiction. Tess's emotional pain supersedes her physical pain and she feels that her life is paused after the occurrence.

The churchyard of Marlott also becomes a borderscape that holds in Tess's desperation as a mother. Being at the periphery of Marlott, it transitions into a borderscape that distinguishes past from the present. She begins to work in a farm to support herself and the child. The people who work with her comment on how her attitude towards the child has gradually evolved. They discuss how she was ignorant to the needs of the child in the beginning and how she adores him in the present. However, the child becomes ill and Tess senses the impending hazard. She watches her son die a slow death and it shatters her. She calls for a parson in a frenzied way as she wants to christen her child. Her father refuses to let the parson in as he feels that his social position could be harmed by the child's existence. She takes him to the churchyard and buries him herself as the parson refuses to perform the last rites stating that he has not been christened. She also names him Sorrow reflecting the pains that he has faced during his short time on earth. Tess contemplates about her circumstance of not being able to grieve for her child due to the restrictions of society and mourns for him at the churchyard in the night, metamorphosing the churchyard into a space that stifles her emotions.

XIII. CONSTRUCTION OF MEMORY

The borders also have the potential to influence and alter the memories of individuals. A particular enclosure becomes the birthplace of human sentiments and also constructs memories associated with it. The incident that takes place at a specific location gets stored in the mind of an individual. The individual is reminded of it whenever he visits the place and other human beings who are a part of it. The geographical space can therefore be seen as the origin of memories that impact individuals and their

actions. The individuals' actions in the present are conditioned by the memories of a similar past event: "Due to memories and changing experiences, place-based narratives of the past exist and are (re)created for the present and future. Narratives, places and memory have their geography in the cultural and social landscapes" (O'Reilly, 2020, p. 94) [25]. The past memory facilitates in the creation of a new memory in the present due to its continuing influence determined by the individuals and the borderscapes.

Tess's social identity is highly impacted by the boundaries of gender and class. The conditioning of women in the Victorian age that blinded them and confined them within the domestic sphere is underscored through Tess's life. The character of Tess accentuates the hardships of rural women who are not treated on par with men. The integrity of Tess is questioned and she is considered as a blemished woman after Alec's sexual assault on her, while Alec is not held accountable for his wrongdoings. This gender divide gets embedded in her memory and it becomes a hurdle in her relationship with Angel Clare:

And as such she compared him with herself; and at every discovery of the abundance of his illuminations, of the immense distance between her own poor mental standpoint and the unmeasurable, Andean altitude of his, she became quite dejected, humiliated, dis-heartened.... (pp. 151-152) [6]

Her earlier encounters with Alec d'Urberville direct her present actions and she becomes more cautious of the gender stereotypes ascribed by the Victorian society.

Tess's traumatic experiences with Alec can be analysed through the power dynamics that exists between them. Her haunting memories of the power struggle experienced at Trantridge surfaces time and again during her stay with Angel Clare, only to lead on to their separation. After her separation from Angel, she relocates to a farm in Flintcomb-Ash which is dry with sparse vegetation. The deserted land becomes a borderscape that distinguishes her present life with her happy days at the Talbothays farm. The arid atmosphere symbolises her misfortunes and it is intensified by the arrival of Alec d'Urberville. The traumas and apprehensions of Tess reappear with his return. Her afflictions reach their pinnacle when she discovers through Mrs. Brooks, the lady who takes care of the mansion of The Heron, that Angel visited the mansion and left the place after hearing about Alec's presence. The outburst of Tess's anger can be deciphered through the postulates of Charles Manda (2019) [27], a psychological counsellor who identifies the underlying reasons that result in the violent behaviours of traumatised individuals. He states that, "They cannot comprehend why the event happened

and why it happened to them. These thoughts can result in intense anger" (p. 53). Tess's suppressed anger gets manifested in her act of killing Alec. The mansion, The Heron, reminds her of her journey with Alec through the forest when she felt powerless. She tries to reclaim her power and assert her individual freedom through the murder of Alec d'Urberville.

The memories of borderscapes are not limited to the specific area of land. They are rather transitional in nature and are spread across time. The temporal dimension of mnemonic borders unearths how an event transgresses its place of origin and affects the individuals involved in it. It gets manifested even in the daily routine of the people as the memory is subconsciously stored by the brain. The intermingling of borders and memory becomes inevitable in the life of human beings as,

...the entanglement of forced movement and memory show that, rather than tacitly implying a simple temporal framing of 'before' and 'after', the mnemonic practices of exile imply a complex 'everydayness' of shifting temporalities in the course of negotiating pasts, presents and futures between and across generations. (Tosic and Palmberger, 2010, pp. 7-8) [28]

The act of remembering does not occur as a conscious act but as an involuntary process when the memory carries dense emotions that has caused psychological pains. The lasting span of memories further exemplifies the necessity to delve into temporality of borders to evaluate the human psyche.

Tess meets Angel Clare again at the Talbothays dairy farm. She remembers their brief encounter at the May Day dance and desires to talk to him initially. Her eagerness is neutralised by her memories of Alec, the retributions of the people of her village and the loss of her child. Her psychological boundary inhibits her to act upon her vehemence when Angel proposes to marry her. Though she foresees a happy life together with Angel, the guilt and remorse from her past obstructs her from surging ahead: "The struggle was so fearful: her own heart was so strongly on the side of his—two ardent hearts against one poor little conscience—that she tried to fortify her resolution by every means in her power" (pp. 212-213) [6]. She feels guilty about not revealing her past to him and continuously ruminates over confessing it to him. This thought leads her to wall in all her desires as she anticipates that the shadows of her past life may follow her into the present.

XIV. CONCLUSION

The close inquiry into Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* provides insights into mnemonic borderscapes that re-establish the profound link between natural terrain and social life. The study unfolds the features of mnemonic borderscapes that aid in the comprehension of human behaviour. It elucidates the social distinctions that limit the self of the individuals and place them in a contested space where the struggle for power never ceases. The unending conflict for power that creates sites of trauma and grief is disclosed through the scrutiny of Tess's character.

The slithering of memories from the trauma sites into the present depicted by Hardy decodes how the borders direct the concurrent human actions. The frequent oscillation of Tess's memories draws attention to the dynamicity of borderscapes. The time-transcending nature of the mnemonic borders further affirms its universality. The pre-eminent nature of the mnemonic borderscapes is ineluctable in fostering the social interaction in the contemporary world where individuals traverse through visible demarcation of land and invisible dissections of mind.

REFERENCES

- [1] Carroll, J. S. (2011). *Landscape in children's literature*. Routledge.
- [2] Tolia-Kelly, D. P. (2010). *Landscape, race and memory: Material Ecologies of Citizenship*. Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- [3] Buchanan, R. (2000). *Taylor's master guide to landscaping*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- [4] Sutherland, J. (2018). *Literary landscapes: Charting the Worlds of Classic Literature*. Black Dog & Leventhal.
- [5] Harvey, G. (2003). *The complete critical guide to Thomas Hardy*. Psychology Press.
- [6] Hardy, T. (2025). *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A pure woman*. Penguin Books.
- [7] McEathron, S. (2013). *Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Routledge study guide and sourcebook*. Routledge.
- [8] Reid, F. (2017). *Thomas Hardy and history*. Springer.
- [9] Millgate, M. (2023). *Thomas Hardy, a biography revisited*. Oxford University Press.
- [10] West, A. (2017). *Thomas Hardy and animals*. Cambridge University Press.
- [11] Bownas, J. L. (2016). *Thomas Hardy and Empire: The Representation of Imperial Themes in the Work of Thomas Hardy*. Routledge.
- [12] Ramel, A. (2008). Tess's silent cry: The vocal object in Tess of the d'Urbervilles. *English Text Construction*. 1. pp. 113 - 124 <https://doi.org/10.1075/etc.1.1.09ram>
- [13] Bukhari, R., Asgher, T., & Parveen, S. (2021). Tess as a Kaleidoscope of Socially Constructed Images in Tess of the d'Urbervilles. *Sir Syed Journal of Education & Social Research (SJESR)*. 4. pp. 37-43. [https://doi.org/10.36902/sjesr-vol4-iss1-2021\(37-43\)](https://doi.org/10.36902/sjesr-vol4-iss1-2021(37-43))
- [14] Lee, K.-S. (2024). Re-Creation of a Classic Novel through Transmedia Storytelling : Cross-Cultural Learning Focusing on Tess of the d'Urbervilles. *The Korean Association of General Education*. 18. pp. 195-211. <https://doi.org/10.46392/kjge.2024.18.5.195>
- [15] Hutner, G. (2001). In the Middle: Fiction, Borders, and Class. *CR: The New Centennial Review*. 1. pp. 89-108. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ncr.2003.0049>
- [16] Yusin, J. (2011). Beyond nationalism: The border, trauma and Partition fiction. *Thesis Eleven*. 105. pp. 23-34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513611400390>
- [17] Genis, G. & Moen, M. (2024). War Poetry of the Angolan/Namibian Border War: Re-membering Poetic Bodies through Textual Limbs. *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa*. 36. pp. 24-39. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1013929X.2024.2325766>
- [18] Olasode, C. (2025). Imagined spaces and memory in Walcott's poetry. *UC Journal: ELT, Linguistics and Literature Journal*. 6. pp. 147-165. <https://doi.org/10.24071/uc.v6i2.11758>
- [19] Boyle, E., & Ivings, S. (2023). Introduction: Heritage sites and borders of memory. In E. Boyle & S. Ivings (Eds.), *Heritage, contested sites, and borders of memory in the Asia Pacific* (pp. 1-27). BRILL.
- [20] Tateo, L., Nugin, R., Jones, A., Marsico, G., & Palang, H. (2021). Cities of senses: Visible and invisible borders in public spaces. In K. Kullasepp & G. Marsico (Eds.), *Identity at the borders and between the borders* (pp. 7-22). Springer Nature.
- [21] Hague, C., & Jenkins, P. (2005). *Place identity, participation and planning*. Psychology Press.
- [22] Altink, H., & Chris, Weedon. (2010). Introduction. In J. Aaron, H. Altink, & C. Weedon (Eds.), *Gendering border studies* (pp. 1-18). University of Wales Press.
- [23] Staudt, K. A. (2018). *Border politics in a global era: Comparative Perspectives*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- [24] Schimanski, J. (2019). Migratory Angels: The Political aesthetics of Border Trauma. In K. Horsti (Ed.), *The politics of public memories of forced migration and bordering in Europe* (pp. 37-52). Springer Nature.
- [25] O'Reilly, G. (2020). *Places of memory and legacies in an age of insecurities and globalization*. Springer Nature.
- [26] Manda, C. B. (2019). *Re-authoring life narratives after trauma: A holistic narrative model of care*. AOSIS.
- [27] Palmberger, M., & Tošić, J. (2017). *Memories on the move: Experiencing mobility, rethinking the past*. Springer.