Subverting the Anthropocene and Capitalocene in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* while heading towards proto-Symbiocene

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Abstract: Hardy's novel combines various temporal layers, the nostalgia of the fleeting past (the warm, idyllic natural landscape), the present when the author ponders over the demise of the traditional ecosystem and the transformation of his own self, and the temporality of "afterwards" (Lanone 2022), the future in which he will not participate and will not watch over nature and its idyllic atmosphere.This survey applies Glenn Albrecht's notions of solastalgia, terraphthora and terranascia (2019), three neologisms which he invented to define the psychosocial effects of environmental degradation, to the analysis of Thomas Hardy's *Tess*. Various scenes from this novel present either pessimistically or nostalgically the social and environmental consequences of industrialization. Each of these fragments criticizes the destructiveness Hardy observed in the Wessex landscape, as well as the spiritual, moral and economic changes brought about by this degradation, or provides the remedies to address these issues. While nowadays Hardy's views may be viewed as outdated, we can learn from his recognition of ecocidal dangers which were evident more than a century ago, thus we can presume the Victorian writer was heading towards the proto-Symbiocene.

Keywords: Anthropocentric, Capitalocene, solastalgia, Symbiocene, ecofeminism

Introduction

The Anthropocene is a term used in defining an era in which the humans have been designated as the ones who forcibly dominate earth and greatly influence the bio-geophysical processes. This concept also defines a new geological epoch in Earth Sciences whose effects (climate change, biodiversity loss, mass extinction of fauna and flora, the presence of microplastics in various ecosystems) have impacted the

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planetary system (Crutzen & Stoermer 2000, 17-18). Academic interest in the Anthropocene has been intensified by the growing awareness of its impact in the public sphere, thus transforming this term into a socially and politically constructed idea which once again stresses upon long-standing socio-economic inequalities.

However, we concur with Donna Haraway (2011) and Jason Moore's proposal (2015) of considering the Capitalocene as the geohistorical epoch during which capitalism was a central element in the making of the climate crisis. The conceptual use of Capitalocene originates with Andreas Malm (Moore 2017, 237-279) who agrees with Karl Marx that capitalism with its imperative accumulation of capital pushes towards the re-shaping of various environments and towards the exploitation of both humans and the natural world, transforming them into 'cheap' resources. After studying the Capitalocene thesis, we consider that the expansion of capitalism forced the degradation of the environment and the commodification of land and labour for capital accumulation. The power structures specific for the Capitalocene also emphasize "the appropriation of unpaid work/energy delivered by women, nature, colonies" (Ibid, 247) which invites us to offer an ecofeminist reading of literature.

The ecofeminist reading of different novels underlines the way in which women and animals/ nature suffer more severely than men the ecological catastrophes, the destruction caused by industrialization, the effects of developing economies, of patriarchal cultures. Ecofeminism is a term coined in 1974 by the French feminist Françoise D'Eaubonne in her book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* and later developed by Greta Gaard in her essay "New Directions for Ecofeminism" (Gaard 2010, 643-665) that revealed how men, due to their superior position in patriarchal societies, are responsible for the women's oppression and for the destruction of nature. The newly developed environmental ethics has led to casting a light on several novels regardless of the biological sex of the authors.

Despite being a male author, Thomas Hardy's work can be subjected to an ecofeminist reading due to his interest in environmentalism, in conservating the natural landscape and local communities. The prevailing patriarchy and capitalist development of the Victorian society specific to the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene threatened the heroine (Tess), but also the animals and the land. Patriarchy by advocating only for the rights of males has "led to the degradation of nature land and animals along with the

marginalisation of groups including but not limited to women, children and people of colour" (Regan 2023). Moreover, capitalism aggravated the women's oppression, as it was only interested in getting productivity at any cost; women were considered weak because many of their attributes were not valued by the pragmatic society and their apparent 'worthlessness' subjugated women even more and disproportionated the women's rights in society. A key concept of the Capitalocene is the 'cheap nature' which defines the process through which natural elements (water, earth, forests, animals) and some categories of humans are constantly exploited, devaluated and degraded so that they become more profitable for the capitalist expansion.

According to Richard Kerridge, Hardy's works employ a type of ecocriticism which is not necessarily preoccupied with an abrupt withdrawal from society, but more with nature writing (Kerridge 2001, 126). However, Anna West (2016), Peggy Blin-Cordon (2016, 1) and Annie Ramel (2015, 33) emphasize Thomas Hardy's concern for animals, for the close relationship between animals and women, insisting on the author's repetitive attempts at providing a voice for these vulnerable beings that were often silenced or given just a strangled voice. Besides his interest in the conservation of species, rather than adopting a sense of anthropomorphism (the projection of human feelings on the nonhumans), Hardy implies that humans imitate the animals' violence; however, animals kill to survive, but men's killing turns into slaughter which endangers the biosphere. Furthermore, the author endows certain objects (steam engine machineries) with hyperpowers that appear to threaten both the idyllic landscape (like Talbothays dairy farm) and the female body (as it happens at Flintcomb Ash).

Subverting the Anthropocene and Capitalocene through an ecofeminist reading

The ecological dimension of Hardy's work emerges in his attempts of rejecting the humans' central position in nature (the Anthropocene), thus forcing his readers to re-evaluate the status of non-human beings. Hardy's protagonists are known for their strong empathy for the suffering of animals. Both Anna Feuerstein (2018) and Marie Bertrand (2022) sensed how Thomas Hardy "encouraged more equality between animals and humans" and made his characters sympathize with the animal condition: this would be the reason for which Tess described

Prince's (the horse's) killing as a murder, blaming herself for falling asleep, though it was not her responsibility to take the bee-hives to town – it was her father's carelessness and alcohol addiction; later, when she kills animals again, the writer underlines the pheasants' miserable state – having been hunted down and wounded by hunters in the forest – so, the birds were practically offered mercy by Tess, thus the woman is absolved of murder again. These episodes make Hardy an advocate for a better treatment of animals making their killing "the origin of crises or plot twists" (Blin-Cordon 2016, 2), rather than showing his ecocritical perspective through a type of anthropomorphism found in fables, where this was meant to serve for moral purpose. Tess is continuously defined as "a wholly organic character whose consciousness and body were born from the earth, as an early fictitious spokesperson for posthumanist thought" (Ibidem) as it can be seen in:

> she could answer no more than a bare affirmative, so great was the emotion aroused in her at the thought of going through the world with him as his own familiar friend. Her feelings almost filled her ears like a babble of waves and surged up to her eyes. (Hardy 1965, 194),

although her nicknames – "genuine daughter of nature" as Angel calls her (Hardy 1965, 120) or "a child of the soil" as her mother thinks of her (Ibid, 369) – indicate how strongly her body is embedded in the natural landscape, making Marie Bertrand believe that "she was not simply born from but made of" nature (Bertrand 2022).

Based on these phrases with which Thomas Hardy defines Tess' connection to nature, Md. Nuruzzaman (2017, 154) calls the heroine "the other self of nature" because each time Tess attempts to start fresh after every tragic incident in her life, she somehow fails because of the Anthropocene's harsh treatment of her: after several misfortunes (Prince's death, Tess' seduction by Alec D'Urbervilles, her son's birth and death, her deception by Angel Clare, the forced move from her childhood home), the human beings are the ones who prevent her from evolving. Moreover, Tess, as a human being, never tries to control nature, consequently, the ecofeminist reading of the novel is based on how the heroine struggles to survive the harsh situations that are not her or nature's doings, this suggesting that Tess is a victim of the Capitalocene. The woman's oppressors are the same abusers who control and colonize nature, therefore one can "see Tess and nature as a surrogate of each other" (Ibidem).

We concur with Eithne Henson (2011, 127) that "Hardy's landscapes are inescapably gendered" especially when one reads fragments like this:

> But those of the other sex were the most interesting of this company of binders, by reason of the charm which is acquired by woman when she becomes part and parcel of outdoor nature, and is not merely an object set down therein as at ordinary times. A field-man is a personality afield; a field-woman is a portion of the field; she has somehow lost her own margin, imbibed the essence of her surrounding, and assimilated herself with it. (Hardy 1965, 87–88)

The writer emphasizes the clear difference between the man and the woman and how they both relate to the environment; if a field man can preserve his individuality, this is not the case of a field woman who loses it and is assimilated in the field she is working on. By losing her individuality, the woman becomes a mere object which can be exploited by men just like the field itself. The patriarchal mindset objectifies the female body, abuses it and never allows it to evolve into a whole human being. Her frequent embedment into the Wessex soil makes Tess a sure victim of the male characters who threaten, abuse and deceive her, thus stifling her and allowing her no other option than letting her womanhood/femininity be absorbed by the natural world.

Besides destroying the landscape, the mechanized agriculture is depicted by Hardy as a patriarchal figure that tortures the female body, too:

> barely visible was the red tyrant that the women had come to serve—a timber-framed construction, with straps and wheels appertaining—the threshing-machine which, whilst it was going, kept up a despotic demand upon the endurance of their muscles and nerves. (Hardy 1965, 269)

Though the scientific progress specific for industrialization was meant to help women-workers and reduce their effort, at Flintcomb-Ash, this machine produces the opposite effects. "The inexorable wheel continuing to spin" (Ibid, 270) refers not only to the machine components, but it could also symbolize the hastened passing of time in capitalism, when workers are no longer treated as human beings, but as tools, as accessories. Women "serve" a "despotic", a "tyrant" whose demands put pressure on their bodies, shortening their lunch break because the machine's endless consumption of stacks of straw does not allow them to leave their positions: "A hasty lunch was eaten as they stood, without leaving their positions, and then another couple of hours

brought them near to dinner-time" (Hardy 1965, 270) and because Farmer Groby "insisted upon their being on the spot thus early to get the job over, if possible, by the end of the day" (Ibid, 269). Both man and machine demand the women to serve their purpose, to get the work done as quickly as possible so that the Capitalocene should accumulate the necessary profit out of these 'cheap resources': "For some probably economical reason it was usually a woman who was chosen for this particular duty" (Ibid, 271). The women are required not only "the endurance of their muscles", but also of their nerves as "the penetrating hum of the thresher thrilled to the very marrow all who were near the revolving wire-cage" (Ibid, 270), trying to control body and mind, by keeping both constantly focused on what the threshing-machine demands from the female workers.

On Farmer Groby's personal orders, Tess is placed in the most difficult position – on the platform of the threshing machine to untie the sheaves of corn handed on to her by other people: "It was the ceaselessness of the work which tried her so severely, and began to make her wish that she had never come to Flintcomb-Ash." (Ibid, 271). If other women, like Marian or Izz,

> could stop to drink ale or cold tea, to exchange a few gossiping remarks while they wiped their faces or cleared the fragments of straw and husk from their clothing; for Tess there was no respite; for, as the drum never stopped, the man who fed it could not stop, and she, who had to supply the man with untied sheaves, could not stop either. (Hardy 1965, 271)

Moreover, Farmer Groby objected to Tess being replaced by other women, thus, it becomes quite evident that the man used the machine to entrap the female body and to punish Tess for eluding his sexual harassment. For not accepting her body to be touched by Farmer Groby, Tess must accept the ceaseless shaking of the machine, its noise and smoke. So, the machine abuses the female body instead of the lecherous man, and agriculture becomes an inhuman activity for both the land and the women.

Furthermore, the "red tyrant" (as the threshing machine is called) is controlled by an engineer who "serves only fire and smoke" (Ibid, 270) and is not interested in being a part of the agricultural world: "hardly perceiving the scenes around him, and caring for them not at all" (Ibid, 271). He does not want any "intercourse with the natives" (Ibid, 270) or "the autochthonous idlers" (Ibid, 271) and has come to this village to "discompose its aborigenes" (Ibid, 269). This kind of behaviour and

the use of such terms remind us of colonization and foreground Thomas Hardy's proto-ecofeminist attempt to show how the Capitalocene man colonizes both the land and the woman's body. The engineer displays the mindset of a white supremacist who abuses the land for the sake of productivity, who scorns the natives out of colonial purpose, and who subjugates the women's body with the help of the machine he steers. Unknowingly, the engineer becomes Farmer Groby's accomplice in his sexual harassment, thus helping another man to colonize the woman's body. Groby's gesture of selecting Tess for the most difficult tasks comes as his punishment for her because she resisted his sexual harassment on the road to Flintcomb-Ash. To further abuse the woman's body and mind, the author re-introduces Alec D'Urbervilles in the text exactly when the female body is plagued by the endless shaking of the threshing machine. Consequently, the patriarchal Anthropocene dominates and harms the heroine through sexual harassment, as well as through agricultural work, thus allowing us an ecofeminist reading.

Hardy's Proto-Symbiocene inclinations

As Thomas Hardy is seen as having a rather sceptic view on the progress of science and technology of the 19th century, he signals the irreversible changes caused by the man's invasive practices during the Anthropocene. If in the early stages of the novel, Wessex seems unaffected by modern science and technology, and "natives are happy with their pagan mindset, poverty and simple way of living" (Blin-Cordon 2016), later the new machines brought in the village disturb the rural inhabitants because this new technology forced them to change their lives and ruined their harmonious relation to nature. Hardy's men prove their inability to foresee the consequences of their actions, or to feel the pain they inflict on others (non-humans or women). Therefore, he directs the readers' attention to the fauna and flora because he desperately wants the readers to observe more carefully the ecosystem which deserves to be preserved, and which includes humans as considerate collaborators, not as hubristic landowners. The novel presents itself as "a performative wake-up call" (Lanone 2022).

The Symbiocene is a conceptual framework in philosophy, coined by Australian environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht (2019, 20-33) used to define an envisioned future era where humans and non-humans (particularly fauna and flora) will be living in a balanced

relationship as companions rather than indulging in the former power structures as colonizer – colonized or exploiter – exploited. The word derived from the Greek "symbiosis" (living together) and "-cene" (the geologists suggest nowadays that this suffix derived from the word "new" should indicate the recent geological eras) means the reintegration of human deeds or activity into the natural world and natural processes. This future geological epoch rejects the Anthropocene with its extractive, exploitative and disruptive characteristics and focuses on regenerative practices and on the co-existence and co-evolution of the human and the natural world meant to ensure a long-term viability. In Thomas Hardy's novel, we can trace the principles of symbiosis based on the mutually beneficial relations that can be established between the humans and other forms of life, consequently, his work can be considered proto-Symbiocene. By offering an ecofeminist reading of *Tess*, we also intend a profound conceptual shift from the male dominance and human exploitation of the natural resources to a model of shared existence, suffering, reciprocity. Hardy's proto-Symbiocene is marked by his rejection of the pre-industrial past, by a practical integration of machines and humans within natural systems for mutual benefits and with deep consideration for the environment.

Talbothays represents the pastoral idyllic world of Wessex which Hardy was so fond of, though not neglecting the ordinary work from a dairy farm. The readers can sense the writer's solastalgia when he depicts this space pervaded by a sense of togetherness, bringing humans and animals together, heading to a Symbiocene-like interconnectedness. This is a space where the Anthropocene is weaker because Dairyman Crick is presented as a gentle patriarch, and the farm functions as an organic microcosm, as close-knit community. The sensory images employed either to ooze eroticism or to share the readers certain annoying details of daily life are meant to emphasize the direct and strong connection between nature and certain characters. For instance, the dairymaids live, work and sleep with "the smell of the cheeses in the adjoining cheeseloft, and the measured dripping of the whey from the wrings downstairs" (Hardy 1965, 96). Furthermore, the male author depicts Tess with the attributes used for elegant ladies, though she is just a dairymaid, engulfed in the natural world: while milking the cows, Tess is seen by Angel like "a cameo cut from the dun background of the cow" (Ibid, 126). Furthermore, the activity of milking – though a process where milk is just a commodity and the

dairymaids strive to produce more – in Tess' hands transforms into a tactile metaphor meant to indicate the rhythmicity of the work: she presses "the udders so gently as to be a rhythmic pulsation only, as if they were obeying a reflex stimulus, like a beating heart" (Ibid, 126–27). In the Symbiocene of Hardy's Wessex, human actions or emotions nurtured by humans are repositioned in a special relationship with all living beings to enhance mutual interdependence, or mutual affinity; thus, it comes as no surprise that Angel woos Tess "at the cow's side, at skimmings, butter-makings, cheese-makings, among broody poultry, among farrowing pigs—as no milkmaid was ever wooed before by such a man" (Ibid, 153). Human development will not harm the other species and will include nature every step on the way, without insisting upon pragmatic activities: the cows are "maddened by the gad-fly" (Ibid, 126) and during the hot summer, the flies "in the kitchen were lazy, teasing, and familiar, crawling about in unwonted places, on the floor, into the drawers, and over the backs of the milkmaids' hands" (Ibidem). We figure Tess' life at Talbothays as a proto-Symbiocene experience as the text insists upon the farm's restorative quality: the heroine's body is rejuvenated, gains vigour and energy and is attuned to the blooming summer.

Tess' rootedness in the Wessex soil is further presented when she sees "the surrounding hills […] as personal to her as […] her relatives" (Hardy 1965, 37), consequently her relation to nature transforms the environment into one of her family members which evolves into "deep compassion and care for the whole nature" (Vakoch & Castrillon 2014, 131). Later, she is compared to a replanted tree, this organic metaphor being meant to root Tess even further in the Wessex soil and blur the boundary between the human identity and the flora:

> she was, for one thing, physically and mentally suited among these new surroundings. The sapling which had rooted down to a poisonous stratum on the spot of its sowing had been transplanted to a deeper soil (Hardy 1965, 129).

Even Tess' sexual abuse by Alec D'Urbervilles is also depicted with an agricultural metaphor: "Tess's passing corporeal blight had been her mental harvest" (Ibid, 124), which indicates that she draws her energy, her experience or her force from nature or soil. The woman's traumatic sexual intercourse and the subsequent pregnancy are translated in the soil being violated by the mechanized agriculture and the ulterior crop being harvested after a few months. This ecocritical perspective (partly

ecofeminist) comes as a plea for the fragile ecosystem on the side of the road that was destroyed by motorcars or other machineries used in agriculture.

After each episode of harassment by various men, Tess finds refuge in nature and decides to disguise herself so that she should not stand out at all. Wearing old, rugged clothes and cutting off her eyebrows, Tess intends to minimize her sex-appeal so that she should be in harmony with the environment:

> Thus Tess walks on; a figure which is part of the landscape; a field-woman pure and simple, in winter guise; a gray serge cape, a red woollen cravat, a stuff skirt covered by a whitey brown rough wrapper, and buff-leather gloves. (Hardy 1965, 280)

The landscape is "pure and simple" (Ibid, 280) in winter (when covered with snow), and this is what Tess wants others to believe about her; she does not thrive for a different status – she intends to share the position with the non-humans. This is her new attempt to enter the Symbiocene, to foster a close relationship to nature. In conclusion, the natural world seems to objectify a woman and to annul her individuality as much as the patriarchal society does. Yet, the natural surroundings underline even more that women, by being treated like the non-humans, in the same abusive way, are clearly perceived as non-men.

To navigate the subversion of the Anthropocene and the transition towards a possible proto-Symbiocene, we resort to Albrecht's (2005, 41-55) concepts such as solastalgia, terraphthora and terranascia. When we connected Glenn Albrecht's and Thomas Hardy's contribution to the environmental anthropology, we intended to demonstrate how a philosopher and a Victorian writer place the human emotions at the centre of the environment assessment. We think that both provided important critiques in the environmental discourse, as well as a semiotic framework that directly links the human psyche and emotions to the ecological conditions. When analysing Thomas Hardy's work, we resorted to Albrecht's development of a lexicon designed for psychoterratic states. The term "psychoterratic" was coined by Glenn Albrecht who wanted to find a name for the emotions one feels when one witnesses the degradation of nature be it on a minor or a global scale (Quarum 2020, 89). The term literally signifies "earth psyche" being formed of the Greek "psycho" (psyche) and the Latin "terra" (earth). On a different level, both Albrecht and Hardy felt

that the Anglophone world needed to express the emotions experienced in the human-nature relationship in an era of huge ecological changes. We consider that Albrecht's neologisms were designed to fill the void sensed by Thomas Hardy when he wanted to express his characters' experiences and emotions regarding various environmental issues. We think that Thomas Hardy intended to transform his private anxiety concerning the degradation of nature into a public concern, thereby endowing his characters with solastalgia and inspiring his readers to collective actions to protect nature.

Solastalgia

According to Glenn Albrecht (2005, 41-55), solastalgia is "a feeling of desolation or melancholia about the emplaced and lived experience of the chronic deterioration of a loved home environment". So, taking into consideration this definition, we recognize Tess' homesickness, while she is in comfortable places, but still not at home; for instance, the sense of familiarity and safety from Marlott is destroyed when she leaves this place. After Prince is killed, the whole atmosphere from her home is ruined, and comfort is lost. It is also the moment when solace is lost, as she is aware of her parents' inability to properly provide for the whole family. After coming back from Trantridge, when Tess is pregnant with Alec's child, Marlott instils in her a sense of isolation, of powerlessness because she senses the destruction of the rural Wessex and of her idyllic past: she no longer fits the image of Marlott from the first pages of the novel, her body has been abused in the same manner as the Wessex landscape suffers transformations due to the mechanized agriculture.

> Almost at a leap Tess thus changed from simple girl to complex woman. Symbols of reflectiveness passed into her face, and a note of tragedy at times into her voice. […] it became evident to her that she could never be really comfortable again in a place which had seen the collapse of her family's attempt to "claim kin"—and, through her, even closer union—with the rich d'Urbervilles. At least she could not be comfortable there till long years should have obliterated her keen consciousness of it. Yet even now Tess felt the pulse of hopeful life still warm within her; she might be happy in some nook which had no memories. (Hardy 1965, 99)

Tess' solastalgia is Thomas Hardy's nostalgia for the pastoral Wessex, thus the loss of comfort and safety from the past can be traced in each space Tess navigates throughout her life.

Marian succumbs to solastalgia, too, when she works with Tess at Flintcomb-Ash because she misses the relaxing working atmosphere from Talbothays, where the seasons allowed the young women's bodies to flourish like the vegetation, where the rhythm of life was attuned to the natural cycle:

> they were talking of the time when they lived and loved together at Talbothays Dairy, that happy green tract of land where summer had been liberal in her gifts; in substance to all, emotionally to these. […] And thus, though the damp curtains of their bonnets flapped smartly into their faces, and their wrappers clung about them to wearisomeness, they lived all this afternoon in memories of green, sunny, romantic Talbothays. (Hardy 1965, 304)

At Flintcomb-Ash, the young women had to endure a harsh winter, and besides being forced to work outside in such arctic temperatures, inside, they had to endure the unhealthy air of their dwelling invaded by snow and the wind outside. The women's nostalgia for Talbothays is enhanced by the extreme cold, which "chilled their eyeballs" "penetrating to their skeletons" (Ibid, 240) which seems to be the counterpart of the heat from the dairy farm with its "Ethiopic scorchings [which] browned the upper slopes of the pastures" (Ibid, 149). Solastalgia is manifested through the repetition of the words that indicate the lush vegetation from Talbothays in direct contrast with the fields full of stones, "composed of myriads of loose white flints in bulbous, cusped, and phallic shapes" (Ibid, 304) which explain the name of the current working space, Flintcomb-Ash. Some pages later, Marian remarks:

> "How I should like another or two of our old set to come here! Then we could bring up Talbothays every day here afield, and talk of he, and of what nice times we had there, and o' the old things we used to know, and make it all come back a'most, in seeming!" Marian's eyes softened, and her voice grew vague as the visions returned. (Hardy 1965, 311)

It is the "nice times" from Marian's words that make us identify the women's solastalgia, their melancholy about the lived experiences from a loved environment. Both female characters realize that these memories would remain only vague visions, thus they try to adapt to this new space, wrap themselves in warm pinafores to prevent men and weather from abusing/ aggressing their bodies.

Terraphthoric forces in Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles

Terraphthora, a word formed from the Latin "terra" (earth) and the Greek "phthora" (destruction), literally means "earth destroyer". It refers to the forces that cause the destruction of the earth, and indicates the actions or the social systems that facilitate the degradation or/and the destruction of various ecosystems. Glenn Albrecht suggested that, by identifying these forces, one should be more capable of overcoming them (Albrecht 2019, 33). Terraphthoran humans in the Anthropocene fail to establish a fair human-nature relationship and their actions do not support all living creatures, on the contrary, we witness the mistreatment, the abuse and even the destruction of the non-humans and of the land.

For instance, men's invention – the steam-powered machines are presented by Hardy as intruders, as violators of everything is pastoral in the Wessex biotope. Both Annie Escuret and Catherine Lanone struggle to offer their personal ecofeminist perspective by tracing the "joint enslaving of land and female body" (Escuret 2007, 38) when Tess goes from the pastoral agricultural activities in her community to the harsh labour at Flintcomb Ash where the woman's body is crushed under the mechanical exploitation. In fact, the whole novel emphasizes the parallelism between women and animals because the patriarchal abuse and violence have as victims both the human and the non-human, so, Tess' uprooting and suffering caused by economic factors might be defined as "eco-grief" (Lanone 2022).

The first mentioning of a machine appears at Marlott: the reaping machine impended the peasants with its "two broad arms of painted wood" and "formed a revolving Maltese cross" that seemed "to have been dipped in liquid fire" (Hardy 1965, 73). Yet, the presumption that we are dealing with an invention of industrialization disappears when the author insists upon the details that engulf the reaping machine in the natural environment: the machine "rose from the margin of yellow cornfield hard by Marlott village" (Ibidem) as if it were a part of the landscape. Elements from nature appear to merge with this apparently menacing machine to support the author's intention to protect the rural world: horses pull this machine, setting a slow pace adjusted to the humans; the women's flapping bonnets are compared to the revolving arms of the reaping machine; the paint of this machine smeared humans and gains intensity in the sunlight; people pick up the ears of corn left behind by the machine; ultimately, machine and people take a break for breakfast and lunch to alleviate the suffering of the land.

These brief moments and small details conceal Thomas Hardy's intention to maintain a harmonious relationship between humans and nature.

The steam engine is introduced gradually in the text: first, as a peripheral experience at Talbothays when Tess and Angel load the milk containers in the train to London; then, the machines gain a central role in the mechanized agriculture at Flintcomb Ash. Changes are impeding due to industrialization, and the ominous image of the steam engine subversively looms over Tess' life. When rural work is not hindered by mechanized forces, it brings pleasure and tranquillity in people's lives, and readers observe this at Talbothays; Tess can rebuild her life and sense of self, and she re-gains her strength and vigour. However, at Flintcomb Ash, work disintegrates her body and soul, and the land is relentlessly fragmentated by the machines. The threshing-machine exhausts both the land and the workers, abusing them like "a greedy ogre" (Lanone 2022): the sheaves which in Marlott were tied by human hands, are here "gulped down by the insatiable swallower" (Hardy 1965, 275); the Anthropocene insults nature by transforming the immense stack of straw into "the faeces of the same buzzing red glutton" (Ibidem). Words like "gulp down", "insatiable", "glutton" emphasize the demanding tone of the machine and its endless consumption which turns humans and plants into commodities that can be digested as this engine was "fed by (engine-)man and Tess" (Ibidem). Hardy's text suggests that people and nature were mutually exploited, devalued by the Capitalocene represented by the threshing machine – "the long red elevator like a Jacob's ladder, on which a perpetual stream of threshed straw ascended, a yellow river running uphill" (Ibid, 276), while the workers "began to grow cadaverous and saucer-eyed" (Ibidem). This ceaseless consumption seems to be supervised by a God-like authority, since the author reminded his readers about the divine initiative to connect heaven and earth through Jacob's ladder as God's response to the failure of the people from Babel.

Technical words are added to the description of this machine to stress upon its speed and efficiency, as well as upon the scientific progress specific for the Capitalocene: "His fire was waiting incandescent, his steam was at high pressure, in a few seconds he could make the long strap move at an invisible velocity" (Ibid, 270). However, the speed of this machine is unnatural, inhumane, intended to symbolize the massive consumption advocated by capitalism. The

automatic rhythm of the threshing machine is Hardy's way of acknowledging the industrial North which invades the rural microcosm and replaces the natural order of Wessex by transforming the idyllic hearth into a dark chimney like a furnace that produces the same type of ash, soot and heat:

> The long chimney running up beside an ash-tree, and the warmth which radiated from the spot, explained […] that here was the engine that was to act as the primum mobile of this little world. (Hardy 1965, 269)

The threshing machine metaphorically defined with a Latin term ("primum mobile") induces alienation (Lanone 2022) into the small, insignificant bucolic world and signals a crisis of values, since this machine acts like the wheel that allowed other wheels to move, that would probably bring more technical devices in this rural landscape.

The industrial North is also represented by the coal that feeds the 'radiating warmth' of the engine which stands as a landmark for the terraphthoric forces that bring pollution to the countryside and ruins the pastoral landscape. Aside from the earth's degradation, the machine appears capable of dehumanizing people, as in the case of the engineer who is presented just as

> a sooty and grimy embodiment of tallness (269), a creature from Tophet, who had strayed into the pellucid smokelessness of this region of yellow grain and pale soil, with which he had nothing in common, to amaze and to discompose its aborigines. What he looked he felt. He was in the agricultural world, but not of it. He served fire and smoke; these denizens of the fields served vegetation, weather, frost, and sun. He travelled with his engine from farm to farm, from county to county, for as yet the steam threshing-machine was itinerant in this part of Wessex. (Hardy 1965, 270)

Anybody who is connected to the industrial world is seen as hellish, as evil (Tophet: hell) because it destroys ecosystems with its "hot blackness" (Ibid, 269) or is ready to unleash disaster. The idyllic beauty of the Wessex landscape has so far been untouched by pollution, being still perceived as "smokeless", a highly agricultural space filled with "yellow grain". The well-known Victorian opposition, nature vs. culture, abounds the writer's text to let the readers decide what path they want to follow: the terraphthoric Anthropocene (that serves only "fire and smoke" that disturbs the Indigenous, who was part of the agricultural world) or the Symbiocene (that served vegetation, weather, and seasons). Insisting on the contrast between the messenger of the industrial North and the pastoral space,

Thomas Hardy, once again, shows its solastalgia for the old Wessex, acknowledging his helplessness in preventing progress from intruding this landscape. The engineer seems to suffer from "the ache of modernism" (Ibid, 105), leading a nomadic life by travelling from village to village, distancing himself from any attachment to a space, being totally alienated because of his dehumanization. The engineer, a true agent of the Capitalocene, shows his contempt towards the natural world by refusing any interaction with "the natives", "the autochthonous idlers" (Ibid, 270) or the "aborigenes" (Ibid, 269) and by refusing any close bonds with "the agricultural world": "The long strap which ran from the driving-wheel of his engine to the red thresher under the rick was the sole tie-line between agriculture and him." (Ibid, 271) We concur with Catherine Lanone's thesis about colonization and the British Empire in the 19th century, when she notices how "the machine is beginning to colonize the rural South" (Lanone 2022).

Terranascient humans in the novel Tess of the D'Urbervilles

Terranascia is another term created by Glenn Albrecht for a better understanding of the Symbiocene expansion. It comes from the Latin words "terra" (earth) and "natura" (to be born), so, it literally means "to foster life on earth". Terranascient humans in the Symbiocene function as earth nurturers, thus fulfilling their role on this planet to generate symbiosis from the microcosmic to the macrocosmic level. A person is an active terranascient human when one is preoccupied with the protection and conservation of the natural world and supports a balanced relationship between humans and other forms of life.

As we have already explained when analysing the threat brought about in the natural world by the mechanized agriculture, terraphthorans find themselves at war with the environment they live in because terranascient humans tend to block terraphthoric actions of exploiting, devaluing nature. Sensing a close relation between women and nature, it is no surprise that Thomas Hardy's female characters manifest psychoterratic emotions more often than men do. For instance, at the Slopes, old Mrs. Stoke-d'Urbervilles shows terranascient inclination when she transforms the hens into her pets and cares for them as if these were her babies. In this community of fowls, Tess herself is encouraged to show the same tendencies when she is "appointed as supervisor, purveyor, nurse, surgeon, and friend" (Hardy 1965, 47) of these hens. Both women are not exposed to the

pragmatic side of the life of the Stokes-d'Urbervilles: the degradation of the true descendants of this family; the buying of the title and of a new mansion; the speculation and money lending, which soon proves to be the source of income for the nouveau riches. Women are confined to private spaces; thus, they find their escape (or possible revenge) in nurturing animals. When the old Mrs Stoke-d'Urbervilles chooses hens as her pets, she banishes the Anthropocene from the thatched cottage to leave room for the birds:

> an enclosure that had once been a garden, was now a trampled and sanded square. The house was overrun with ivy, its chimney being enlarged by the boughs of the parasite to the aspect of a ruined tower. The lower rooms were entirely given over to the birds, who walked about them with a proprietary air, as though the place had been built by themselves. (Hardy 1965, 47)

Nature gains back its territory, once the humans allow it: the ivy, the boughs, the birds – all confirm the terranascient tendencies, although the Anthropocene voices its discontent through the former tenants. Words like "parasite", "ruined", "overrun", "trampled" connect the current degradation of the cottage with the usurpation of the old family by the new owners. The author symbolically places Tess in this position at the poultry-farm, since she comes from a degraded version of the d'Urbervilles: the degradation of the name (into Durbeyfield) and the loss of the family fortune mirror the decayed cottage, and nature overcomes culture.

We can say there is an emotional war between terranascians and terraphthorans through which the author tries to convince his readers to foster soliphilia (commitment / fight for environmental justice). Thomas Hardy is aware of the dominance of capitalism in the 19th century (or in ecological terms, he was aware he was living in the Capitalocene), therefore, we might find numerous examples in his novel which indicate the terraphthoric forces in action. Yet terranascient forces, or simply said, nature also reacts against the ones who abuse it, thus it shows its destructive side each time human beings attempt to mis- or (ab)use the natural world or its representatives. Terranascient humans can detect the destructiveness of the terraphthorans, so they will try to oppose these forces. As a true "daughter of nature" (Hardy 1965, 120), Tess finds her revenge against the maltreatment she receives from different men: Alec's murder can be regarded as a demonstration of this type of revenge, when nature's/ Tess' patience ends after having endured so much abuse from the male

exploiter, from the Anthropocene. Tess' violent reaction against her exploiter was compared by Nuruzzaman (2017, 151) to Moby Dick's final revenge against the crew of the *Pequod*. Herman Melville's novel also highlights nature's atonement against the human beings who pursued and were obsessed with the killing of the white whale. Another example could be Frank Schatzing's *The Swarm* where nature severely punishes the human beings for having destroyed the marine ecosystem.

Again, nature teaches Angel Clare a lesson for deserting Tess and for not understanding her innocence in the act of seduction which was provoked by a representative of his sex. Without caring about his wife's destiny, Angel seeks to fulfil his dream as an "emigrating agriculturist" (Hardy 1965, 280) and intends to start afresh by setting up a farm in Brazil. Tess, as a representative of nature, would be degraded by

> the shade of his own [Angel Clare] limitations […]. With all his attempted independence of judgement this advanced and well-meaning young man, […] he was yet the slave to custom and conventionality (Hardy 1965, 280).

As Angel prepares to arrive in Brazil, he is "drenched with thunderstorms and persecuted by other hardships" (Ibid, 294), these coming as a punishment for not forgiving Tess and because "in considering what Tess was not, he overlooked what she was, and forgot that the defective can be more than the entire." (Ibid, 281) Nature in Brazil prevents Angel from finding a safe and pleasant position, and in this environment, his health cannot endure the harsh conditions. It is as if nature rejected the Anthropocene fearing the dramatic changes that could be brought by Angel. A possible explanation for Angel's failure in Brazil lies in his dream of becoming a farmer; he would become another colonizer of nature (a possible agent of Plantationocene, of the "extractive and enclosed plantations" with "devastating transformations of diverse ecosystems" (Haraway 2015, 162) because he intends to violate the earth the same way as other farmers did: through deforestation, overgrazing, habitat destruction, overexploitation of land, etc. Moreover, this comes as a reminder that he left Tess to become a victim of men and hard work at Flintcomb Ash. Only when he realizes the injustice done to his wife, he can accept a radical transformation in his life, and he is ready to accept Tess as she is. In this instance, his realization that he could not live without Tess (without the representative of nature) transforms him

into an agent of Symbiocene, by fostering a cooperation, an acceptance of nature rather than by preferring a competitive relationship. He no longer thinks of himself as the Anthropocene, on top of the hierarchy, but he longs for becoming equal to Tess, thus, he longs for the Symbiocene.

Conclusion

During a long period in human history, we have witnessed how an industrial-technological society emerged and grew addicted to progress, how this society achieved its success based on the natural resources. The forced production of the Capitalocene made some humans rich, yet it also harmed the earth through pollution, climate change and sometimes species extinction.

What we intended to illustrate in this paper, was the degradation of everything connected to the natural world. Apart from animals and plants, Thomas Hardy shows his readers how women, due to their close relation to nature, become the victims of the Anthropocene; impoverished, corrupted and seduced, women stand fewer chances to survive unless they maintain a harmonious relationship with nature, unless they enter the Symbiocene. Displacement seems to loom Tess' journey throughout the novel: because of the agricultural depression of 1880s in England, she is forced to move from place to place as in a mechanical movement, implicitly being denied attachment or any close relationship to space. Seasonal work implies not only migration, but also the emergence of solastalgia. Tess' constant uprooting shows the degradation of the rural world and confirms the exploitation of women and nature through the Capitalocene – a kind of work which, though mechanized, proves to be inhuman. At Talbothays, where Tess and the other dairy girls are not aggressed by machines or by men, the woman can rejoice her youth and passion; yet, at Flintcomb-Ash, as the steam engine replaces the sense of community with a strong desire for productivity, the women are harassed and exploited in the same way asland is violated by machines. For all creatures connected to the natural world, the solution to escape abuse is to embrace the Symbiocene and become a terranascian.

Thomas Hardy was generally believed nostalgic or conservative or environmentalist; however, his interest in the woman's body, in its exploitation, together with the exploitation of animals and land make Hardy a proto-ecofeminist writer or allow the readers to consider him as greening the humanities.

The conceptual transition from the Anthropocene to the Symbiocene is one ambitious project for any researcher because, besides analysing the literary work, one must extend the work into the field of economics, environmental studies, history, sometimes politics in order to envision a framework where humans are less interested in progress and technology, and develop a close relationship with the environment they inhabit.

For Hardy's transition, we needed to demonstrate his subversion of the anthropocentric model that placed humans as superior to nature, and to emphasize his intention of entering the Symbiocene which encourages humanity to stay deeply embedded in nature, to show preoccupation for a healthy planet, and to preserve untouched the ecosystems. In the end of the novel, Angel and Liza-Lu (a pseudo-Tess) leave the urban space and are expected to embrace a more rustic existence, since the rural world "is built on regenerative practices, and on a deep cultural appreciation for the interconnectedness of all living beings" (Albrecht 2019, 54):

> The prospect from this summit was almost unlimited. In the valley beneath lay the city they had just left, its more prominent buildings showing as in an isometric drawing; […] further off, landscape beyond landscape, till the horizon was lost in the radiance of the sun hanging above it. (Hardy 1965, 487)

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