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Electronic version
URL: https://journals.openedition.org/fathom/2012
DOI: 10.4000/fathom.2012
ISSN: 2270-6798

Publisher
Association française sur les études sur Thomas Hardy

Electronic reference
Carolina Elices, "’The Disappearing Creation’: Architectural Conservation and the Natural Landscape in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, FATHOM [Online], 7 | 2022, Online since 23 December 2022, connection on 22 May 2023. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/fathom/2012 ; DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/fathom.2012

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“The Disappearing Creation”: Architectural Conservation and the Natural Landscape in Tess of the d’Urbervilles

« La création en voie de disparition » : la conservation architecturale et le paysage naturel dans Tess of the d’Urbervilles

Carolina Elices

1 Although Thomas Hardy found fame as a novelist and poet, he was interested in architecture throughout his life. In the nineteenth-century debate between the architectural conservation techniques of restoration – which considered historical buildings from a functional, practical perspective – and preservation – which viewed ancient buildings as records of history, receptacles of memories, and repositories and facilitators of human relationships – Hardy emerged, in his later life, as a preservationist. He had arrived at this position after participating in several church restorations throughout his lifetime, which he ultimately came to regret. His 1906 “Memories of Church Restoration”, a lecture presented at a meeting of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, is an emotional denunciation of the use of restorationist methods to conserve ancient buildings and an endorsement of preservationist methods as the morally superior alternative. As Hardy explains in the speech, the preservationist technique of trying to keep intact as much of the original building as possible is crucial because a major part of ancient buildings’ intrinsic value lies in the “human association” they contained (Hardy qtd in Beatty 76).

2 It is no surprise, then, that many of Hardy’s novels explore preservationist themes, including Tess of the d’Urbervilles. In Tess, Hardy investigates the inextricable links among man-made structures, humanity and the natural world, while also examining instances where the built environment, particularly decaying constructions that have not been conserved, merges with nature to form a unified landscape. The buildings and structures in Tess represent various issues related to architectural conservation,
including consideration of the natural landscape, humanity’s emotional investment in architectural spaces and the associations among past, present, and future.

Critics, such as Dominic Head and Richard Kerridge, have noted that Hardy’s “special value [...] to ecocritics is precisely in the way he does not separate place and person” (Kerridge 141). Dominic Head claims that in Tess and other Hardy novels, “we are confronted with ‘natural’ images in which questions of social history [...] are inscribed in the scene or in the landscape” (Head 236). Moreover, taking inspiration from Raymond Williams, Head asserts that to understand the kind of “nature novel” Hardy wrote, we must realise that “a considerable part of what we call natural landscape [...] is the product of human design” (Williams qtd in Head 236). By examining architecture as embedded in the natural landscape, Hardy is addressing this very concept, calling attention to the unmistakable impact humans have on nature when they create buildings. As Head declares, “the represented landscape becomes a text in which human interaction with the environment is indelibly recorded: it follows that a Green materialist reading of this inner text cannot divorce the social from the natural” (Head 236). An assessment of Hardy’s “green”-ness through the lens of the natural landscape in Tess must therefore be grounded in both the social, as represented in the structures and architecture that contain human associations, and the natural, as embodied by the various natural landscapes in which these structures and architecture are fixed.

Richard Kerridge bolsters this notion that the social and the natural are connected, by observing that “an ecologist studies forms of life not in isolation but as parts of a system, an economy that sustains them and that they constitute” (Kerridge 130). To Kerridge, “Hardy’s narrative forms bring interdependency to the fore” (130). Moreover, Kerridge affirms, “ecology is the study of relationships and interdependencies within shared local environments” (131). Hardy’s exploration of the interconnectedness of humanity, architecture and nature in Tess functions, therefore, as an expression of his ecocentrism.

Yet, Hardy’s “green”-ness involves more than simply his examination of the associations between nature and architecture. In Tess, Hardy criticizes humanity’s underestimation of the strength and value of nature. By presenting a preservationist view of man-made structures, which, ironically, prizes their human value, but situating these constructions within a powerful natural environment that can utterly destroy them, Hardy emphasizes the notion that nature should be as respected and appreciated as the man-made constructions with which it must coexist. Hardy is “green”, therefore, in that he encourages a re-centring from a landscape focused on humanity to a landscape in which humanity, as represented by architecture and structures, and nature exist together, however imperfectly, and are similarly valued in the architectural conservation process.

The nineteenth-century debate between restoration and preservation centred on how a historical building should be viewed and which aspects of it should be prioritized. French architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc defined restoration as follows:

To restore a building is not to preserve it, to repair, or rebuild it; it is to reinstate it in a condition of completeness that could never have existed at any given time [...] every portion removed should be replaced with better materials, and in a stronger
Thus, according to the restorationist perspective, historical buildings ultimately served a functional, practical purpose. Restoration work focused on strengthening the building to allow it to continue standing and fulfilling its function long into the future. As such, removing or replacing portions of the building was acceptable and even encouraged as a means of extending a building’s life span.

Restoration also entailed unifying a building’s various architectural styles by choosing one privileged style and removing other elements that did not conform to it. The Ecclesiological Society, a restorationist group founded in 1845, emphasized “recover[ing] the original scheme of the edifice as conceived by the first builder” (“Church Restoration”, 61). When this advice was put into practice, what often occurred was that “elements representing ‘unfashionable’ or non-conforming styles were removed and ‘corrected’” (Cole qtd in Jokilehto 157). Hardy comments on this practice in “Memories of Church Restoration” and describes a “case in which a church exhibiting two or three styles was made uniform by removing the features of all but one style, and imitating that throughout in new work” (Hardy qtd in Beatty 73).

On the other hand, preservationists such as Hardy and John Ruskin saw restoration as destructive. For them, a historical building represented more than functional space; it was full of “human association” and possessed a distinctive history because it had existed for such a long time (Hardy qtd in Beatty 76). As such, ancient buildings needed to remain in their “association-rich [...] original state” even if it meant they were “functionally deficient”, in order to preserve the history and human connections they had accumulated (Cannon 205). In Seven Lamps of Architecture (1849), John Ruskin condemns restoration as “the most total destruction which a building can suffer”, “restoration [...] is a Lie from beginning to end. You may make a model of a building [...] and your model may have the shell of the old walls within it [...] but the old building is destroyed” (Ruskin 199–200). Replacing parts of a building, then, effaced the original architectural space rather than improving or strengthening it, even if those replacement parts were exact models of the originals. Likewise, preservationists’ efforts to make historical buildings conform to one architectural style were considered, as Hardy put it, “devastations” (Hardy qtd in Beatty 73). Ultimately, preservationists sought to maintain as much of the original structure of historically rich architecture as possible, not just for the sake of the building but for history’s and humanity’s sake as well.

Hardy’s “Memories of Church Restoration” neatly presents the preservationist perception of the difference between restoration and preservation. Restoration is “active destruction under saving names”, and restorationists view a historical building as “a utilitarian machine [that] has [...] to be kept going, so that it may continue to discharge its original functions” (Hardy qtd in Beatty 73). Conversely, preservation represents “the preservation of memories, history, fellowships, fraternities” (76). Furthermore, Hardy stresses, “the protection of an ancient edifice against renewal in fresh materials is [...] a humane [...] duty” (76). Hardy depicts restoration as a destructive, misguided practice that focuses entirely and emotionlessly on a building’s practical usage as the reason for extending its existence, rather than on other values inherent in the building. Hardy also emphasizes the moral necessity of avoiding the restorationist practice of replacing a building’s parts, framing the restoration/
preservation conflict as an ethical debate as well as a technical one. Preservation is the morally superior choice, according to Hardy, because it accounts for a building’s emotional and historical impact and recognizes how intertwined these human connections are with the existing architectural space. Rather than heartlessly thinking of a historical building as a useful “machine” and thereby destroying parts of it, if not the entire structure, in pursuit of functionality, Hardy argues that conservation must consider the social, emotional and historical impacts of ancient buildings. Incidentally, by decrying the rebuilding of a historical edifice in new materials, Hardy also endorses a form of conservation that is less wasteful and possesses a lower environmental impact.

Indeed, Hardy’s stance on conservational techniques for historical architecture not only anticipates modern methods for historical building conservation, particularly in the context of environmental sustainability, but also echoes similar debates in the environmental conservation sphere. As Kester Rattenbury notes, “Hardy was there before us” with his “modern […] ideas of conservation theory” and his “powerful arguments about the human value of long-used buildings” (Rattenbury 216). P.J. Godwin’s paper “Building Conservation and Sustainability in the United Kingdom” demonstrates just how closely Hardy’s “Memories of Church Restoration” foreshadowed the modern architectural conservation approach. According to Godwin, “a historic building should be regarded as a composite work of art and a document of history” (Godwin 17). This resonates directly with Hardy’s sentiments that historical buildings can “exist as art” and that preserving them equates to the “preservation of […] history” (Hardy qtd in Beatty 76). Moreover, Godwin asserts that “in UK practice […] the minimum absolutely necessary” is done to buildings so that “the maximum historic fabric is preserved and thereby the significance it embodies” (Godwin 18). Hardy prefigured this concept when he wrote that “the protection of an ancient edifice against renewal in fresh materials” preserves memories, history, and human relationships (Hardy qtd in Beatty 76). Godwin points out that “energy efficiency is seen as the key factor” for improving the environmental sustainability of architecture (Godwin 14), but he notes that “sometimes it has to be appreciated that some buildings are of such quality importance [sic] or completeness that they should not be altered at all to meet sustainability aims save in the most exceptional circumstances” (17). He also mentions that “when they were first built and inhabited, all pre-industrial buildings were by definition sustainable” and that “there is no inherent conflict between the retention of historic buildings and the principles of sustainability” (13–14). Most of the buildings whose conservation Hardy was addressing were “mediaeval buildings” and “Gothic” architecture, both of which would have been pre-industrial (Hardy qtd in Beatty 73, 76). Moreover, Hardy anticipated Godwin when he advocated “do[ing] nothing, where to act on little knowledge is a dangerous thing, is to do most and best” (77). As Laurence Coupe declares, “green studies makes no sense unless its formulation of theory contributes to the struggle to preserve the ‘biotic community’” (Coupe 4). While Hardy himself was not specifically concerned with the environmental sustainability of architectural conservation, many of his ideas prefigure modern concepts of sustainable architectural conservation.

Moreover, the nineteenth-century conflict between restoration and preservation parallels a related modern ideological conflict in the realm of environmental conservation. Lawrence Buell describes the “contemporary […] restorationist project” as seeking “to repair the biosphere, to recreate habitat” (Buell 267). Its premise was
that “humans must intervene in nature” and that “we have no alternative but to alter the landscape” (267). Buell contrasts this attitude with “the preservationist approach of protecting environments in their present state” and “the conservationist resource-management tradition” (267). The modern environmental conceptions of restoration and preservation are undoubtedly similar to their nineteenth-century architectural counterparts. Both the architectural and environmental forms of restoration emphasise the need for human intervention and alteration and seek to restore or continue functionality. Likewise, both conceptions of preservation focus on protection and maintenance based on the conservation object’s current state. However, while modern environmental conservation possesses a third ideological option beyond restoration and preservation in the form of the “conservationist resource-management tradition”, architectural conservation in Hardy’s time centred on the restoration/preservation conflict. Nevertheless, Hardy’s ideas on architectural conservation correlate to similar concerns in today’s environmental conservation theories, suggesting that applying Hardy’s preservationist ideals to the protection of the natural environment is both useful and relevant.

Most importantly, Hardy is keenly aware that historical architecture is ultimately powerless against nature, which threatens buildings’ survival into the future. In “Memories of Church Restoration”, Hardy reflects on the “ideal” conservation method of enclosing a “ruinous church […] in a crystal palace, covering it to the weathercock from rain and wind” (Hardy qtd in Beatty 73). Hardy thus reveals the unstoppable power of the natural elements to weather and wear away a building. The wind and rain are so strong and certain that only a fortress can properly protect a building from their ravages. The use of “ideal”, however, emphasises that this conservation scheme is an impossible, imagined one; enclosing a building like a museum artefact in a case is too costly and too much work, since “even a parish composed of opulent members […] would be staggered by such an undertaking” (Hardy qtd in Beatty 73). Therefore, even if a historical building does survive into the future, it must contend with the inevitable weathering that years of existing will bring. Because the elements can so thoroughly damage architecture, Hardy suggests, nature must be respected and considered in the architectural conservation process. It is not just humanity and historical buildings that can affect and be affected by architectural conservation; nature can as well. Ultimately, by adding nature as a third, if not entirely equal, concern to the human and architectural considerations of the architectural conservation process, Hardy demonstrates the “green” mindset that even a seemingly human-centred activity like architectural conservation must move beyond anthropocentrism to consider the natural environment.

More than a dozen years before his “Memories of Church Restoration”, Hardy had already investigated the relationship between architecture and nature in Tess of the d’Urbervilles. Unlike buildings in Hardy’s other novels, such as the great barn in Far from the Madding Crowd and the Corn Exchange in The Mayor of Casterbridge, which are depicted as facilitators for human interactions, the buildings and structures in Tess reveal the complex and often uneasy coexistence of humanity and nature within and around man-made structures. Moreover, in Tess, ancient buildings and structures form inextricable links among architecture, humanity and the natural world. Already imbued with the “human associations” of the people who use(d) them, the architectural
sites of Tess also demonstrate how architecture and man-made structures, particularly decaying architecture and structures that have not been conserved, can merge with nature to form a unified landscape. Five sites exemplify and complicate this notion: The Slopes, the “almost new” d’Urberville home that contrasts sharply with the “primaevial” forest behind it (Hardy 38); the fowl-house at the Slopes, where birds walk “with a proprietary air” (58); the “Cross-in-Hand”, a man-made landmark that is described as a “stump” (310–311); the tombs at Kingsbere, where the d’Urbervilles ancestors lie; and Stonehenge, the “forest of monoliths” (393). These examples demonstrate that built spaces and structures must be considered in the context of the natural landscape around them. As the humans who occupy these spaces will eventually fade into oblivion, nature must be a fundamental consideration in the architectural process, since nature will ultimately reclaim human constructions that are not conserved.

The Slopes represents a key example of how harshly buildings can clash with their natural environs and how crucial human connections within a built space are. Hardy describes The Slopes as follows:

It was of recent erection – indeed almost new – and of the same rich crimson colour that formed such a contrast with the evergreens of the lodge. Far behind the bright brick corner of the house – which rose like a red geranium against the subdued colours around – stretched the soft azure landscape of The Chase – a truly venerable tract of forest land [...] of undoubted primaevial date, wherein Druidical mistletoe was still found on aged oaks [...] All this sylvan antiquity [...] though visible from The Slopes, was outside the immediate boundaries of the estate. [...] It was contrary to [Tess’s] expectation. ‘I thought we were an old family; but this is all new!’ she said, in her girlish artlessness. (Hardy 38–39)

The Slopes is a subversion of expectations, both for Tess and the reader. This home is “bright”, “new” and “crimson”, a striking contrast to the “subdued”, “primaevial” landscape around it. What should be an ancient and dignified seat of the “old” d’Urberville family is modern and garish. Instead, it is the forest of The Chase around The Slopes that belongs to “antiquity” and is full of “Druidical mistletoe” on “aged oaks”. Moreover, although The Chase does not form part of the “immediate boundaries” of the d’Urberville estate, it does stretch behind the estate and is “visible” from it. Hardy is therefore encouraging the reader to view The Slopes and The Chase as part of a unified landscape, at least visibly. For now, The Slopes is “bright, thriving, and well kept” (Hardy 38), but what, Hardy seems to imply, will happen once this incongruous building begins to break down, considering how sharply it already contrasts with the natural landscape around it?

Of course, decay within the Slopes has already begun, at least in the ethical sense. While the building’s façade seems to be an outward display of vitality (perhaps too much vitality, as it is so new), it conceals a pervasive moral decay within. This house is so new because the d’Urbervilles who live here are not true d’Urbervilles. Their ancestor, Simon Stoke, simply thumbed through “the pages of works devoted to extinct, half-extinct, obscured, and ruined families [...] considered that d’Urberville looked and sounded as well as any of them: and d’Urberville accordingly was annexed to his own name for himself and his heirs eternally” (Hardy 39; author’s emphasis). This house, known as “Mrs. d’Urberville’s seat”, is, in fact, built upon a lie, so that moral decay, or at least questionable morals, are inherent in the architectural foundations of the home as well as the ancestral foundations of the family (38). Alec...
d’Urberville, like his ancestor Simon Stoke, lies about his d’Urberville heritage, calling Tess “Coz”, short for “cousin”, even though he knows they are not actually related (41).

Therefore, while Tess should be able to use The Slopes to connect to her family, there is no kind of useful memory, history, fellowship or fraternity to be found for her in the supposed d’Urberville family home. Hardy’s “Memories of Church Restoration” focuses on “memories, history, fellowships, fraternities” that can be found and preserved in “ancient edifice[s]”, not modern ones (Hardy qtd in Beatty 76). Any “history” the mansion house has is fairly recent and not truly d’Urberville history anyway. The recent “memories” Tess develops at the house are rather more unpleasant, considering Alec’s “cruel” treatment of her, than anything else (Hardy 381). Any “fellowships” or “fraternities” Tess forms with this alleged branch of the d’Urberville family are predicated on a lie; Tess believes she is connecting with relatives when they are, in reality, no more related to her than strangers.

Hardy thus demonstrates the interrelation of architecture, humanity and the natural landscape at The Slopes. Because The Slopes is not truly a d’Urberville home, it cannot be used to form the “human association” that would make it emotionally valuable and worth preserving, at least to Tess, the only d’Urberville by blood who enters the space (Hardy qtd in Beatty 76). Moreover, because The Slopes is not the home of true d’Urbervilles and, by extension, not ancient, the home and estate provide a jarring contrast with the “sylvan antiquity” of The Chase around them, demonstrating that the construction of The Slopes did not consider the natural surroundings. Hardy criticises this architectural approach that prizes human wants and values over respect for the surrounding natural environment and implicitly advocates for a kind of architecture that at least attempts to better harmonise with nature. Since The Slopes already differs so noticeably from the natural landscape, if the building were to decay without any conservation or maintenance, it would, at the very least, remain incongruous and, in the worst-case scenario, potentially damage the landscape around it. However, as The Slopes offers no real emotional connection or history for a true d’Urberville like Tess, its future remains in question. Ultimately, it seems, the false past of The Slopes has created a murky future for its maintenance and upkeep.

The fowl-house exemplifies the notion that nature will ultimately overpower man-made structures and offers a glimpse of a potential future for The Slopes if it begins to decay without any repair or conservation. What was once a “cottage” is now teeming with birds:

The community of fowls [...] made their headquarters in an old thatched cottage standing in an enclosure that had once been a garden [...]. 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 and for themselves, and not by and for certain dusty copyholders who now lay east and west in the churchyard. The descendants of these bygone owners felt it almost as a slight to their family when the house which had so much of their affection [...] and had been in their possession for several generations before the d’Urbervilles came and built here, was indifferently turned into a fowl-house by Mrs Stoke-d’Urberville as soon as the property fell into hand according to law [...]. The rooms wherein dozens of infants had wailed [...] now resounded with the tapping of nascent chicks. Distracted hens in coops occupied spots where formerly stood chairs supporting sedate agriculturists. The chimney-corner and once blazing hearth was now filled with inverted beehives, in which the hens laid their eggs, while out of doors the
plots that each succeeding householder had carefully shaped with his spade were
torn by the cocks in wildest fashion. (Hardy 58)

21 Here, nature, in the form of ivy, has severely damaged what was once a beloved human
habitation. This ivy has grown unhindered throughout the cottage and completely
transformed the chimney into a “ruined tower”, with the word “ruined” indicating just
how dilapidated the building has become. While the “community of fowls” that now
occupies this former home have been domesticated for human purposes, this group still
represents nature reclaiming a human space in that the birds are non-human animals.
These birds walk around the rooms “with a proprietary air” as if the house “had been
built by and for themselves”. This phrasing indicates that the birds’ sense of ownership
extends beyond their total occupation of the space; they treat the cottage as though
they had built it themselves, thereby eradicating any human involvement with or claim
to the space. The humans who once lived in this space, now dead “dusty copyholders”,
have been completely forgotten by the new occupants, and Hardy emphasizes this
erasure by presenting four scenarios where the avian tenants have replaced the former
human inhabitants. “Infant” children’s wailing has been transformed into “nascent”
chicks’ “tapping”. Hens sit in coops where “agriculturists” once sat in chairs. The use of
the word “distracted” to describe the hens anthropomorphically presents the hens as
harried mothers in a hectic environment and contrasts strongly with the description of
the agriculturists as “sedate”. The centre of domestic life, the chimney-corner and
“once blazing hearth”, is now the heart of the hens’ efficient fertility. Outside, the
“carefully shaped” garden plots have been “torn by the cocks in the wildest fashion”,
highlighting that human-imposed order has been supplanted by wildness and impulse.
Hardy underscores that architectural spaces that are not conserved will ultimately be
claimed by nature to form a unified landscape that incorporates both architecture and
nature while only hinting at a former human presence.

22 This cottage was not conserved, not because its former human occupants did not
appreciate the space, but because its owner before the birds, Mrs. Stoke-d’Urberville,
chose to alter it to become a fowl-house. The descendants of the former tenants
certainly possessed “human association[s]” related to the space (Hardy qtd in Beatty
76), since the house “had so much of their affection” and “had been in their possession
for several generations”. Of the “memories, history, fellowships, fraternities” Hardy
classifies as human associations (Hardy qtd in Beatty 76), the “affection” for the cottage
indicates that the tenants’ descendants have happy “memories”, as well as potential
“fellowships” and “fraternities”, connected with the space. Moreover, the fact that the
home was owned by the family “for several generations” implies that it was laden with
family “history”. According to Hardy’s view of preservation, all these human
associations suggest that the cottage would have been maintained and conserved had it
remained within the family, especially since Mrs. Stoke-d’Urberville’s transformation
of the cottage was viewed as a “slight to their family”. Like one of the restorationists
Hardy decries, Mrs. Stoke-d’Urberville, having merely inherited the property
“according to law”, possesses no emotional associations with the building and thus
transforms it “indifferently”. As Wendell Berry notes, “without a complex knowledge of
one’s place, and without the faithfulness to one’s place on which such knowledge
depends, it is inevitable that the place will be used carelessly, and eventually
destroyed” (Berry qtd in Buell 252–253). While Berry was referring to an environmental
sense of place, his quote equally resonates with Hardy’s conception of architectural
place and conservation.
The fowl-house reveals that nature cannot claim architectural spaces without a lack of human interest in the spaces’ survival and maintenance. Nature will ultimately reclaim architectural spaces that are not conserved, Hardy demonstrates, and buildings can only reach the point of being reclaimed by nature after they have been neglected by humanity. What seems to arise as a solution to humans’ indifference toward the natural environment, as represented by The Slopes, and humans’ apathy toward architectural conservation, which can create emotional and physical damage that is then compounded by the natural environment, as illustrated by the fowl-house, is a compromise between these two extremes of human-dominated landscape and nature-dominated built environment. An awareness of and appreciation for both the natural and built environments must prevail, Hardy argues, and create a landscape in which neither nature nor humanity fully dominates. Emotional investment in both nature and architecture is therefore a crucial aspect of architectural conservation.

As Elisha Cohn points out, the landscape in Tess is a “landscape pervaded by human interference” (Cohn 516). One such example of human interference with the landscape is the “Cross-in-Hand” monument (Hardy 310). This “stone pillar” illustrates how seamlessly a man-made structure can be integrated into a natural landscape:

At length the road touched the spot called ‘Cross-in-Hand’. […] The place took its name from a stone pillar which stood there, a strange rude monolith, from a stratum unknown in any local quarry, on which was roughly carved a human hand […]. Some authorities stated that a devotional cross had once formed the complete erection thereon, of which the present relic was but the stump; others that the stone as it stood was entire, and that it had been fixed there to mark a boundary or place of meeting. (Hardy 310–311)

At the “Cross-in-Hand” monument, the boundaries between nature and man-made structure are blurred. The monument is made of “stone”, a natural material, but it is “from a stratum unknown in any local quarry”, suggesting that it has been transported here from a distance and that “human interference” was involved in its placement. Moreover, the landmark is referred to as a “monolith”, which, according to Merriam-Webster, can mean both “a very large stone that is usually tall and narrow” and “a very large building or other structure” (“monolith”). This monument, then, belongs to both humanity and nature as equally a structure and a natural feature. This duality is further enforced as Hardy explains its history. The “roughly carved” hand on the pillar is potentially what remains of a human-made design that included a “devotional cross”. Nevertheless, the monument that remains is referred to, variously, as a “relic”, a “stump”, and a “stone”. The word “relic” emphasizes that this monument did not appear here through natural processes; it was designed by humans for a purpose, potentially for religious reasons, potentially as a landmark. Yet a “stump” is the remains of a felled tree, suggesting mutilation as well as natural origins. The “stone” “Cross-in-Hand” strengthens this association with nature by conveying earthiness and solidity. Moreover, since “the place took its name” from the monument, the name “Cross-in-Hand” refers not only to the monument itself but also to the surrounding area, implying that the monument and landscape cannot exist without each other.

The “Cross-in-Hand” proves how coherently man-made structures can fit into the natural landscape, to the point where the monument is inseparable from the landscape around it. Although the monument seems not to have been maintained, since there is allegedly an entire portion of the design missing, in this case the lack of conservation is not as alarming as it would be with The Slopes or as it is with the fowl-house. The
“Cross-in-Hand” fits into the landscape around it and was created from natural materials, unlike The Slopes. The creators of the “Cross-in-Hand” are so long forgotten that the purpose of the monument survives only as various legends, unlike the fowl-house, where the descendants of the last human occupants still exist and have a connection to the cottage as it was. Failing to maintain a man-made structure, Hardy implies, is only damaging to the natural environment if it has been built without regard for the landscape around it and only emotionally harmful to humanity if humans possess a direct connection, whether through memories, history, fellowships or fraternities, to the place. Because no direct emotional connection to the “Cross-in-Hand” exists anymore, the structure has lost valuable parts: its original purpose and, possibly, a key physical feature. The “Cross-in-Hand” highlights the fact that emotional connections are key for human creations to survive into the future.

The d’Urberville vault at Kingsbere serves as the ultimate reminder of humans’ eventual fading into oblivion and the interconnection of nature and architecture. The tombs of the d’Urberville family are described as covering in their dates several centuries. They were canopied, altar-shaped, and plain; their carvings being defaced and broken; their brasses torn from the matrices, the rivet-holes remaining like marten-holes in a sand cliff. Of all the reminders that [Tess] had ever received that her people were socially extinct there was none so forcible as this spoliation. (Hardy 363)

As Peter J. Casagrande puts it, Tess’s “ancestral tomb, like the d’Urberville family itself, is in a state of advanced decay” (Casagrande 204). The tombs have clearly not been maintained or taken care of; parts are “broken”, “defaced” and “torn”. The use of a nature-related metaphor to describe the remaining rivet-holes, “like marten-holes in a sand cliff”, suggests that the tombs’ damage can be attributed to natural processes. Not only is the outer state of the tombs one of disarray and destruction, but also the dead bodies from “several centuries” that are housed inside the tombs are in an advanced state of decay. Decay and disintegration have affected both the bodies within the tombs and the tombs themselves so that the two are unmistakably linked. As the bodies within have disintegrated, so do the tombs that contain the bodies. Likewise, the more the outer portion of the tombs degenerates, the more the potential for emotional connection with the ancestors housed within disappears. Some weathering of these ancient tombs is to be expected, but had the outside of these tombs been at least somewhat maintained through a preservationist process, Tess might perhaps have been able to learn something of her family’s history, memories, fellowships and fraternities through the carvings or brasses. Charlotte Bonica notes that “in Hardy’s universe nature supersedes human life” (Bonica 858). Like the fowl-house, the vault at Kingsbere is an example of a nature-dominated built environment, which Hardy implicitly criticises. While the decomposition of the bodies within the tombs and some wearing away of the tombs themselves is unavoidable, much of the tombs’ outer damage and disarray is preventable, as evidenced by the use of “broken”, “defaced” and “torn”, all of which suggest neglect. Moreover, as Hardy implies with his use of “spoliation” to describe the scene, this damage should be prevented, so as to preserve history, memories and fellowships for the generations of ancestors who will view these tombs. While allowing nature to reclaim a built environment may be the most eco-conscious option, this choice, especially for such an emotion-laden construction as a tomb, can cause very real, emotional pain to the humans associated with that environment, as it did to the family that was formerly associated with the fowl-house. As such, Hardy
advocates for a kind of balance between humanity and nature; micro-organisms must, naturally, eat away at the skeletons, but conservators should have maintained the outside of the tombs so as to preserve their capacity for human connection and emotional impact.

Finally, as Peter J. Casagrande notes, nature is “represented [...] in the pagan monuments at Stonehenge” (Casagrande 200). Like the “Cross-in-Hand” monument, Stonehenge exemplifies Hardy’s ideal landscape, where architecture is so integrated with nature that neither element fully dominates. It is “all doors and pillars, some connected above by continuous architraves” (Hardy 393). The use of specifically architectural jargon, “pillars” and “architraves” (lintels or beams resting on columns), emphasises that this is a man-made structure, a “roofless” building even (393). Yet, the structure is also “of solid stone, without joint or moulding” (392). The lack of traditional architectural elements to hold the structure together and the use of natural building materials underscore that Stonehenge is a kind of natural erection. Moreover, Stonehenge is described as “a forest of monoliths grouped upon the grassy expanse of the plain” (393). The word “forest” implies that these stones could just as easily have sprung from the earth as been carried here by humans. Additionally, the mention of the “forest” with the “grassy expanse of the plain” suggests a sense of unity in the landscape, that Stonehenge is just as much a natural feature of the landscape as the plain is.

Stonehenge also demonstrates the tenuous connection between past and future in historical structures that can only be maintained through conservation. As Angel Clare declares, Stonehenge is “older than the centuries; older than the d’Urbervilles!” (Hardy 393). Angel and Tess even discuss the significance of the structure, with Tess asking, “Did they sacrifice to God here?” (394). Angel replies, “No, [...] I believe to the sun. That lofty stone set away by itself is in the direction of the sun, which will presently rise behind it” (394). Yet, this important historical landmark may not survive into the future, since, as Kester Rattenbury notes, when Tess was being written, Stonehenge was “then threatened with complete oblivion” (Rattenbury 171). Ultimately, however, Hardy “would play a part” in “making sure Stonehenge survived” (103). By “placing [Stonehenge] so epically in Tess, his greatest and most successful work”, Hardy “had it well framed in the public imagination” (213). With Tess, Rattenbury argues, Hardy “had put the idea in our minds” of preserving Stonehenge (213). Stonehenge, then, reveals Hardy at his most preservationist, since he is actively seeking to preserve the “memories, history, fellowships, fraternities” contained within it through writing (Hardy qtd in Beatty 76). Likewise, since Stonehenge blurs the line between human-made construction and natural structure, Hardy’s investment in conserving Stonehenge indicates consideration for both the human and natural aspects of architectural conservation. The human value of Stonehenge, of course, comes from the history and human relationships contained in and represented by the place. In terms of nature, Stonehenge is an inextricable feature of the natural landscape that would also cause tremendous damage to the natural environment if it were not conserved, as the collapse of any of its stones would damage the surrounding plain and grasses, and potentially injure or kill nearby fauna. Ultimately, then, Hardy’s depiction of Stonehenge in Tess epitomises his “green” thinking that architectural conservators should consider both nature and humanity when planning how best to conserve a historical structure.
Through the five architectural sites in *Tess*, Hardy explores the impact of the lack of architectural preservation on humanity and the natural landscape. The Slopes reveals how crucial it is to consider the surrounding natural landscape in the process of building and conservation. Meanwhile, the fowl-house demonstrates that humans’ emotional investment is essential for conservation, as does the “Cross-in-Hand”. The d’Urberville tombs at Kingsbere establish that nature will eventually supplant humanity, creating all the more reason for conservation to involve consideration of nature. Moreover, Stonehenge represents the notion that architectural conservation must involve concern for both architecture and nature. Throughout his examination of architectural conservation at these five sites, Hardy shows that the relationship between architecture and nature is a complicated one. Nature possesses the power to reclaim and eradicate man-made structures, but only if humanity neglects them. Yet, allowing nature to reclaim man-made structures can be beneficial for the natural environment, as at the fowl house, where the ivy and birds thrive, even as the building’s destruction has caused emotional pain to the family that formerly occupied it. As Hardy demonstrates, the uneasy compromise that could resolve this conflict between humanity and nature is to focus on a form of architectural conservation that encourages coexistence, where both nature and architecture are valued, even if nature or humanity will sometimes dominate over the other. Ultimately, as Hardy suggests in *Tess*, the best we can hope for is to maintain historical architecture as well as possible, in order to minimise historical and emotional damage, while trying to avoid doing so at the expense of nature, even as damage to both nature and architecture is, to some extent, inevitable.

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NOTES

1. When I refer to “nature” throughout this paper, I am using Jhan Hochman’s definition of it as “the collective name for ‘individual plants, nonhuman animals, and elements’” (Hochman qtd in Coupe 3).

ABSTRACTS

Thomas Hardy’s work as an architect prior to his becoming an author led him to develop the preservationist view that a major aspect of ancient buildings’ value lies in their human associations. In Tess of the d’Urbervilles, Hardy explores the inextricable links among man-made structures, humanity and the natural world, while also demonstrating instances where nature and the built environment – particularly decaying constructions that have not been conserved – can merge to form a unified landscape. The five sites the article uses to examine this notion are: the d’Urberville home of The Slopes; the fowl-house where Mrs d’Urberville’s birds live; the Cross-in-Hand monument; the d’Urberville tombs at Kingsbere; and Stonehenge. While The Slopes provides a prime example of how jarringly architecture can contrast with its natural environment, the fowl-house exemplifies the decaying structure that, because it has not been conserved, has been reclaimed by nature. Cross-in-Hand, the Kingsbere tombs and Stonehenge...
are all described with plant- and animal-related terminology, emphasizing their integration with and reclamation by their natural environs. Ultimately, the man-made structures in Tess highlight the notion that architectural spaces must be considered in the context of the natural landscape around them. As the humans who occupy these spaces will eventually fade into oblivion, nature must be a fundamental consideration in the architectural process, since nature will ultimately reclaim man-made spaces that are not conserved. In Tess, Hardy’s “green”-ness centres on his emphasis that the natural environment should be just as valued in the architectural conservation process as the built environment.

Le travail de Thomas Hardy comme architecte avant qu’il ne devienne écrivain l’a conduit à développer l’approche préservationniste qui voit dans les associations humaines un aspect essentiel de la valeur des bâtiments anciens. Dans Tess of the d’Urbervilles, Hardy explore les liens inextricables entre les structures créées par l’homme, l’humanité et le monde naturel, tout en montrant des exemples où la nature et l’environnement bâti – en particulier des constructions en ruines qui n’ont pas été préservées – peuvent se fondre en un paysage unifié. Les cinq sites que cet article utilise pour examiner cette notion sont : The Slopes, résidence des d’Urberville ; le poulailler où vivent les oiseaux de Mrs D’Urberville ; le monument Cross-in-Hand ; le tombeau des d’Urberville à Kingsbere; et Stonehenge. Si le site de The Slopes offre un excellent exemple de l’effet de discordance produit par le contraste entre l’architecture et son cadre naturel, le poulailler est un exemple d’une structure en état de délabrement qui, parce qu’elle n’a pas été conservée, retourne à la nature. Le monument Cross-in-Hand, le tombeau de Kingsbere et Stonehenge sont tous décrits avec une terminologie associée au règne végétal et animal, ce qui souligne leur intégration dans leur environnement, et leur retour à la nature. En fin de compte, les structures construites par l’homme dans Tess mettent en avant l’idée que les espaces architecturaux doivent être considérés dans le paysage naturel qui les entoure. Comme les humains qui occupent ces espaces finiront un jour par disparaître et tomber dans l’oubli, la nature doit être une considération primordiale dans le processus architectural, puisqu’elle finira par regagner les espaces construits par l’homme qui n’ont pas été conservés. Dans Tess, l’engagement environnemental de Hardy se mesure à l’accent mis sur le fait que l’environnement naturel devrait tenir autant de place dans le processus de conservation architecturale que l’environnement construit.

INDEX

oeuvrecitee Memories of Church Restoration, Tess of the d’Urbervilles

Keywords: green studies, architecture, preservation, human association, nature, memory, history, fellowship, ecocriticism, ecology

Mots-clés: écologie, éco-critique, environnement, études environnementales, architecture, conservation, nature, mémoire, histoire

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