

THE ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION AND NATIONAL DISTINCTIVENESS OF HUMAN–NATURE–SOCIETY RELATIONS IN THE WORKS OF THOMAS HARDY AND XURSHID DUSTMUHAMMAD

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Abstract

This article examines the artistic interpretation and national distinctiveness of human–nature–society relations in the works of Thomas Hardy and Xurshid Dustmuhammad. The research compares Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *The Return of the Native* and *Far from the Madding Crowd* with Dustmuhammad's *Chayongul*, *Bozor*, *Jajman* and selected prose. Comparative-typological, hermeneutic, close-reading and ecocritical approaches are employed. The analysis demonstrates that both writers construct the human being within a dynamic triangle of natural environment, social order and individual consciousness, yet the artistic realization of this triangle reflects different national-cultural traditions. Hardy's Wessex is shaped by Victorian rural life, agricultural temporality, class hierarchy, gender conventions and the tension between traditional communities and modernization. In both authors, landscape and social environment participate in characterization, conflict and plot, but Hardy tends toward tragic environmental realism, whereas Dustmuhammad more often combines realism with symbolic, psychological and parabolic modes.

Keywords: Thomas Hardy, Xurshid Dustmuhammad, human, nature, society, national distinctiveness, artistic interpretation, Wessex, landscape, symbolism, comparative literature, ecocriticism.

Introduction

Human–nature–society relations are among the most persistent structures of literary representation because human identity is formed neither outside the physical environment nor outside social institutions. Literature gives this relationship a concrete artistic form through landscape, labor, family, custom, morality, economic dependence, community judgment and individual choice. The interaction of these factors becomes especially revealing in comparative study, where similar human problems may be expressed through different national-cultural codes.

Thomas Hardy and Xurshid Dustmuhammad belong to different historical periods, literary traditions and cultural environments. Hardy's major fiction is rooted in nineteenth-century England and in the imagined region of Wessex, where rural life, agricultural labor, social hierarchy and the pressure of modernization shape human experience. Dustmuhammad's prose develops within modern Uzbek literature and frequently connects social reality with symbolic, psychological and philosophical interpretation. Despite these differences, both writers repeatedly place the individual at the intersection of natural environment and social order.

The comparative value of their works lies not in direct influence but in the recurrence of a shared artistic problem. In both poetics, the external world is not a neutral background. Fields, roads, heathlands, villages, markets, flowers, animals and domestic spaces become active elements of narrative meaning. They influence the emotional state of characters, organize conflict and embody the moral logic of society. Hardy criticism has long emphasized environment, regionality and social determinism [1; 2; 6], while Uzbek scholarship on Dustmuhammad has drawn attention to symbolism, psychology and the interaction of nature and society [3; 4; 5].

The aim of this article is to determine how human–nature–society relations are artistically interpreted by Hardy and Dustmuhammad, to identify the national-cultural features of this interpretation, and to show how natural and social spaces participate in character formation and narrative structure.

An ecocritical approach provides a useful theoretical basis because it rejects the assumption that nature functions merely as decorative scenery. Glotfelty and Fromm define ecocriticism through the relationship between literature and the physical environment, while Garrard shows that literary representations of

dwelling, pastoral space, wilderness and environmental conflict are always connected with cultural values [7; 8]. This perspective allows landscape to be read as a participant in social and ethical meaning.

However, the concept of nature cannot be separated from society. A field may be a biological environment, a site of labor, a form of property and a symbol of national memory at the same time. A village may represent communal belonging but also social control. A market may be an economic institution and a metaphor for moral exchange. Therefore, human–nature–society relations should be studied as a unified artistic system.

National distinctiveness emerges through the way a culture interprets space, labor, family, community, gender, custom and moral responsibility. It does not mean that one national literature possesses completely unique human problems. Rather, similar problems are encoded through historically specific images and narrative conventions. In Hardy, Wessex reflects English rural history and the pressures of Victorian modernization. In Dustmuhammad, familiar Uzbek social spaces acquire symbolic and psychological meanings connected with collective memory, interpersonal responsibility and moral self-examination.

Comparative analysis therefore requires two levels: the universal level of the human–nature–society triangle and the national level through which that triangle is concretely represented.

Hardy's Wessex is both a geographical reconstruction and an artistic world. Its villages, farms, heathlands and roads create a network in which human life is inseparable from local history and economic structure. Characters are defined partly by where they live, how they work and how they move through the landscape. The result is a strongly regional poetics in which space carries social memory.

In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, agricultural life structures the rhythm of the narrative. Seasonal work, animal care, harvest and weather do not simply accompany human relationships; they shape responsibility, competence and social reputation. Bathsheba Everdene's position as a landowner places her at the center of both natural and social systems. Her authority must be demonstrated through practical knowledge as well as personal independence.

In *The Return of the Native*, Egdon Heath becomes even more autonomous. It appears older than the individual characters and resistant to their desires. Ecocritical readings have emphasized the way the heath exceeds human control

and provides a temporal scale different from personal biography [9]. Yet its meaning is also social: different characters interpret the same place as home, confinement, beauty or backwardness. Nature therefore becomes a field of cultural perception.

This dual function is nationally significant. Hardy's rural environment embodies a society in transition. Traditional forms of livelihood and communal continuity exist alongside mobility, urban aspiration and technological change. The landscape thus records not only natural permanence but also historical tension.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles offers a particularly complex model of the relation among person, nature and society. Tess's life is embedded in rural labor, seasonal movement and bodily vulnerability, but the tragedy of her destiny is intensified by social judgments concerning gender, sexuality, class and respectability. The novel repeatedly contrasts the continuity of natural processes with the harsh moral codes of human institutions.

Tess is often most fully herself in moments of contact with the natural world. Yet Hardy does not idealize nature. Agricultural labor can be harmonious and exhausting, fertile and destructive. The natural world provides neither automatic justice nor reliable protection. Its indifference becomes a critical counterpoint to a society that claims moral authority while producing suffering.

The heroine's national-cultural environment is specifically Victorian. Concepts of female purity, family reputation and class mobility place pressure on individual life. Studies of the novel have therefore interpreted Tess through both fatality and personal agency [10; 11]. Her tragedy cannot be explained by nature alone or society alone; it is produced by their intersection with chance and human choice. Hardy's artistic method is important here. Landscape description, labor scenes and bodily imagery are integrated into the narrative rather than added as external commentary. This integration gives social conflict an environmental dimension and environmental experience a social meaning.

Dustmuhammad's prose presents a different relation between environment and social reality. While concrete spaces remain recognizable, they are frequently intensified through symbolism and psychological association. Objects, plants, animals and everyday places may function as signs that reveal the internal state of characters or expose contradictions in the surrounding social order.

In Bozor, the market is not merely a location of economic exchange. It becomes a concentrated image of human relations, value, desire and competition. The

social environment is therefore material and metaphorical at the same time. The market embodies a world in which human values can be tested against transactional logic. This gives the social space a philosophical dimension.

In Jajman, realistic and non-realistic elements interact in a way that expands the meaning of ordinary experience. Studies of the story have emphasized the artistic logic of this interaction [5]. The unusual or symbolic image is not detached from social life; it functions as a means of exposing hidden moral structures. The external environment becomes a mirror in which human impulses and collective habits can be examined.

Chayongul similarly demonstrates Dustmuhammad's interest in the symbolic potential of natural imagery. Research on the work has drawn attention to the representation of human psychology [4]. The flower image acquires meaning beyond botany: it participates in the characterization of vulnerability, tension, emotional resistance and transformation. In this way, nature enters the social and psychological world through symbol.

The social worlds of Hardy and Dustmuhammad differ because they arise from different historical and cultural systems. Hardy's characters frequently confront the institutions of Victorian England: class hierarchy, property relations, gender morality, church influence, agricultural change and the decline of older rural structures. Social pressure is often formalized through institutions and public reputation.

Dustmuhammad's characters, by contrast, are often placed within social environments where communal perception, moral habit, family memory and everyday interaction have strong importance. Social pressure may appear not only through formal institutions but also through collective expectation, indirect judgment and the symbolic weight of familiar spaces. This distinction gives his prose a particular cultural texture.

National specificity also appears in the treatment of community. Hardy's village communities can provide continuity and practical knowledge, but they can also intensify gossip and exclusion. Dustmuhammad's social spaces often expose tensions between communal belonging and individual moral autonomy. In both writers, society is therefore ambivalent: it protects identity and constrains it at the same time.

What differs is the symbolic vocabulary through which this ambivalence is represented. Hardy often relies on regional landscape, seasonal labor and rural

institutions. Dustmuhammad more often combines everyday Uzbek social spaces with metaphorical, parabolic or psychologically charged images.

Character formation in both writers is inseparable from environment. A protagonist does not simply possess a fixed personality before entering the world of the narrative. Character emerges through response to place, labor, social judgment, desire, fear and responsibility. This dynamic model explains why the same natural or social environment can affect different individuals differently.

Hardy's protagonists are repeatedly tested by material conditions. Tess's labor, Eustacia Vye's relation to Egdon Heath, Bathsheba's management of the farm and Gabriel Oak's practical knowledge all connect identity with the physical world. Competence, vulnerability and aspiration are revealed through environmental action.

Dustmuhammad's characters are also shaped by external conditions, but his narrative method often moves more directly into psychological symbolism. Natural or social images can condense complex internal states. Rather than merely describing what happens to a character, the prose often converts environment into an interpretive code through which the reader understands emotional and moral transformation.

The key similarity is that neither writer treats human character as independent of context. The key difference lies in method: Hardy generally develops character through realist environmental process, while Dustmuhammad frequently intensifies this process through symbolic and parabolic compression.

Landscape performs several functions in the two poetics. First, it locates the story culturally. Wessex immediately signals a regional English world, while the spaces of Dustmuhammad's prose carry Uzbek social and cultural associations. Second, landscape creates atmosphere. Third, it structures plot by determining movement, labor and encounter. Fourth, it acquires symbolic meaning.

Hardy's landscape often develops slowly and accumulatively. Repeated descriptions of heath, fields, roads and seasons produce a sense of duration larger than any one human life. This temporal depth contributes to his tragic vision because individual hopes appear fragile against the continuity of the world.

Dustmuhammad's symbolism is often more concentrated. A plant, creature, marketplace or object may rapidly gather several layers of meaning. The image becomes a point where natural, psychological and social meanings intersect. This

is particularly visible in Chayongul and Jajman, where concrete images exceed their literal function.

These differences are not absolute but they are stylistically significant. Hardy expands symbolic meaning through realist accumulation; Dustmuhammad often creates symbolic intensity within a compressed image or situation.

Table 1. Comparative artistic features of human–nature–society relations.

Aspect	Thomas Hardy	Xurshid Dustmuhammad
Dominant spatial model	Wessex: rural region, farm, heath, road	Market, village, domestic and symbolic social spaces
Nature	Material environment with autonomous rhythms	Natural image often combined with psychological-symbolic meaning
Society	Victorian class, gender, property and reputation	Communal expectation, moral habit, social memory and everyday interaction
Character formation	Realist interaction with labor, place and institution	Psychological and symbolic interaction with environment
National marker	English rural history and modernization	Uzbek cultural mentality and social-symbolic coding
Typical effect	Tragic environmental realism	Symbolic-psychological and parabolic intensification

The comparison shows that both authors construct a triangular relationship rather than three isolated categories. Human identity is produced through simultaneous participation in natural and social systems. Nature may condition material existence, while society interprets that existence through norms and values. The individual responds to both through consciousness and action.

National distinctiveness is visible in the dominant cultural codes. Hardy's Wessex carries the history of English rural transformation. Dustmuhammad's social and symbolic spaces reflect Uzbek cultural experience and the moral pressure of communal life. Yet both writers use local material to address universal questions of freedom, responsibility and belonging.

National distinctiveness in literature should not be reduced to ethnographic detail. It includes the deeper organization of value: what is considered honorable, shameful, natural, civilized, traditional, desirable or threatening. Hardy and Dustmuhammad reveal these value systems through conflict rather than abstract explanation.

In Hardy, the conflict between individual desire and social convention frequently exposes the contradictions of Victorian morality. The rural world can appear traditional and stable, yet it contains unequal structures of power. Nature becomes a measure against which the artificiality of certain social judgments can be perceived.

In Dustmuhammad, national specificity often emerges through moral psychology and social symbolism. Familiar communal spaces become sites where modern pressures, inherited norms and individual conscience encounter one another. The result is not a simple celebration of tradition or rejection of modernity, but a critical exploration of how identity is negotiated.

Thus, national distinctiveness is an artistic principle that organizes perception. It shapes which images become central, how conflict is narrated and what forms of social experience are given symbolic importance.

The comparative analysis demonstrates that the human–nature–society model provides a productive framework for reading both writers. It avoids the reduction of Hardy to fatalism and Dustmuhammad to symbolism alone. In each case, the individual exists within an interacting system of material environment, social expectation and personal response.

Hardy's strongest contribution to this model is the integration of regional landscape with social history. Wessex is not simply picturesque; it is a space in which changes in labor, property, mobility and morality become visible. Dustmuhammad's distinctive contribution lies in his ability to transform ordinary social and natural images into condensed psychological and philosophical signs. The two writers also share an important ethical dimension. Their works question social systems that treat human beings according to rigid categories. Nature can destabilize such categories by revealing a deeper continuity of life, while symbolic images can expose hidden forms of moral deformation. Literature therefore becomes a means of re-examining the relation between individual dignity and collective order.

The national differences between the writers strengthen rather than weaken the comparison. They show how universal relationships acquire culturally specific artistic forms. Comparative literature is most productive at precisely this point: not where difference disappears, but where shared structures are refracted through different historical memories and aesthetic traditions.

Conclusion

The works of Thomas Hardy and Xurshid Dustmuhammad present human–nature–society relations as a dynamic artistic system. Human character is formed through interaction with material environment, social norm and individual consciousness; nature and society are not external decorations but active components of narrative meaning.

Hardy’s national distinctiveness is most visible in the poetics of Wessex, agricultural temporality, Victorian social hierarchy and the tension between rural continuity and modernization. Dustmuhammad’s national distinctiveness emerges through Uzbek social spaces, communal moral pressure, psychological symbolism and the transformation of natural images into cultural and ethical signs.

Both writers demonstrate that the individual cannot be understood outside the environment in which life is lived and interpreted. Their difference lies in aesthetic emphasis: Hardy generally develops this relation through regional realism and tragic environmental process, while Dustmuhammad often intensifies it through symbolic and psychological structures. This contrast makes the two writers especially productive for comparative study and confirms the importance of national-cultural context in the artistic interpretation of universal human problems.

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