

**Imagining Archaeology: Nature and Landscape in the work
of Thomas Hardy and Richard Jefferies**

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Abstract

Over the last two decades the potential for the combined study of literature and archaeology has been increasingly recognised. The Victorian era, which gave rise to new literary forms, and to archaeology as a science, offers a fertile area of enquiry. This thesis seeks to bring together the imaginative possibilities of archaeology and literature, conceiving their close association to be rooted in the observance and appreciation of the natural world. Focusing on the work of Thomas Hardy and Richard Jefferies, who both wrote about Wessex landscapes rich in archaeology, the thesis identifies the processes involved in the authors' engagement with nature in archaeological settings. In 1851, Sir Daniel Wilson welcomed archaeology into the 'circle of the sciences', and the subject rose to popularity in the periodical press alongside rural pursuits; driven by the closing divide between town and country. Literary depictions of nature in ancient settings elevated the imaginative conception of the past, and found a receptive audience in London papers such as the *Graphic* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*, to which Hardy and Jefferies contributed. Both authors associate the mysterious qualities of prehistoric times, and the consonant sense of 'untrodden space', with the discovery of new subterranean territories in the self. In a society that was 'adrift on change', and seeking new meaning, these connections between the literary and archaeological imagination, and between the present and the past, forged at least temporary consolation. Both authors anticipated early Modern approaches to an archaeology of mind.

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