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Landscape, Gender, and the Politics of Belonging in Thomas Hardy's The Woodlanders and Tess of the D'Urbervilles

Sarah Dickerson
Bucknell University, sad023@bucknell.edu

LANDSCAPE, GENDER, AND THE POLITICS OF BELONGING IN THOMAS HARDY'S *THE WOODLANDERS* AND *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*

by

Sarah A. Dickerson

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Approved by:

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Advisor: Dr. Virginia Zimmerman

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Committee Member: Dr. Jean Peterson

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Committee Member: Dr. John Rickard

_____
Department Chair: Dr. Anthony Stewart

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

In my thesis, I analyze Thomas Hardy's *The Woodlanders* (1887) and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), exploring the way that Hardy's depictions of both landscape and gender are interwoven to illuminate the larger issue of belonging as a central concern for his characters. I argue that in these two novels, we can analyze how one's belonging to a physical environment and performative gender role directly relate to characters' tragedy or success in the narratives. Characters who challenge normalized gender roles and characters whose place attachment manifests in natural rather than social spaces, endure worse tragedies than their gendered insider and environmental outsider counterparts in Hardy's prose. By calling attention to this pattern of tragedy, Hardy uses his novels to undermine, critique, or at least call attention to, the dominant norms and values of Victorian society that seemingly reinforce the insider/outsider relationship based on the discourse of the politics of belonging.

The chapter focusing on *The Woodlanders* offers an interrogation of the differing levels of autonomy that characters experience when performing in opposition to traditional gendered Victorian expectations, focusing specifically on the role that the insider/outsider relationship to a physical place has in curtailing or supporting individual agency in gender performance. My analysis departs from the typical scholarly focus on social and class-based belonging in the novel by introducing gender and sexuality to the conversation. The notion of identity narratives that constitute a character's belonging is central to my understanding of the interrelationship between seemingly separate communities of belonging.

The chapter I dedicate to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* explores the ways the feminine body interacts with the land. I track the way the shifting standard of farm work rewrites the social and physical expectations of the female body and how Tess mediates these expectations. Rather than mapping Tess onto a spectrum of belonging, I explore the range of Tess's liminal belonging. While it seems most obvious to consider liminality as not belonging to a particular community, I argue that Tess's liminality is an alternate to, rather than the negation of, belonging. While Tess does strive to locate herself in communities of belonging, Tess's liminality is both a persistent inability to belong and a refusal to make concessions for the sake of belonging. It is only through her temporal liminality that Tess can briefly experience a kind of belonging. In the end, however, Tess's only option for sustained belonging is death.

Finally, I conclude with a brief exploration of the possibility of expanding this project to include an analysis of the role of belonging in Hardy's poetry. In analyzing "The Puzzled Game-Birds" (1901), I call attention to Hardy's reworking of a scene that he first recorded in his journal, wrote in his novel, and then developed into a poem. This process of writing and rewriting encourages a parallel reading of Hardy's own repeating remediations of the terms of his belonging as he transitions from a working-class man to a novelist and then to a poet.

1 INTRODUCTION

Scholarly readings of Thomas Hardy's prose tend to focus on either his representation of landscape or gender, but my analysis considers how Hardy's depictions of both landscape and gender are interwoven to illuminate the larger issue of belonging as a central concern for his characters. By belonging, I mean locating oneself as an insider or an outsider to a particular community. For my analysis, I focus on two intersecting factors that contribute to the insider/outsider status: the intersectionality of belonging for characters who do or do not align themselves with nature and those who fulfill or challenge normalized gender roles. Hardy weaves these two factors together in his depictions of his characters. To evaluate how Hardy uses the rural landscape to manifest the issues of belonging that simultaneously exist in his characters' gender performances, I selected two novels to analyze: *The Woodlanders* (1887) and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891). In each of these novels, Wessex, Hardy's "partly real, partly dream country," is a central location for the novel's actions, and the protagonists experience varied degrees of personal and social strife for the decisions they make while navigating landscape-based and gendered communities of belonging (*Far* xxx). I argue that in *The Woodlanders* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, we can analyze how one's belonging to a physical environment and performative gender role directly relate to characters' tragedy or success in the narratives. Characters who challenge normalized gender roles and characters whose place attachment manifests in natural rather than social spaces, endure worse tragedies than their gendered insider and environmental outsider counterparts in Hardy's prose. By calling attention to this pattern of tragedy, Hardy uses his novels to undermine, critique,

or at least call attention to, the dominant norms and values of Victorian society that seemingly reinforce the insider/outsider relationship based on the discourse of the politics of belonging.

My specific focus on the insider/outsider relationship in Hardy's novels manifests out of my reflections on the discourse surrounding the "politics of belonging." In "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging," Nira Yuval-Davis discusses how the politics of belonging dictate the maintenance of community boundaries that separate "us" from "them" (204). Yuval-Davis explains that "any construction of boundaries, of a delineated collectivity, that includes some people—concrete or not—and excludes others, involves an act of active and situated imagination," which suggests that as we meet new people, we evaluate their situation inside or outside of our community of belonging (204). To better explore belonging/exclusion, I analyze the intersectionality of belonging for characters who do or do not align themselves with nature and those who fulfill or challenge normalized gender roles. Each community or collection of people creates "imagined communities" that necessarily remove the possibility of "outsiders" successfully joining or assimilating to their community. As we see in Hardy's texts, belonging in imagined communities is not determined by a single aspect of a character; instead, belonging hinges on one's relationship to the physical environment, gender performance, and social placement in Victorian society. Yuval-Davis describes this complementary relationship of characteristics as an "identity narrative" (203). For the purpose of my thesis, I am focusing on the intersection between two facets of belonging: belonging in a physical environment, which is determined by a character's knowledge of

the natural land, and gender-based belonging, which is determined by a character's adherence to gendered social norms.

As aforementioned, Thomas Hardy scholars traditionally focus their studies on portrayals of the land or gender issues in Hardy's novels. Ecocritical analyses of his elaborately-described natural spaces within Wessex are popular because he not only devotes large passages in his novels to describing the setting but with the creation of Wessex, he offers a hybrid imaginary and realistic pastoral landscape. Conversations about the role of gender in Hardy's work are also often-considered because he writes strong, independent female characters. Shifting away from that traditional conversation, I aim to use the concept of belonging as a means to focus on the intersectionality between the physical environment and gender. First, however, I will briefly overview these two focus areas of traditional Hardy scholarship in sections 1.1 and 1.2 before moving into a more detailed description of Nira Yuval-Davis's theoretical discussion of belonging in section 1.3. I will then describe Hardy's repeating mediations of belonging in his novels in section 1.4, and finally, in sections 1.4.1 and 1.4.2 I will briefly summarize the plots of the two novels on which my thesis chapters focus.

1.1 Hardy's Pastoral

Literary scholars frequently focus on the changing role of the pastoral that Hardy pursues with his creation of the rural landscape of Wessex. While Buell argues that Hardy is not an ecocentric writer who is a counterpart of Thoreau, Kerridge disagrees (141). Buell suggests Hardy focuses too much on the characters, but the interconnection between land and characters is precisely what Kerridge argues makes Hardy such a great ecocentric

writer. These connections are always there because one cannot exist in isolation from the other, and Hardy chooses to give attention to the details of the spaces in which his characters exist. Drawing on Raymond Williams's understanding of the pastoral in *Country and the City* and then Indy Clark's tracking of Hardy's modification *to* rather than rewriting *of* the traditional pastoral form in *An Unkindly May*, I explore the ways in which these scholars argue that Hardy complicates the pastoral.

Raymond Williams's *The City and the Country* is a foundational text for discourse surrounding environmental literature. His multiple chapters separate his analysis of different facets of the environmental literature conversation, exploring the differences between the country and the city, tracking literature's transitional relationship with the pastoral, and exploring the role of community in identifying the differences between spaces and the people who inhabit those spaces. Rather than drawing on a lot of other critical texts, Williams's book acts as the foundation for future critics, so as many of the critics I consult for my thesis cite Williams heavily, I think it is important to revisit the original text. Like the more contemporary critics I cite, Williams also consults literary texts, including Hardy's novels, to explore and illustrate his points. While this text is out of date in some regards, I think it still provides an integral voice to the dialogue about environmental literature, especially because contemporary literary critics continue to reference Raymond Williams in their works.

The classical pastoral form idealized both the land and the way of life for the individuals who inhabited it. Like all traditions, the pastoral is selective, meaning that it only draws from certain aspects of social and cultural memory (Williams 18). In the

classical view of the pastoral, a vision that excluded people, the country necessarily was void of people. Departing from this perception of country, Williams opens his book by explaining the meaning of "country" in the English language. He writes, "[i]n English, 'country' is both a nation and a part of a 'land' (Williams 1). Hardy describes Wessex as a "partly real, partly dream country" in his introduction to *Far from the Madding Crowd*, and it seems significant that he selected a term that means both a nation and a particular rural landscape. Since I am focusing on communities of belonging, Williams's multi-layered discourse surrounding Hardy's descriptive "country" invites a similarly multi-faceted description of how people can belong in a country or in the country. Focusing more on Hardy in his chapter "Wessex and the Border," Williams asserts that Hardy's country exists in the space between the dichotomies of "custom and education," "work and ideas," "love of place and an experience of change" (197). Navigating between these dichotomies, Hardy's prose investigates and sometimes complicates the role of change in the Wessex community (197). Williams also observes that some of Hardy's characters (e.g., Tess and Grace) speak two languages: that of the country and that of the urban, educated world; however, they are not accepted by the educated communities, and they alienate themselves from their known communities, to an extent, through their attempts to depart from them (201). Williams is one of the ecocritical pioneers in dismantling and complicating our interpretations of the representations of the environment in literary works.

To help develop a connection between Williams and more contemporary readings of Hardy, I shift my focus now to Indy Clark, whose book-length analysis of Hardy's

poetry explores the manifestation of Hardy's version of the pastoral. Building on the ways in which Williams complicates the classical perception of the pastoral in *The Country and the City*, Indy Clark explores the significance of labor in Thomas Hardy's poetry. In his chapter, "Landscape, Nature, and Work" from *An Unkindly May,* Indy Clark argues that Hardy departs from the typical "observer" role associated with the pastoral by highlighting his focus on the "processes at work beneath the surface" of the pastoral (59). In this chapter, Clark investigates the "uniqueness of Hardy's pastoral" because of the way Hardy features the "complex relationship in Wessex between the representation of landscape, nature, and work" (59). Specifically focusing on Hardy's poetry that features Wessex, Clark explores the intersectionality of these three representations, and ultimately argues that "the Wessex landscape is defined through the relationship of its people to it" (100).

Clark identifies the ways in which Hardy's pastoral imagery does not align with the tradition of pastoral landscapes that exclude people, citing Raymond Williams's consideration of the classical pastoral landscape by the "'implie[d] separation and observation'" that it necessitates (60). When a landscape is characterized as a space for observation, an environment in which one does not "get one's hands dirty," then the presence of laborers does not fit into that landscape scene (Clark 60). Hardy disrupts the notion of gazing on the landscape: rather than excluding people, specifically people who are working in the pastoral landscapes, Hardy makes these characters central to his poetic and prose narratives. While Clark's exploration of the role of labor in Hardy's pastoral is not an entirely unique academic interest, Clark differs from other critics in that he focuses

on the environment first and the characters second while most other critics prioritize the characters in their analyses, which is a helpful alternative point of view that influenced my analytical approach in which I try to look at characters and their environments simultaneously. Clark also makes a very interesting argument in which he compares Hardy's landscape to Derrida's supplement. He explains that "[t]his dialectic between absence and presence is at the heart of Hardy's pastoral" and that "the disruption in style," meaning the representation of landscape, "is a product of the widening of the knowable community; as more voices are heard and represented, so a unity of form becomes impossible to observe" (64). While Clark is thinking specifically about poetry, Hardy replicates his disruption to the pastoral style in his prose as well.[1]

1.2 Hardy and Gender

The role of gender in Hardy's work is also a frequent area of critical engagement for literary scholars because of his writing of characters who perform in contrast to pre-determined gendered and sexual expectations. For example, in *Patriarchy and Its Discontents: Sexual Politics in Selected Novels and Stories of Thomas Hardy*, Joanna Devereux argues that in Hardy's novels, "the female characters embody either a threat to the male protagonist or a personification of his social and professional ambitions" (xii).

[1] There is also a history of scholars' desire to map Hardy's Wessex onto the real English countryside, prioritizing a desire to identify reality in the landscape rather than focusing on the reality of the scenarios that Hardy depicts in Wessex. Denys Kay-Robinson and Simon McBride's *The Landscape of Thomas Hardy* is an example of one of these academic works. This book carefully maps the fictional places and buildings from Thomas Hardy's literary works onto the real places and buildings in England. By offering photographs and historical proof, Kay-Robinson and McBride together attempt to cement Hardy's fiction into reality. While this kind of study is preoccupied with the realistic mapping of the physical places described in Hardy's novels, my analysis is preoccupied with the reality of the representations of people and social scenarios, so their work is out of the scope of my thesis.

Women who do not perform in alignment with gendered expectations appear repeatedly in Hardy's work and embody this kind of threat to "masculinity" that Devereux describes. Moreover, "Hardy's narratives expose the problems inherent in the social-class and gender hegemony of his time without reinforcing that hegemony, by focusing on both the nostalgic power of the patriarchy and the distance of his protagonists from the center of that power base" (Devereux xiii). Hardy's acknowledgement of and resistance to hegemonic norms allow his work to emerge as a critical commentary on his society. She continues to argue that Hardy's male characters demonstrate a "fearful fascination with women" and an "attraction" towards higher class status, which draws attention to the "linked gender and social-class instabilities of the period," suggesting that Hardy's life experiences influenced his desire to write social truths and critiques into his fictions (xiii).

Within the feminist community of Hardy scholarship, there is also a specific repeating interest in the treatment and interpretation of Tess Durbeyfield from *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* because of the paradox of Hardy's commitment as a male who aims to write a true representation of Tess as a female character. *The Sense of Sex: Feminist Perspectives on Hardy*, edited by Margaret Higonnet, is a collection of feminist writings about Hardy's work that includes multiple chapters that focus on Tess. In Higonnet's chapter, "A Woman's Story: Tess and the Problem of Voice," she explores Hardy's navigation of writing the female Tess as a male author (14). She argues that "Hardy's project of truthfully representing a woman's language becomes entangled in his concern to dismantle clichés about masculinity and femininity. It also intersects with his critique

of stereotypes of class" (Higonnet 14). By committing himself to writing Tess's story truthfully, Hardy challenges his own masculine positionality as he tries to reproduce feminine language, which is potentially problematic. Pointing to the inherent tension in Hardy's errand, Higonnet asks, "can a man implicated in the patriarchy speak for a woman constrained by it?" (15). This question remains at the crux of many feminist readings of Hardy. We know from the text of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* that when Tess resolves to tell her story to Angel after he has shared his sexual history with her, Hardy describes the "'question of a woman telling her story' is to her 'the heaviest of crosses'" (16). Hardy's awareness of the challenge Tess faces in sharing her story further complicates his relationship with her voice, but he does appear to try and allow Tess to reclaim her voice. Higonnet asserts that "Hardy does not allow Tess to remain a totally passive object of description by his male characters. Nonetheless he demonstrates that when she does speak up, men try to silence her" (18). In this sense, while Tess has the resolve as a strong female character to try to speak, the men around her frequently suppress her voice in a way that is symbolically representative of the patriarchy's oppression of female voices. For example, when Higonnet recalls the scene in which Tess pleads with Alec after he has raped her, claiming her ignorance about his intentions, Higonnet reminds the reader that Hardy does afford Tess opportunities to speak (18). In this scene, Tess says to Alec, "'I didn't understand your meaning till it was too late'" (*Tess* 77). Alec carelessly replies, "'That's what every woman says'" (77). Instead of writing Tess as the passive woman who resolves to silence after Alec's reply, Hardy's Tess reproaches Alec: "'How can you dare to use such words!' she cried […] 'Did it

never strike your mind that what every woman says some women may feel?'" (77). By writing this line for Tess, Hardy does try to give Tess a voice, but oppressive male characters, like Alec, suppress her.

Higonnet also explores the way Hardy links Tess's voice to her mother's through their shared dialect and singing of songs (19). Tess's voice is "[f]luty, murmuring, quavering, stammering, panting, its breaks and stops call to mind Julia Kristeva's *semeiotik*, that theory of fluidity, contraction, and silence in a feminine, pre-Oedipal language" (Higonnet 19). In further defense of Hardy, Higonnet also recalls the language of Tess's pauses, silences, and omissions, looking at these missing passages as a way for Tess to speak even though it is not typical language (27). These pauses are a part of Tess's semiotic and contribute to her feminine language, so instead of concluding that Hardy is removing Tess's voice in her moments of silence, Higonnet asks us to consider using Kristeva's critical theory as a framework in which we can recognize the possibility of meaning in silence. Additionally, Higonnet considers Tess's letters to Angel as examples of what Hélène Cixous calls *écriture feminine*, which is female writing that includes hearing the semiotic and writing against hegemonic plot structures (23). While Cixous focuses on women writing *écriture feminine*, men can write in this style as well; writing feminine is about hearing the semiotic, which originates from the mother. This is why Tess's shared dialect and songs with her mother recalls this kind of feminine writing. Furthermore, Higonnet points out the way that Tess's and Angel's voices become more masculine and feminine, respectively, as the novel progresses: Tess adopts Angel's words and phrases and then begins writing, limiting her previous silence, while

Angel speaks less and less until he abandons words altogether (24). For example, when Angel comes to find Tess at a hotel with Alec after she is forced to reunite with her rapist, Angel starts, "'Ah—it is my fault!' said Clare. But he could not get on. Speech was as inexpressive as silence" (*Tess* 379). This switch supports the arbitrary assignment of "feminine" and "masculine" language (Higonnet 24).

While Higonnet cites some of the ways in which Hardy restores Tess's feminine voice, she also reminds us of his exclusion of some key passages that would give clear language to Tess's story (i.e., her rape and her recounting of her rape to Angel). While Higonnet acknowledges critics' argument that Hardy's removal of these key scenes depicting her rape "'takes away from Tess all power to speak what she means'" and plays into "a larger tragic pattern [of] 'the ideological elision of woman, sex, and nature,'" she also maintains that the absence of these scenes may have been imposed on Hardy (27). These key exclusions of sexually-laden content may be the result of perceived censorship of them rather than intentional removal of Tess's language.

Devereux also gives attention to Tess and explores, in part, the way Hardy does not box her into a female gendered stereotype. For example, when Tess confesses her childhood rape to her new husband, Angel, she is not hysterical (Devereux 118). Rather than Angel perceiving her "masculine" delivery of her tragedy as positive, however, Angel is disturbed by Tess's measured, rational description of her rape because he expects her to respond in a "feminine" way. By writing this complication of her gender and the corresponding misinterpretation, Hardy encourages readers to reconsider the hegemonic forms of gender performance. At the crux of Tess's paradox is the way that

she “espouses the patriarchal ideology even as her story demonstrates its essential inhumanity” (121). The novel’s male protagonists “see her as the completion of their own inadequate selves: for them, she is the necessary, and ideal, complement” and yet they misunderstand and mistreat her through the patriarchal systems of oppression (119).

In the end, however, we are still left to deal with the controversy of a male author writing a female character. Also in *The Sense of Sex: Feminist Perspectives on Hardy,* Dianne Fallon Sandoff and Judith Mitchell both write against Higonnet’s defense of Hardy’s writing of Tess’s voice. In “Looking at Tess: The Female Figure in Two Narrative Media,” Sandoff focuses on the image of Tess created both in film and in narrative, arguing that not only does Hardy participate in Tess’s violation by exercising his male gaze but that as readers, we are participating in the sadomasochist writing of her story (149-50). Similarly, Judith Mitchell’s “Hardy’s Female Reader” discusses the power of the male gaze versus the powerlessness and lack of control that the female gaze embodies in Hardy’s novels (176-7). In *Tess of the D’Urbervilles,* she argues that Hardy embodies the male narrator and is the one exercising the male gaze, citing the disparate narrative perspective he employs for his male and female characters (Mitchell 178). Ultimately, Mitchell concludes that Hardy’s writing offers a complex combination of feminist and sexist/patriarchal views (186). While I recognize the problems these feminist scholars raise, I am more inclined to agree with Higonnet’s assessment of Hardy’s imperfect but faithful attempt to critique the feminine and masculine binary through his representation of Tess’s voice.

Tess is obviously not the only female character Hardy has written, and feminist scholars also write about others who act in contrast to their prescribed gendered norms. Typically, their attentions rest more on Hardy's later works because he was freer to explore and dismantle gender norms after his initial literary success. When Rosemarie Morgan writes critically about *Jude the Obscure*, for example, she discusses patriarchy, traditional female roles, and how Sue has to repress her sexuality to be taken seriously as an intellectual woman who does not want to align with the traditional subservient female. Writing about the same novel, Elizabeth Lagland writes that "Hardy has revealed masculinity as a cultural and social class construct, one that coerces and limits individuals even as it holds out the irresistible promise of conferring definitive meaning on their lives" (45-6). Hardy's writings about gendered representations and sexual relationships continue to interest scholars today, I would argue, for the same reason they outraged Victorian readers: he makes space for the truthfulness of individual differences instead of espousing social ideals. Of course, his gendered position in the patriarchy problematizes a sort of emphatic acceptance of his rewriting of gendered or sexual standards, especially with his focus on writing feminine characters, but I maintain that his work still houses early glimpses of feminist views.

1.3 The Politics of Belonging

Looking at Hardy's characters' adherence to gender norms or familiarity with the landscape as markers for belonging to a community, I situate Nira Yuval-Davis as a theoretical foundation on which I build my literary analysis. Rather than being a literary scholar, Yuval-Davis is a professor in Gender, Sexuality, and Ethnic studies at the

University of East London. In her article "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging," Nira Yuval-Davis presents an analytical outline for the "study of belonging and the politics of belonging" (197). She organizes this analytical framework in three main sections. I am most interested in the first two sections of her article in which she focuses on "the notion of 'belonging' and the different analytical levels on which it needs to be studied" and explores "politics of belonging and how it relates to the participatory politics of citizenship" (Yuval-Davis 197). Yuval-Davis is primarily in conversation with other scholars who use historical frameworks to examine contemporary issues of social exclusion or prejudice based on race, ethnicity, or national identity.

To begin, Yuval-Davis explains the difference between belonging and the politics of belonging. The former, belonging, "is about emotional attachment" and "tends to be naturalized" (Yuval-Davis 197). The latter, the politics of belonging, "comprises specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectivities that are, at the same time, themselves being constructed by these projects in very particular ways" (197). Obviously these notions are not new, so rather than using her article to summarize the substantial historical conversation about belonging and the politics of belonging, Yuval-Davis explains that her work "attempts to differentiate and identify some of the major building blocks a comprehensive analytical framework for belonging and the politics of belonging would require" (198). I am most interested in Yuval-Davis's exploration of what it means for someone to "belong" in a community since the concept of "belonging" is the narrative thread that I use to unify the notions of gender and landscape-based belonging in Hardy's literature. She explains that there are

different ways for someone to belong, and the act of "belonging can be an act of self-identification or identification by others" (199). Belonging, she continues, is not fixed but "is always a dynamic process" that is constructed on "three major analytical levels" (199). These levels are "social locations," "individuals' identifications and emotional attachments to various collectivities and groupings," and the "ethical and political value systems with which people judge their own and others' belonging/s" (199). These interrelated analytical levels of belonging help condition an analysis of belonging to explore the multi-faceted, intersectional concept rather than an isolated, static concept.

Furthermore, she explains that instead of belonging to only one "identity category," our "concrete social location is constructed along multiple axes of difference, such as gender, class, race and ethnicity, stage in the life cycle, sexuality, ability and so on" (Yuval-Davis 200). Instead of looking at each of these identity categories in isolation as individual "items that are added up," Yuval-Davis emphasizes the significance of the way these "intersecting social divisions" "constitute each other," meaning that one's identity is the compiled result of the intersectional impact that these multi-faceted aspects of identity have on each other (200). For example, in Hardy's literature, we cannot reduce the complex identity of a female character to her gender alone; rather, we must consider how her existence as a working-class, sexually-repressed female who lives in the country constitutes her identity. If even one of the aspects of a female character's identity changes and she is instead upper-class, for example, the resulting character changes to a unique individual who belongs to a different community.

Advancing her argument for the constituted nature of identity, Yuval-Davis asserts that "[i]dentities are narratives" (202). She cites Elspeth Probyn and Anne-Marie Fortier who both "construct identity as transition, as always producing itself through the combined processes of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong" (Yuval-Davis 202). The transitional duality of identity, argues Yuval-Davis, "is often reflected in narratives of identity" (202). Consequently, it follows that these narratives of identity are performative. In the tradition of Judith Butler's argument regarding the performative nature of gender, Vikki Bell and Fortier argue that "constructions of belonging have a performative dimension" and that "repetitive practices […] are crucial for the construction and reproduction of identity narratives and constructions of attachment" (203). Their emphasis on performance and construction highlight the non-biologically determined aspect of identity and, therefore, belonging.

Yuval-Davis continues her article to discuss how the politics of belonging dictate the maintenance of community boundaries that separate "us" from "them," building on the work of Benedict Anderson who used the term "'imagined communities'" to describe nations "'because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'" (204). Yuval-Davis clarifies what Anderson is asserting, writing that this "abstract form of community is necessary based on an abstract sense of imagined simultaneity" (204). Even still, as aforementioned, she explains that "any construction of boundaries, of a delineated collectivity, that includes some people—concrete or not—and excludes others, involves an act of active and situated imagination,"

which suggests that as we meet new people, we evaluate their situation inside or outside of our community of belonging (Yuval-Davis 204). This valuation of people as insiders or outsiders manifests in the judgment of, for example, someone's social location, performative identity, and physical place attachment. Therefore, boundary maintenance "is all about potentially meeting other people and deciding whether they stand inside or outside the imaginary boundary line of the nation and/or other communities of belonging, whether they are 'us' or 'them'" (204). In Hardy's prose, we read how his characters evaluate the identity and corresponding belonging of other characters without actually meeting them. Furthermore, as the author, Hardy has the agency to intentionally orient his reader, predisposing him/her/them to evaluate his characters as "us" or "them" with respect to the reader's own imagined community.

1.4 Analyzing Belonging in Hardy's Novels

While it is out of the scope of this thesis to explore Hardy's repeated mediations of belonging in his entire collection of prose, it is important to recognize the pervasive nature of his contemplations of this concept. In his essay, "The Profitable Reading of Fiction" (1888), Hardy explores the genre of fiction writing and the nature of reader response. Specifically, he mentions a recent theory that asserts that "novels which depict life in the upper walks of society must, in the nature of things, be better reading than those which exhibit the life of any lower class," which rests on the assumption that the upper class "represent a higher stage of development than their less fortunate brethren" (Hardy and Orel 123). This theory erroneously "proceeds from the assumption that the novel is the thing, and not a view of the thing," explains Hardy (124). He continues to

argue that "[i]t forgets that the characters, however they may differ, *express mainly the author, his largeness of heart or otherwise, his culture, his insight, and very little of any other living person,* except in such an inferior kind of procedure as might occasionally be applied to dialogue" (124, emphasis added). Hardy seems to reclaim the significance of authorial intention in a work of literature, drawing close ties between the author's "heart," "culture," and "insight" and the characters he creates in the novel. As a result, Hardy is writing himself into his novels, so if we consider Hardy's own life for a moment, a life in which he struggled to access his own belonging, it naturally follows that we can read Hardy's repeating questioning of belonging into his entire collection of prose.

Starting with his first novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady* (1868), which was never published, Hardy seemed interested in challenging the systems, assumptions, and restrictions that impacted a person's access to belonging in particular communities. In this first novel, he calls attention to the problems surrounding the standards of class-based belonging in this story of romantic desire that spans class divides. We see this interest reappear much later in Hardy's career in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) when Michael Henchard, a drunk and desperately poor laboring man, sells his wife and daughter. Horrified by his actions, he resolves to right his life and eventually becomes the mayor of his town, leaving behind his working-class life while remaining under the thumb of his ethical violation. As Hardy's novel writing career continued, he also wrote female characters who challenged the stereotypical gendered norms and, therefore, had a troubled relationship with belonging in their gender community. For example, *Far From*

the Madding Crowd (1874) features Bathsheba Everdene, an animated and capable woman who manages her late-uncle's farm successfully until she gives into social pressure to accept an ill-suited husband who leads to the devastation both of Bathsheba and her farm. Bathsheba is the mouthpiece for Hardy's acknowledgement of the oppressive, gendered system in which women must operate when she states, "'[i]t is difficult for a woman to define her feelings in language that is chiefly made by men to express theirs,'" which conveys her inability to portray her emotions effectively in the words of a male-created and dominated society (*Far* 376).

Hardy also dedicates his attention to his characters' navigation of belonging in physical environments throughout his literary contributions, often connecting this relationship to a shift in the physical environment. For example, in *Return of the Native* (1878), Hardy reflects the changes in the landscape of Egdon Heath in the hardships experienced by its residents. Opening the novel with a description of the land, Hardy describes its "lonely face, suggesting tragical possibilities," and the soil's wearing "of the same antique brown dress," situating the land in antiquity while foreshadowing the encroaching reach of modernization (*Return* 5). Hardy's final novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1895), offers the portrait of the tragic cousin-couple of Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead, who both struggle to access a community of belonging because of their resistance to the oppressive Victorian community standards. This final literary work challenges social, gender, sexual, and class-based norms with Sue's resistance to marriage and early feminist leanings, Jude's sensitivity towards others and longing for a life in the city, and the couple's taboo social and sexual behaviors. In the end, the criticism that Hardy

received for his writing of *Jude the Obscure* was so great that he abandoned novel writing, removing himself from that community of literary belonging.

Having laid out the common thread of belonging in Hardy's collection of prose, I now turn to the two novels that are the primary focus of my thesis. Each of my thesis chapters focuses on a single novel. I concentrate first on *The Woodlanders* (1887) and second on *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), examining specific intersectional relations between his characters' belonging to physical environments and socially-prescribed gendered performances. While Hardy's collection of novels offers many options that I could analyze through this lens of belonging, I chose these two texts because of the specific ways in which they invite a reading of environmental and gendered belonging—both as individual novels and with relation to each other. To orient my reader to the novels I selected, the next two sub-sections offers brief summaries of each text. At the close of sections 1.4.1 and 1.4.2 that begin to hint at the ways in which these novels interweave concerns of land, gender, and belonging, I will move onto the two body chapters, sections 2 and 3, in which I explore the relationship between land, gender, and belonging in these two novels.

1.4.1 *The Woodlanders* (1887)

The earlier of Hardy's two books I am analyzing is *The Woodlanders*. In this text, Thomas Hardy undertakes a nostalgic exploration of the disappearing rural community of Little Hintock. The novel maps the relationships between residents of Little Hintock and immigrants who find themselves living there. Key characters who are residents include Mr. Melbury and his daughter Grace Melbury, Giles Winterborne, and Marty South and

her father John South. The immigrants to the community who are most central to the novel are Dr. Edred Fitzpiers and Mrs. Felice Charmond. The residents who have only ever lived in the isolated community share knowledge about the woodlands, nature's seasonal cycles, and the history of the Little Hintock community while the outsiders are both unable to navigate through the woodlands and find its solitude oppressive.

When the novel opens, we meet Marty South, a poor woman who is completing her father's labor because the latter is gravely ill (*Woodlanders* 10). The strain of poverty compels Marty to cut and sell her luscious chestnut hair to make a wig for Mrs. Charmond (20). Marty also works in the forest, completing man's labor, so she spends time close by Giles Winterborne as they plant trees together (64). Unbeknownst to Giles, Marty loves him, but she never shares her affection because she knows Giles is in love with another: Grace Melbury. Grace is the daughter of Mr. Melbury, and at the outset of the novel, she is returning from her schooling in the city (37). Before her education was completed, Mr. Melbury promised Giles and Grace that they would marry, and both Giles and Grace were content with this resolution. This promised union was in part motivated by Mr. Melbury's commitment to right the wrong he did to the Winterborne family when he stole away the beloved of Giles's father (29). In spite of this commitment, when Grace returns from school, she is unengaged with the rugged nature of her native land, and Mr. Melbury encourages her to increasingly distance herself from both the land and Giles, asserting that she ought to marry someone of a higher class now that her education is complete (85).

Around the time of Grace's return, two new characters settle into Little Hintock: Mrs. Charmond and Dr. Fitzpiers. Mrs. Charmond is a wealthy widow whose husband purchased the Hintock House, which is a mansion in the Little Hintock woods, so she spends some time there in the dreary solitude between her trips to Europe. Mrs. Charmond exercises a sexual vitality that does not compare to the other women in the community, and aided by her wig made of Marty's hair, Mrs. Charmond attracts multiple lovers. Dr. Fitzpiers is a modern doctor who settles in Little Hintock for convenience but feels oppressed by the place (50). He is decidedly out of place in the community, but his foreignness develops as his central appeal to Grace. After a while, with a combination of encouragement from Mr. Melbury and Fitzpiers's intoxicating way of arresting Grace's senses, the two decide to marry (173).

During this same time, the death of John South, Marty's father, signals the end of the life-lease under which Giles's and Marty's homes are rented (102). Mrs. Charmond, the property owner, refuses to accept additional payment to extend the lease, so Giles and Marty must vacate their homes. Her father's death leaves Marty completely alone, but it also forces Giles out of his home (105). In response, Giles retreats further into isolation in his native woodland.

The marriage of Grace and Fitzpiers is not to be wedded bliss, however, because Fitzpiers has a sexual history that morphs into adulterous behavior when he engages sexually with Mrs. Charmond after his marriage to Grace (207, 241). Devastated by his daughter's marriage hardship, Mr. Melbury sets off to London to attempt to secure a divorce for Grace (271). When he thinks that the divorce is certain, Mr. Melbury

encourages Giles and Grace to renew their courtship and right the wrong he set against them both (275). Tragedy strikes again when the terms of the legislation determine that adultery alone is not a sufficient reason for Grace to obtain a divorce from Fitzpiers, so Grace and Giles must call off their courtship again (294).

The various plot strands all come together when Marty sends a letter to Fitzpiers, informing him that the hair of his beloved, Mrs. Charmond, is actually hers (243). This news causes a rift between the lovers, and while Fitzpiers decides to return to Grace, Mrs. Charmond is left alone and then shot by a crazed ex-lover (326). Grace is distraught by her husband's return to Little Hintock, so she retreats into the woods where she finds Giles (299). Giles relinquishes his home to Grace and agrees to assist in her escape from Little Hintock, but before the trip can commence, Giles, who has been terribly sick, dies (322). For a while after his death, Grace and Marty return to Giles's grave together to mourn the loss of their beloved, but before long, Grace agrees to leave Little Hintock with her husband as Mrs. Fitzpiers, leaving Marty as the final mourner. In the closing scene of the novel, Marty stands over Giles's grave alone (66).

1.4.2 *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891)

Arguably his most widely-read novel, Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* tells the tragic story of Tess Durbeyfield, a young country woman living in the isolated the village of Marlott in the Vale of Blackmoor, whose poverty and poor fortune force her to travel throughout the Wessex countryside in search of work. When she is a young girl of only 16 years, Tess's parents send her to the D'Urberville estate to claim kinship based on the delusion that their surname, Durbeyfield, descends from "D'Urberville" and should

afford them upward social mobility (*Tess* 49). The estate owners, Alec D'Urberville and his mother, however, are imposters: their family name is Stoke, but when ancestors decided to settle in the English countryside, they adopted the name D'Urberville (39). While Tess is living and working at the estate, Alec drugs and rapes Tess (74). Pregnant with their child, Tess moves back home (84). The child, who she names Sorrow, dies as an infant, so Tess takes it upon herself to baptize her baby with the assistance of her little brothers and sisters as the child dies (94).

With her sullied reputation, Tess, now 20 years-old, leaves her Marlott home and treks across the Wessex countryside in search of work (101). She finds work as a dairy maid at Talbothays Dairy, and during her time there, develops an affectionate relationship with Angel Clare. The two eventually marry, but when Tess shares her unwilling sexual experience with her husband, Angel abandons his new bride (227). Broken and even more alone than before, Tess finds herself again migrating across the Wessex countryside in search of work (254). This time instead of finding work at a dairy, Tess is compelled to work as a field-laborer at the Flintcomb-Ash Farm, which is unforgiving work (284). Upon receiving news that her parents are ill, Tess leaves her laboring position early to return to Marlott to care for her family (344). After her father's death, Tess, her mother, and the other Durbeyfield children are pushed out of their home because of the community's disapproval of Tess's sexual impurity (353). Again, with the strife of poverty and the needs of her family steering her decisions, Tess accepts Alec's repeated efforts to "win" her back, so later when Angel finally returns to apologize and reclaim Tess as his wife, it is too late (375). In a moment of combined passion and despair, Tess

stabs Alec and flees to be with her love, Angel (381). The couple's time together is loving but brief because Hardy concludes the novel with Tess's arrest and hanging for Alec's murder (397).

"It was one of those sequestered spots outside the gates of the world where may usually be found more mediation than action, and more listlessness than mediation; where reasoning proceeds on narrow premises, and results in interferences wildly imaginative; yet where, from time to time, no less than in other places, dramas of a grandeur and unity truly Sophoclean are enacted in the real, by virtue of the concentrated passions and closely-knit interdependence of the lives therein."

--Thomas Hardy, *The Woodlanders*

2 A Place to Belong: Exploring the Interrelations between Insiders and Outsiders of Little Hintock in *The Woodlanders*

In this chapter, I interrogate the differing levels of autonomy that characters experience when performing in opposition to traditional gendered Victorian expectations, focusing specifically on the role that the insider/outsider relationship to a physical place has in curtailing or supporting individual agency in gender performance. My aim is to uncover the role that environmental attachment has in determining the potential of gender expression. The text on which I focus for this chapter is *The Woodlanders* (1887). Written earlier in Hardy's career, it offers a nostalgic exploration of the disappearing rural community of Little Hintock, focusing on the varied levels of duress characters undergo as social and economic modernizations redefine the fundamental processes and values of the community. In "Ecological Hardy," Richard Kerridge describes Little

Hintock as "the most secluded and unadulterated of Hardy's communities: the most deeply engrossed in its immediate environment" (137). Through his emphasis on the seclusion of Little Hintock and the static, unchanged nature of the community, Kerridge's description mirrors the separation between the insider and the outsider that distinguishes Hardy's characters from each other: the majority of the inhabitants of Little Hintock demonstrate an extreme closeness to their rural environment, following nature's cues and the changing of seasons to structure their lives and work. They are predisposed to maintain the same practices and follow the same philosophies to which Little Hintock residents have adhered for generations. In contrast, the characters who immigrate to Little Hintock do not know or understand the environment in which they find themselves residing. The community's lack of change leaves these outsiders feeling further isolated from the close-knit, environmentally-focused community. Characters who leave and return to Little Hintock, however, occupy a more complicated position, resting on the threshold between insider and outsider, because of their combined familiarity with the secluded community and experience of the world outside of Little Hintock.

While most literary scholars who write about the terms of belonging in *The Woodlanders* focus on social and class-based belonging, my project also introduces gender and sexuality to the conversation. These individual identity narratives constitute a character's belonging, but rather than arguing that there is a causal relationship between belonging in the environment and gender-based or sexual belonging, I plan to explore the analogous or metaphorical relationship between these types of belonging. What this means is that I am not asserting that if a character belongs in nature, then he/she/they

does not belong in a gendered community or have the freedom of sexual expression. Instead, it seems more productive to explore how a character's status as an environmental insider or outsider influences his/her/their autonomy in gendered and sexual performance. This difference allows for the complexity of the characters instead of trying to neatly place them in boxes. To visualize of the complexity of these relationships, I think of each character as mapping onto a spectrum of belonging, and each position on that range is determined by the sum of all the performative and location-based aspects of belonging.

Each of the sub-sections of this chapter is organized in a similar way. First, I explore the characters' relationships to the environment, categorizing them as insiders or outsiders to the Little Hintock community. Second, I use their insider/outsider statuses as a lens through which to explore the way that status influences the terms of their gendered and sexual expression. In section 2.1, I compare Mr. Giles Winterborne and Dr. Edred Fitzpiers. Giles is a long-time resident of Little Hintock while Fitzpiers only recently arrived to start his medical practice in the rural woodland. In love with the same woman, their approaches to win her affections and disparate results highlight the changing valuation of the insider compared to the outsider while also offering contrasting performances of masculinity. Section 2.2 offers another comparison between contrasting characters: Miss Marty South and Mrs. Felice Charmond. Marty is a working girl, living in poverty in the rural community, and Mrs. Charmond is a wealthy world-traveler who takes up temporary residence at the Hintock House that her late husband purchased. The women's narratives collide when poverty compels Marty to sell her luxurious chestnut hair to Mrs. Charmond for the latter's physical adornment to aid her sexual appeal. This

exchange of hair diminishes Marty's capacity of sexual autonomy while facilitating Mrs. Charmond's sexual, feminine performance. Finally, section 2.3 focuses on a single character, Miss Grace Melbury/Mrs. Grace Fitzpiers, who simultaneously occupies the insider and outsider role in Little Hintock because while she grows up in the village, she goes away for formal schooling and returns to find her home disenchanting. Consequently, when faced with two options for her husband, the familiar Giles or the foreign Fitzpiers, Grace's unstable relationship with her rural home correlates with her varied feelings for each man. Existing perpetually at this threshold of instability, Grace's adherence to gendered norms and sexuality oscillates between expression and repression in a way that increases her personal suffering.

To better explain the significance of the insider/outsider relationship that I plan to discuss, I would first like to turn to the distinction that Kerridge draws between the disparate experiences that insiders and outsiders have with the environment. Kerridge describes these oppositional perspectives as the two "forms of pleasure in the natural world" that Hardy imbeds in his literature: "the un-alienated lover of nature *inhabits*; the alienated lover of nature *gazes*" (134, emphasis added). Those who inhabit spaces are "native" to those spaces; they are "deeply embedded in a stable ecosystem," such as Marty South and Giles Winterborne are embedded in Little Hintock (134). In contrast, Kerridge categorizes someone who gazes on nature as "a Romantic, a tourist, a newcomer, a reader" (134). In *The Woodlanders*, the consuming gaze Kerridge ascribes to non-natives belongs to the immigrants, Edred Fitzpiers and Felice Charmond.

After drawing distinctions between the groups of people in the novel and marking them as insiders or outsiders, the question of belonging in the community follows naturally. Tim Dolin's article "Who Belongs Where in *The Woodlanders*?" asserts that *The Woodlanders* "explores the complex and unexpected interchanges between settled inhabitation and transience: between residents and tourists" (561). Quoting from Jonathan Bate, he writes, "'[t]he presence of memory means that the countryside is inhabited rather than viewed aesthetically (554)'" (Dolin 546). Hardy emphasizes the role of memory in the evaluation of a character's belonging in the rural woodland community. In Little Hintock, this requires knowledge of the history of the place and intimacy with the land. Hardy explains, for example, that spending winter in Little Hintock can be "enjoyable and delightful, given certain conditions," and those who belong in the community have access to those conditions while someone who "drop[ped] down into such a place by mere accident" does not (*Woodlanders* 125). These conditions, continues Hardy, "are an old association—an almost exhaustive biographical or historical acquaintance with every object, animate and inanimate, within the observer's horizon," meaning that familiarity with the physical place is knowledge that develops over years of inhabitation (125). This familiarity, in large part, refers to the history of the land, including knowing "all about those invisible ones of the days gone by, whose feet have traversed the fields which look so grey from his windows" and "whose hands planted the trees that form a crest to the opposite hill" (125). This distinction requires an inhabitant who can recognize the people connected to the land instead of gazing at the landscape as an entity entirely separate from human life. Being familiar with the history of the land also includes knowing the

social history of the people who inhabit the land and "what bygone domestic dramas of love, jealousy, revenge, or disappointment, have been enacted in the cottages, the mansions, the street, or on the green" (125). More than anything, for a character to find joy or delight in Little Hintock, it is essential for the character to recognize the history of the land: "[t]he spot may have beauty, grandeur, salubrity, convenience; but if it lack memories it will ultimately pall upon him who settles there without opportunity of intercourse with his kind" (125). Hardy emphasizes the important role that one's knowledge of the history of a place plays, which suggests that without access to the social history and common memories of a place, the solitude of the sleepy town becomes oppressive. As a result, "'the modern man […] will always be an outsider; his return to nature will always be partial, touristic, and semi-detached (554)'" because he cannot access the memory of the land, which is a memory that includes the people who have inhabited that land (Dolin 546). Despite attempts to realign with the rhythms of the natural world, the very act of leaving that world means that there will be a necessary separation between character and nature that encourages gazing at rather than inhabiting the natural space.

Acknowledging that most of the native woodlanders, excluding Grace, have never left their natural world, Lawrence Buell suggests "that if the woodlanders' lives 'get traumatically disrupted or extinguished,' their 'basic life-rhythms have scarcely changed for years and seem unlikely to do so in the future'" (Dolin 546). In other words, the lack of historical change suggests that the woodlanders' relationship with the land will remain the same. Writing about secluded and unchanging communities like Little Hintock, Dolin

suggests that "[i]f they are not hostile to change, it is because that change is attributed to outsiders, so that Hardy's fiction is once again (as in Bate and Buell) reduced to the impact of disaffected urban aliens on the natural-social-economic ecology of the woodlands" (547). At the crux of Hardy's novel is an exploration of the relationship between these groups of people. Instead of writing a novel in which the insiders experience life in the peaceful, unchanging woodlands, however, Hardy chooses to explore the instability of the disappearing rural life. Dolin asks, "[w]hat can it mean to say that tourists do not share the character-residents' sense of belonging, as Bate would have it, when, in *The Woodlanders*, even the most deeply rooted locals are more or less constantly uprooted, losing their homes and struggling to retain their livelihoods?" (547-8). The residents experience instability in response to the modernizing world, and their inability to exercise resiliency seems to foreshadow the impending demise of the rural, natural community.

2.1 The Woodsman and the Doctor

To explore how one's belonging to a physical environment and performative gender role directly relate to characters' tragedy or success, I begin my analysis with the comparison of two primary characters of *The Woodlanders*: Mr. Giles Winterborne and Dr. Edred Fitzpiers. In Little Hintock, knowledge of the natural land determines belonging in the physical community environment. Giles Winterborne, the Little Hintock resident and woodsman, lives by the seasons and knows his environment because his life and work depend on it. In contrast, a character who does not intimately know the natural, rural landscape in which he/she/they exists cannot belong to that physical environment. Dr.

Edred Fitzpiers, an immigrant to Little Hintock, does not tout knowledge about the natural environment. Instead, Hardy emphasizes Fitzpiers's separation from the physical community. The divide between Giles and Fitzpiers, however, does not end with their belonging to the physical environment: these characters also experience a disparate sense of belonging in terms of their gender-based performances. Hardy describes Giles as possessing traditionally feminine traits such as being nurturing and not sexually-assertive despite his longing for a physical attachment to a person who compares to his close attachment to his physical place. His counterpart, Fitzpiers, assumes an almost hypermasculine persona, pursuing and engaging in sexual relations with multiple women without caring for them. Ultimately, these two different men have drastically different ends: the ethical woodsman dies alone while the selfish doctor leaves Little Hintock with the woman he desires.

I will begin with the land attachment differences between these two men before using their inclusion in or exclusion from the environment to inform my analysis of their gender performances. Giles is intimately connected to the land because he has cultivated his relationship while living and working in Little Hintock for his entire life. As Giles plants trees in the forest, Hardy describes Giles's physical body as being intertwined with the trees themselves: "Winterborne's fingers were endowed with the gentle conjuror's touch in spreading the roots of each little tree, resulting in a sort of caress under which the delicate fibers all laid themselves out in their proper directions for growth" (*Woodlanders* 64). As a "gentle conjuror," Giles is in the unique position to "caress" the young trees' roots as he prepares them for the integration of their lives with the forest. In

this sense, he is assuming the role of a feminine, maternal figure to the young saplings as he nurtures their growth. Further demonstrating his familiarity with the history of the land, Giles plants the roots of the trees "towards the south-west" to account for "some great gale" that will blow from that direction in forty years during which "the trees will require the strongest holdfast on that side to stand against it and not fall" (64). Giles's familiarity with the land also correlates with the cyclical nature of the agriculture seasons. As Yuval-Davis explains, "repetitive practices […] are crucial for the construction and reproduction of identity narratives and constructions of attachment," so Giles's repetition of seasonal, environmental labor, such as planting trees, is key not only to his identity narrative but to his attachment to the physical land with which he is working (203).

Quite the opposite of Giles, Dr. Fitzpiers has no interest or investment in the land. Kiely describes Fitzpiers as being "poised between alienation and accommodation" as an "aristocrat without land or money, a doctor without ambition, he is on the constant lookout for diversion (sexual and intellectual), privilege (secret knowledge of others), and financial support through marriage," which suggests that instead of seeking an access point to integrate with the Little Hintock community, Fitzpiers is preoccupied with the possibility of exploiting others for his personal gain (195). Hardy builds a narrative of indifference and ignorance that constitutes Fitzpiers's outsider distinction when the doctor is called to attend to Mr. John South, Marty South's father. In Fitzpiers's first dialogue in the novel, he instructs that the tree outside of Mr. South's window that has been frightening the sick old man should be cut down, saying that "'[t]he tree must be cut down, or I won't answer for his life'" (*Woodlanders* 101). On hearing the doctor's

instruction, Giles explains that the tree is Mrs. Charmond's property, so it is the customary practice in Little Hintock to ask permission before felling someone else's tree, but Fitzpiers dismisses his concern and explains "'what's a tree beside a life!'" (101). What Fitzpiers fails to understand or respect is the significant role that traditions and customs play in the community. Furthermore, in failing to acknowledge the value of a tree, ordering it as less valuable than a life, it becomes clear that Fitzpiers does not understand the essential role that trees occupy in the lives of Little Hintock residents who plant, harvest, and work with trees. In spite of Giles's repeated attempts to explain the way of the community, noting that "'[t]hey never fell a stick about here without its being marked first,'" Fitzpiers casually dismisses the tradition and asserts that "'we'll inaugurate a new era forthwith'" as he continues to argue for the cutting down of the tree (101). Rather than helping the old man, Fitzpiers's inability to understand the Little Hintock insider's valuation of the tree combined with his disregard for the ways of the town accelerates Mr. South's death with the felling of the tree. Instead of reflecting on the disastrous results of his instructions, Fitzpiers leaves Mr. South, "[d]ismissing the subject," like he dismissed the value of the tree (102).

Further separating the two men from each other, Hardy's descriptions of the physical and social locations of their residences in the community create the image of one home rooted in the community and another separated from it. Giles's home is, in a sense, part of the history of Little Hintock. Instead of owning his home, his ancestors, like many other Little Hintock residents, chose to "exchange their copyhold for life-leases" (*Woodlanders* 98). To better understand why Giles's father and other Little Hintock

residents exchanged their copyhold leases for life-leases, I consulted an array of historic law documents that outline the terms of each kind of lease and then explain the ways in which the changes in social structures, such as in the increase of labor-based (e.g., farms and woodlots) and residential property sizes, correlated with the shift in land ownership type.[2]

I will first focus on copyholds, the older form of land ownership. Frederick Pollock explains in *The Land Laws*, which was first published in 1883 (four years before *The Woodlanders*) that copyhold tenure originated from "folk-land held by individuals as their inheritance […] according to the varying custom of the country" (43). The terms of the copyhold were not universal, however, and the "rules governing the landholding of a copyholder were to be found in the custom of the manor concerned" (Simpson 55). As a result, the "rules varied from place to place, and so copyholders were never subjected to a uniform system of land law; there never grew up anything which could be called a common law of copyhold," which helps explain why the terms of the copyhold are less transparent than the rules pertaining to other forms of property leasing (55). By 1896 when Pollock released a new edition of his book, he asserts that copyholds are "a form of tenure which is now fast disappearing" (43-4). Specifically, legislative changes in England, such as the Acts of Parliament (1852) and The Copyhold Act (1894),

[2] According to a footnote by Michael Millgate in *Thomas Hardy's Public Voice: The Essays, Speeches, and Miscellaneous Prose*, "the Hardy family's Higher Bockhampton cottage was so held [in a lifehold or life-lease] at the time of TH's birth," so Hardy had a personal history of interacting with this kind of property arrangement (56).

encouraged the disappearance of copyhold land and the country transitioned to a land-ownership system that catered to the increasing size of industrializing farms (181).[3]

As the copyhold tenure was disappearing, the life-lease took its place. This "type of lease essentially equated to 99 years determinable on the three lives named which were usually those of the tenant, his wife and his eldest son. In practice this bought a lifetime of security for the tenant and his family" (Beardmore 37). When the "leaseholder had no apparent heirs to top up the lease," then the property would be returned to the landlord; however it was a common practice to add new names to the lease "upon payment of an agreed sum of money," so even though the life-lease structure includes a definite timeline at the death of the third life on the lease, it was typical for the landlord to allow the tenant to continue adding more names to the life-lease, allowing a family to continue living in their rented property for more than 99 years (37).

With this historical background in mind, when we return to the novel, we understand that the Winterborne and South families were compelled to accept a life-lease in exchange for their copyhold. This exchange, however, is not the impetus for the family's downfall; the way that their landlord, Mrs. Charmond, handles the terms of the lease is. The family had copyholds that passed down property through inheritances, but when they switch to life-leases, then the end of the lease is tied to John South's death. What this means for Giles is that when Marty's father, John South, dies, then both Marty

[3] In "The Dorsetshire Labourer" (1883), Hardy writes that "the old copyholders" were "ousted from their little plots when the system of leasing large farms grew general" (Hardy and Millgate 41). What this indicates is that instead of the types of common leases simply changing with time, Hardy suggests that the leases were changing because of the increase in the sizes of farms, which is directly connected to the industrialization of labor.

and Giles lose their homes to Mrs. Felice Charmond because John South is the last member of the families who has a life-lease (*Woodlanders* 98). Unfortunately for Giles, John South dies before Giles can pay the sum required to extend the life-lease to his own lifetime (99-102). Beardmore writes that "[w]hile historians have suggested that there was a general movement to rack renting, in reality the ways in which land was rented [were] more fluid and altered according to the perceived economic situation. *Inevitably the personality of the land agent impacted on the type of tenure offered*" (27, emphasis added). While there were common trends in the land ownership market, the trends were not necessarily universal, but it would not have been uncommon, historically speaking, for a land owner to make an adjustment to the terms of the life-lease for the benefit of his/her/their tenant. Likely with this historical pattern in mind, Giles writes an appeal to Mrs. Charmond to ask for permission to pay the required sum to extend the life lease, but she rejects his request, explaining that she "'sees no reason for disturbing the *natural course* of things, particularly as she contemplates pulling the houses down'" (106, emphasis added). By rejecting Giles's request, Mrs. Charmond cites her perception of what is "natural," but her understanding both does not coincide with the community-centric nature of Little Hintock nor does it align with the historical trends pertaining to land ownership. With Giles's connection to the natural land, it is ironic that Mrs. Charmond uses the word "natural" to defend her displacement of him from his home.

After Giles's loss of his home—his physical roots in the community—Hardy asks the reader to look at Giles like the countryman looks at the landscape, which further reduces the separation between Giles and the land he inhabits. Hardy begins by

explaining how the countryman's intimacy with the landscape leads to a different kind of reading the land: "[t]he countryman, who is obliged to judge the time of day from changes in external nature, sees a thousand successive tints and traits in the landscape which are never discerned by him who hears the regular chime of a clock, because they are never in request" (*Woodlanders* 106). By relying on the land to track the passage of time rather than on a manmade clock, the countryman gains a sensitivity towards his physical environment, recognizing "a thousand successive tints and traits" that others never see.[4] Changing the narrative voice and addressing the reader, Hardy continues,

> In like manner do we use our eyes on our taciturn comrade. The infinitesimal movement of muscle, curve, hair, and wrinkle, which when accompanied by a voice goes unregarded, is watched and translated in the lack of it, till virtually the whole surrounding circle of familiars is charged with the reserved one's moods and meanings. (106)

Offering Giles and the landscape as an analogous pair in this passage, Hardy is teaching us to read Giles like the woodsmen read the land and like the residents of Little Hintock read Giles. Giles retreats further from the social sphere of the community, and his lack of words forces members of the community to rely on cues from his face to decipher Giles's disposition. Hardy sets up the passage with reference to the way that a countryman looks at a landscape and determines the time of day and then transitions to asking his reader to discern Giles's "moods and meanings" through an analogous survey of the features of his

[4] I attend to Hardy's treatment of the temporal moment in nature, introduced briefly here, more extensively in section 3.3 when I explore Tess's temporal liminality.

face. Hardy's analogous approach to surveying the landscape and Giles brings the two closer together. Furthering his relationship with nature, Giles takes this time of great loss to retire "into the background of human life and action thereabout" (109). He disappears into the woodlands, and we later learn that he is living in a "lonely hut" (224). Already an insider to the woodland environment, losing his home in town pushes Giles further into a natural space in which he truly does belong by forcing him to move into the forest. In a sense, Giles is losing his space in the human community of Little Hintock as he disappears into the trees and falls out of the community's consciousness. Giles's insider relationship to the woodland makes his return to that space in the midst of his loss of his family home seem natural, or at least does not cause any alarm among the Little Hintock residents, including those like Mr. Melbury, who is accustomed to crossing paths with Giles in the woods while they work.

Contrasting with Giles's old home that is taken from him as the older generations of Little Hintock residents die, Hardy begins the next chapter with a description of the highly organized garden that leads up to Dr. Fitzpiers's "comparatively modern" home and contrasts the wilderness in which the home rests (*Woodlanders* 110). Hardy describes the precise landscaping of the "low, dense hedge" that is "formed into an arch" and "bordered with a clipped box," all of which "ran up the slope of the garden to the porch, which was exactly in the middle of the house front, with two windows on each side" (110). This cultivated, symmetrical scene contrasts the natural, unorganized growth of the forest and instead offers a curated collection of natural things removed from their homes and repositioned in a highly-intentional matter. It also echoes Fitzpiers's predisposal to

exploit both natural resources and people to achieve a particular outcome that is most favorable to himself. Hardy goes on to describe the successive beds of plants, all neatly planted one after the other along either side of the path (110-1). Then, beyond the house sits the orchard—a collection of trees cherished for their material value and planted to achieve an economic return—and finally, "behind the orchard the forest-trees, reaching up to the crest of the hill" (111). The "forest-trees" are the greatest distance from the doctor's home, and, with a more thorough understanding of Dr. Fitzpiers as a character, Hardy offers this separation as a metaphor for Dr. Fitzpiers's lack of belonging in the physical environment of Little Hintock.

While these two characters are near opposites, Hardy allows their paths to converge via their mutual interest in Miss Grace Melbury. Of course, both Giles and Fitzpiers handle their desire differently; however, both men concentrate their male gaze on Grace. In an effort to unpack their performances of masculinity, I will consider the way each man executes his male gaze against Grace. Hardy brings Giles and Fitzpiers together when the latter picks up Giles to assist with driving his wagon through the dark woodlands. As the environmental outsider, Fitzpiers "hated the solitary midnight woodland," and because he is "not altogether skilful with the reins," meaning that he is not good at driving his horse, he often considers "that if in some remote depths of the trees an accident were to happen, his being alone might be the death of him" (*Woodlanders* 113). Insecure about his navigation of the woodland, Fitzpiers regularly chooses to pick up residents of Little Hintock to ride with him through the trees, and on one particular night, the man Fitzpiers picks up is Giles, our environmental insider. Their

conversation, before long, turns to Grace Melbury. By putting the men in conversation with each other about Grace, Hardy emphasizes the difference between the men's considerations of her.

Fitzpiers gazes at Grace in a consuming way, aiming to possess her. In this early scene, we recognize the indifference with which Fitzpiers selected Grace as the subject of his desire. As Fitzpiers tries to uncover the identity of the woman he caught in his gaze by describing her adornments, "'a little white boa round her neck, and white fur round her gloves,'" Giles avoids offering any identifying details about Grace despite his knowing "'in a moment that Grace […] was represented by these accessories'" (*Woodlanders* 114). Fitzpiers chooses to represent Grace by her rich, white fur accessories, which reduces Grace to these material objects. Continuing to try and decipher who the well-adorned woman is, he says to Giles, "'[s]he cannot be a permanent resident in Hintock, or I should have seen her before. Nor does she look like one'" (114). The first part of Fitzpiers's comment is relatively harmless, suggesting only that because of the smallness of the community, it is unlikely that anyone may have lived there permanently without his knowing; however, he further reduces Grace to her appearance when he concludes that she cannot be a permanent resident of Little Hintock because she does not "look like one" (114). This struggle between reality and appearance or social education, of course, exists at the crux of Grace's trouble with mediating the terms of her social and gendered belonging, which I will explore more extensively in section 2.3.

After describing his interest in Grace, Fitzpiers shares his philosophy about the way by which people develop attraction towards each other: the random chance of

circumstance. As Patricia Ingram explains in the notes to the Penguin Classics (1998) edition of the text, Fitzpiers mixes literary, philosophical, and scientific references in his monologue as a means of showing off to Giles (*Woodlanders* 392). He begins with a scientific reference, "'people living insulated, as I do by the solitude of this place, get charged with emotive fluid like a Leyden jar with electric, for want of some conductor at hand to disperse it,'" which suggests that the solitude creates a buildup of social energy that requires some kind of eventual dispersal (115). He continues with philosophy and literature:

> 'Human love is a subjective thing—the essence itself of a man, as that great thinker Spinoza the philosopher says—*ipsa hominis essential*—it is joy accompanied by an idea which we project against any suitable object in the life of our vision, *just as the rainbow iris is projected against an oak, ash, or elm tree indifferently*. So that if any other young lady had appeared instead of the one who did appear, I should have felt just the same interest in her, and have quoted precisely the same lines from Shelley about her, as about the one I saw. Such miserable creatures of circumstance are we all!' (115, emphasis added)

Hardy packs in a lot of meaning in these few short sentences. On the surface, Fitzpiers is still showing off to Giles with his references to Spinoza and Shelley, using Spinoza's philosophy to prove the presumed randomness of love and suggesting that Shelley's poetry would be suitable for any random subject of human love. Ingram explains in the notes that Fitzpiers is employing Spinoza to assert that "the capacity to love is what

makes human beings what they are," but Hardy has him mistakenly apply this capacity to "sexual love" while Spinoza's "reference is to the love of God" (393). The implication here is that "Fitzpiers reads philosophy to suit himself" (393). His consumption of the text and repurposing of it for his own means mirrors his intended consumption and use of Grace. As Fitzpiers continues with his lecture, he takes a moment to clarify his reference to Spinoza with a simile that includes trees, claiming that the randomness of love is "'just as the rainbow iris is projected against an oak, ash, or elm tree indifferently'" (115). Trees are laden with meaning for the text but, much like his misuse of Spinoza's language, Fitzpiers does not understand the unique, individual value that the Little Hintock community ascribes to each variety of tree. Likewise, as I would argue Hardy is exploring with this simile, Fitzpiers does not acknowledge the value that Giles ascribes to Grace. The flippant randomness of it all but dismisses the possibility for any real sentiment behind Fitzpiers's desire for Grace.

In spite of the indifference behind Fitzpiers's selection of Grace as the subject of his gaze, his performance of dominant masculinity means that he manages to physically possess her multiple times before his final claim to her in their marriage. Arguably, these moments of physically holding Grace are relatively inconsequential to Fitzpiers because we know that in addition to selecting her merely by circumstance, "[i]nstead of treasuring her image as a rarity he would at most have played with her as a toy. He was that kind of man" (*Woodlanders* 125). He first takes hold of Grace when she is trying to dismount from the gig. He surprises her with his presence and "she was very nearly lifted down in his arms," an action that has the effect "of producing in her an unaccountable tendency to

tearfulness" (138-9). This first touch from Fitzpiers makes Grace cry, and as Ingram points out in the notes, Grace's physical reactions to him continue throughout the text. The next two times he possesses Grace occur in the woods, which is interesting because it is supposed to be a location in which a Little Hintock resident would have the upper hand, especially compared to someone like Fitzpiers who is uncomfortable among the trees; however, we see Fitzpiers grasp Grace again, "supporting her with his arm" until she "withdrew from his grasp," after startling her in the woods at night when she is looking for her lost purse that was a gift from Giles (141). At the close of this interaction, Fitzpiers transforms Grace with his gaze, and "Grace assumed in his eyes the true aspect of a mistress in her lover's regard" (142). Shortly after this scene, Grace is once again in the woods at night, this time joining in with the local girls who are engaging in a "Midsummer eve […] spell or enchantment which would afford them a glimpse of their future partners for life" (145). The action of the enchantment includes the girls running through the dark forest, but men from their community interrupt the ritual by hiding behind the trees with the hopes of catching a maiden. As Grace runs, she "flew round the fatal bush" and, stepping out from behind it, Fitzpiers "stretch[es] out his arms as the white figure burst upon him" (148). Fitzpiers "captured her in a moment, as if she had been a bird" (148). Responding to the frightened Grace, Fitzpiers replies, "'You are in my arms, dearest, […] and I am going to claim you, and keep you there all our two lives!'" (148). Grace, in return, "rested on him like one utterly mastered," taking "several seconds" to recover from "this helplessness," before asking him "in a trembling voice" to release her (148-9).

When they meet again, Hardy starts to explore the psychological influence that Fitzpiers's physical presence has on Grace. Grace's memory of Fitzpiers's actions in the woods translate into "an almost psychic influence" on Grace (158). He "acted upon her like a dram, exciting her, throwing her into a novel atmosphere which biased her doings until the influence was over, when she felt something of the nature of regret for the mood she had experienced" (159). Like a strong drink, Fitzpiers has the ability to momentarily alter Grace's feelings but leaves her feeling something like regret when his effect wears off. Hardy again refers to "the strange influence" that Fitzpiers has on Grace when the doctor comes to ask permission to marry Grace, describing her feeling for him as "a fearful consciousness of hazard in the air" instead of "love" or "ambition" (162). Finally, when Grace is compelled to walk him out of her home after Fitzpiers has spoken to her father about marriage, he "took the girl's hand in his, drew it under his arm, and thus led her on to the front door, where he stealthily put his lips to her own" (164). As before, his physical possession of her leaves Grace "trembling," and the "intoxication that Fitzpiers had, as usual, produced in Grace's brain during the visit passed off somewhat with his withdrawal. She felt like a woman who did not know what she had been doing for the previous hour" (164). The psychological and physical powers that Fitzpiers exercises over Grace cause mental gaps and physical weakness in his presence, and she appears stripped of any individual agency and is instead easily convinced to surrender to Fitzpiers. With his exercise of his domineering masculinity, "the afternoon's proceedings, though vague, amounted to an engagement between herself and the *handsome, coercive, irresistible* Fitzpiers" (164, emphasis added). Fitzpiers's desire to obtain Grace relies on

his traditional masculine gender performance, and while he experiences success, his success leads to Grace's hardship.

While Fitzpiers aims to have Grace with his consumptive gaze and possessive actions, Giles symbolically and then literally sacrifices himself for her. Early in the novel, Giles goes to receive Grace at the train station in Sherton Abbas when she is returning to Little Hintock from school. While he is there, Giles plans to sell "his specimen apple-tree" at the market (*Woodlanders* 36). Having also come to town to make a sale, the sale of her chestnut hair, Marty observes Giles at the market: "he was standing somewhat apart, holding the tree like an ensign, and looking on the ground instead of pushing his produce as he ought to have been doing" (36). Hardy's narrator continues to explain that Giles is "not a very successful seller either of his trees or of his cider" (36). Giles's lack of success as a businessman, which is an almost exclusively masculine role, implies a deficiency in his masculinity. As he stands in the market with his tree, he spies Miss Grace Melbury, the woman who has been promised to him by her father for marriage, "now looking glorified and refined to much above her former level" (37). Her early arrival surprises him, and he finds himself still holding the tree he brought to sell. With a practical yet symbolic action, Giles "gave away the tree to a bystander, as soon as he could find one who would accept the cumbersome gift" (37). While for Giles the action is pragmatic as offloading his burden allows him to receive Grace, the symbolic nature of a woodsman giving away his tree adds depth to this moment. For Giles, trees are not just a symbolic manifestation of life; they are integral to his way of life. As a woodsman who plants trees and then harvests the trees' fruits or the trees themselves, when Giles gives

away a tree that is a necessary part of his career and identity, we realize just how significantly Grace's presence alters his natural contentment with his job. Hardy repeats Giles's action of discarding a tree to pursue Grace again later in the novel when Giles is planting with Marty and Grace walks down the nearby path (65). In this scene, Giles "threw down the tree he was planting" and is about to emerge onto the path to address Grace when he "became aware of the presence of another man," Fitzpiers (65). Much like the demasculinized connotation of Giles's poor business skills in the market scene, here Giles maintains his concealed position behind the holly bushes until Fitzpiers walks away. Giles is unwilling to confront his sexual competitor.

In these scenes, Hardy seems to be questioning Giles's adherence to the traditional performance of masculinity. Investigating Giles's inability to perform traditional masculinity, in her chapter, "Patriarchal Tragicomedy: Self-Denial and Masculine Heroism in *The Woodlanders*," Joanna Devereux contemplates his "ambiguous gender identity that must derive in some sense from his child-like character" (96). Citing his failed performance in adult roles such as conducting business and hosting a dinner party, Devereux argues that Giles displays more child-like than adult characteristics. Supporting her argument for Giles as a child-like character, she recalls the way he is "orphaned, disposed, and abandoned by society and by the text," which is the same fate that his complementary character Marty experiences (96). Moreover, she notes that Giles is not off-put by Grace's sexual experience when Mr. Melbury encourages Giles to pursue the soon to be divorced Grace. In fact, he thinks of her experience as a novelty (Devereux 82). Giles's attraction to Grace when "he suddenly realizes that she is

a grown and sexually experienced woman" is suggestive of the attraction that "a boy or adolescent" would have for "an adult woman" (96). Rather than agreeing with Devereux that Giles's sexual expression mirrors that of an undeveloped man, however, I would assert that Giles is acting on his sexual desires in these scenes, but there appears to be an incompatibility between sexualized masculinity and an insider's relationship to the land. By throwing down the trees to pursue Grace, Giles is privileging his sexual desires over his affinity for nature. If we consider the conflict that Hardy writes into these two components of Giles's identity narrative of belonging, then we can better realize the complexity of the latter's masculinity.

Furthermore, Giles does momentarily act on his sexual desire. After he learns that Grace cannot divorce Fitzpiers because her husband was not "sufficiently cruel" to her, Giles withholds this information from Grace as he finally holds her (*Woodlanders* 289). Hardy writes, "[i]ndeed, he cared for nothing past or future, simply accepting the present and what it brought, *deciding once in his life* to clasp in his arms her he had watched over and loved so long" (291, emphasis added). In this moment, Giles finally achieves a momentary satisfaction of his sexual desire; however, Hardy maintains the incompatibility of Giles's insider status and sexualized masculinity when the moment of possession quickly ends with the news of Grace's sustained marriage to Fitzpiers. Forced to relinquish Grace, Giles again retreats deep into the woods, reducing the margin between himself and the environment. By trying to mediate the incompatibility between his environmental attachment and sexual expression, Giles ultimately sacrifices his life when he relinquishes his woodland hut to Grace and withdraws further into

environmental isolation in the trees. Kiely argues that "[i]t becomes clearer and clearer that Giles and Grace are alienated from one another not simply because of sexual inhibition or a trick of fate but because of a social and economic mechanism that affects all of the characters and leads to a gradual and relentless atomization of the community," which suggests that the dismantling of the traditional woodland community structure is ultimately what keeps these two characters separated (194). In a way, Giles's story is representative of the rural decline in the face of modernization, represented by the immigrant doctor, Fitzpiers.

2.2 The Women of and in Little Hintock

The next pair of characters whose contrasting states of belonging impact the degree of tragedy they experience are Miss Marty South and Mrs. Felice Charmond. As Giles's planting companion, Marty South is another Little Hintock resident who demonstrates insider knowledge of her environment. Marty is intimately connected to the trees and suggests that the trees "'sigh because they are very sorry to begin life in earnest—just as we be'" (*Woodlanders* 64). In this passage, we see Hardy employing literary techniques that showcase the insider character's keen, heightened awareness of non-human nature by making the "'obscure or overlooked object become magnified or more densely rendered than they would be in the ordinary experience of them'" (Buell 103, qtd. Kerridge 135). Kerridge cites Lawrence Buell's argument for the purpose of creating environmental spaces in which this "'deliberate dislocation of ordinary perception' is to remind us of neglected human perspectives and move us toward 'environmental literacy'" (Buell 104,107, qtd. Kerridge 135). Personifying the trees' release of a sorrowful "sigh" also

mimics Marty's unfortunate positioning: she is living in poverty and is defeminized by the compulsion to complete masculine labor because her father is gravely ill. Like Hardy's other female characters who belong securely in their physical environment, Marty appears to share emotional expression with the trees.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Felice Charmond, who describes herself as "'not sufficiently local'" to know the history of Little Hintock, lives separately from the community in her mansion and has little interest in or knowledge of the woodlands that she owns (*Woodlanders* 61). As a landowner, she controls the physical land in Little Hintock, including the woodlot that Mr. Melbury works, but her disinterest in the environment is upsetting to the invested residents. After describing Mrs. Charmond's indifference about the woodlot, for example, the latter shares with his family that he "'wish[es] she took more interest in the place, and stayed here all the year round,'" taking it as a slight against himself that she does not want to be more involved (46). Mrs. Melbury corrects his perception, saying, "'I am afraid 'tis not her regard for you, but her dislike of Hintock, that makes her so easy about the trees'" (46). Since trees are one of the most respected resources of the place, Felice's indifference towards them sets her firmly outside of the community. Furthermore, as a wealthy widow, Mrs. Charmond exercises a kind of sexual agency that is unmatched by any other category of Victorian woman. She has had a variety of lovers and does not appear to be concerned with whether a man is committed to another woman as much as she is preoccupied with satisfying her sexual desire. Hardy offers the reader an early glimpse at Mrs. Charmond's careless approach to sex when Grace visits the Hintock House and sees the man-traps on display in Mrs. Charmond's

home. The traps were her husband's, but Felice "playfully" remarks to Grace that "'Man-traps are of rather ominous significance where a person of our sex lives, are they not?'" (59). In response, "Grace was bound to smile; but that side of womanliness was one which her inexperience had no great zest in contemplating," which highlights Grace's uncertainty in the face of Mrs. Charmond's sexual autonomy.

Marty's feminine sexuality is often overshadowed by imposed masculinity or asexuality. I use "masculinity" and "asexuality" to describe the imposed sexualities on Marty because the nature of her impoverished life forces her to assume a masculine role in the home, but at the same time, Marty is unable to fully act in a masculine role because of her feminine body. Furthermore, when Marty is compelled to cut and sell her luscious hair, yet another pressure of poverty, she seems to lose her ability to express sexual desire; instead, she fades herself into the natural landscape of Little Hintock, removing herself from the social view. As Patricia Ingram explores in her chapter "Social Issues: Class in Hardy's Novels from *Thomas Hardy*," distinctions between social classes are integral to Hardy's stories. Ingram writes, "[t]he poor in Hardy's novels are not simply representative figures but individuals whose lives are largely shaped by the effect of poverty upon their temperaments as well as their circumstances" (108). Hardy's treatment of poverty pays respect to the permeating way in which it shapes and comprises one's identity.

When Hardy first introduces the reader to Marty earlier in the novel, she is engaged in another kind of masculine work and wearing masculine clothing. He describes her as a "girl" with "a bill-hook in one hand, and a leather glove, much too large for her,

on the other" as she makes "spars," which are used for thatching roofs (*Woodlanders* 9-10). The leather apron Marty wears is "also much too large for her figure," and we learn that she is completing her father's work in an attempt to stave off impoverishment (10). Dressed in her masculine costume, Marty's hair stands out a strikingly sexual, feminine feature: "its abundance made it almost unmanageable" and "its true shade was a rare and beautiful approximation to chestnut" (11). Notably, Hardy compares Marty's hair to a tree. Again, however, the same threat of poverty forces Marty to cut and sell her feminine locks, and Hardy describes the cutting as "the rape of her locks" and Marty's "deflowered visage" after the "recent ravages of the scissors" (20-1). Describing her haircutting as a rape, Hardy indicates that Marty is forced to succumb to an undesired sexual violation because of her poverty. Since her hair is likened to a tree, the cutting of her hair is also a symbolic violation of nature. Having lost her chestnut locks, Marty is consequently excluded from a position of sexual autonomy in which other women in the novel indulge. In fact, when morning arrives after Marty cuts her hair, Hardy describes the day as "emerg[ing] like a dead-born child," which metaphorically suggests that Marty has lost her ability to fulfill the female role of producing offspring (23). For Marty, it is her poverty that forces her to suppress her female sexuality by completing men's work and relinquishing her female beauty, making her an outsider to her gendered community while she remains an insider to the physical environment.

Given the long history of cutting hair as emblematic of feminine sexuality, it is prudent to discuss the symbolic implications of Marty's "rape of her locks" further. While Hardy deploys some of the customary associations with cutting hair in this scene,

he also challenges them. In her article, "Thomas Hardy's Morphology: Hair Formations in Scientific and Fictional Narratives," Galia Ofek analyzes the repeating images of women's hair in Thomas Hardy's novels. She argues that women's hair offers a means to "explore the changing power-relations between the sexes" and to explore the female "role in the social organization and its destabilization" (Ofek 291). In the Victorian period, "[m]edico-scientific representations of women's hair and its disorders, although not monolithic, tended to present women's hair problems as pathologies which were closely related to characteristically feminine disorders" (Ofek 294). As a result, the cutting of hair was thought to be a means to cure feminine disorders (294). The Victorian scientific and medical communities' "attention given to women's hair tried to subject it to social discipline and tame its wildness, or, by the same token, to systematize female sexuality" (294). Shifting away from the popular scientific and medical perceptions of hair, Ofek argues that in "Hardy's novels, hair is a metaphorical battlefield where the two sexes fight for dominance" (299). Starting with *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), Ofek traces the image of women's hair as "a central synecdoche for femininity in Hardy's fiction, just as it functioned as a synecdochal figure of womanhood in the [Victorian] scientific narratives" (299).

If we think about Marty's hair cutting in this larger symbolic context, we can consider the way that the "imagery of social, biological and ecological interdependence" create a "web-like plot design" in the novel (Ofek 306). Ofek explains that when Hardy first introduces us to Marty, we are observing her alongside the barber, Mr. Percomb, who has come to cut her hair (306). As Mr. Percomb observes Marty making spars, the

scene “composed itself into an impression-picture of extremest type, wherein the girl’s hair alone, as the focus of observation, was depicted with intensity and distinctness” (*Woodlanders* 11). At the same time, “her face, shoulders, hands, and figure in general, were a blurred mass of unimportant details, lost in haze and obscurity” (11). The narrator’s narrow focus on Marty’s hair “establishes the scopic economy as exploitative, victimizing and invasive” (Ofek 307). Marty, like other impoverished characters who sell their organs after death, must sell her hair to “rich, powerful and idle people, who purchase organic matter to serve their own selfish purposes, rather than to help humanity” (307). Marty’s cutting of her hair places her at “a point of transition into sexless existence” while the severed hair serves Felice’s mission to be more sexually-attractive (307). If we return to the novel again, we see the change in Marty’s ability to be assertive when she loses her hair. After selling her hair, Marty sees Grace and Giles meet, considers saying hello, and then checks herself, saying dryly, ‘No; I baint wanted there;’ and critically regard[ing] Winterborne’s companion” (*Woodlanders* 38). Having lost her hair and her possibility of sexual autonomy, Marty consequently seems to start to lose her place in the social community of Little Hintock. She, like Giles, slips further into the woodlands, and after her father dies, she falls completely outside of the community of thought.

Losing her sexuality and place in the Little Hintock community, Marty is spiraling into the position of an extreme environmental insider as she loses her access

points of belonging in the Little Hintock community.[5] While Marty exists as an extreme insider with little influence on anyone else in the community, "according to Hardy's literary hermeneutics, even when a minute, nearly invisible line in the web is disturbed or severed, it destabilizes the whole inextricable, interrelated network of characters, relations and actions that make up the plot" (Ofek 307). Consequently, late in the novel, "Marty's severed hair gains immense influence over the lives of all of the main characters" (307). When Marty plays her "only card" and writes a letter to Fitzpiers, she tells him "that Mrs. Charmond's magnificent pile of hair was made up of the writer's more largely than of her own" (*Woodlanders* 243). Marty's letter causes the two lovers to separate, which leads to Felice's "isolation and vulnerability, and her subsequent murder by a jealous lover" (Ofek 308). Felice's death compels the isolated Dr. Fitzpiers to return to his wife, Grace, which makes Grace flee from Fitzpiers and find shelter in the woodlands with Giles (308). Grace's presence in Giles's shelter forces him out into the weather, and, combined with his existing illness, leads to his early death (308). Giles's death, in turn, pushes Grace back to her adulterous husband. While Ofek carefully tracks the symbolic value of Marty's hair from its initial cutting to its independence as the catalyst for this string of subsequent events at the close of the novel, she fails to acknowledge the regrowth of Marty's hair that occurs by the end of the novel. After Felice and Giles have both died, Fitzpiers visits Marty's home to thank her for writing the letter (*Woodlanders* 333). As he speaks to her, "[h]is glance fell upon the girl's rare-

[5] As Marty disappears from the community, she also fades out of Hardy's plot. Ofek connects Marty's loss of hair with Marty's "literary dispossession" in the novel (307). While Marty seems like she is going to be a primary character at the outset of the text, she "loses her position immediately after the haircut" as she fades out of the central narrative (Ofek 307).

coloured hair, which had grown again," and he exclaims, "'Oh Marty, those locks of yours—and that letter!'" (333). Hardy's description of Marty's hair that has regrown suggests Marty's letter writing coincides with both her reentry into the novel and her sexual reemergence if we maintain the sexual symbolism of feminine hair.

While Marty's hair cutting is ripe with symbolic value, it is not the only aspect of her character that problematizes her relationship with her expected gender performance. Commenting on the way that Marty's labor complicates her gendered belonging, Kiely asserts that "if Marty does 'man's work,' it isolates her from men and women by eroding her conventional female identity without providing her with the means to define a new kind of womanhood" (194). Marty's female body excludes her from the masculine community of labor that poverty forces her to join; however, her masculine labor simultaneously complicates her relationship with the female community. Pointing to a scene in which Marty and other laborers are stripping the bark off the oak trees, Dolin also focuses on the impossibility of Marty's gendered social location, writing that she "is absolutely at one with the natural environment but also absolutely trapped by her class and sex" (549). In this scene, Hardy's narrator describes Marty as she peels back the bark from the limbs of the felled trees: "there she stood encaged amid the mass of twigs and buds like a great bird, running her tool into the smallest branches, beyond the furthest points to which the still and patience of the men enabled them to proceed" (*Woodlanders* 136). Described as being "like a great bird" in the tangled tree top, Marty settles comfortably into her natural location, but at the same time, her lower-class status and female body make her labor absolutely necessary and less valuable at the same time.

While her fellow male laborers do not have the “patience” to remove the bark from the smallest branches, Marty is compelled to spend her time stripping the low-yielding areas of trees because her overall compensation is lower. When Fitzpiers, who was attracted to the scene because he thought he might find Grace there with her father who owns the trees being harvested, speaks to Marty, he assumes that her stripping tool is different from the tools that the men use since she is removing bark from smaller branches while the men move on. Marty responds, “‘’tis only that they’ve less patience with the twigs, because their time is worth more than mine’” (137). As a poor woman, Marty rests at the lowest rung of the social ladder, and through her compulsion to complete masculine labor, she moves further from her gendered community as well.

As the antithesis to Marty, Mrs. Felice Charmond has ample finances, so she does not have to work, and with her purchase of Marty’s chestnut hair, Mrs. Charmond remains steadfast in her depiction of feminine beauty and fertility in spite of her natural hair’s lack of abundance. While the hair that helps situate her in the gendered sexual community is false, Mrs. Charmond is costumed as an insider to her gendered community. Her false appearance affords her membership into a community of belonging. Ingram asserts that Hardy’s “exploration of social conditions exposes the way that social class predetermines the possibilities open to individuals; the fuzzy nature of the criteria on the basis of which the class hierarchy is constructed; the corrosive effects it produces; and the flimsiness of the rationale offered for the system” (112). What Ingram is describing here, on one level, is that social class is what determines whether or not a particular path is available to an individual. She furthers her analysis of Hardy’s

treatment of social stratification by arguing that Hardy does not simply write a narrative of succession in which someone of a certain class moves from one position to another naturally. Instead, Hardy aims to expose the bias of the artificial systems, such as the purchase of artificial hair, that dictate each class's available paths, oppressing the impoverished populations. If we revisit Ofek's exploration of morphology in Hardy's literature, she offers historical context that further problematizes Felice's procurement of Marty's hair. Ofek explains that "Victorian doctors and scientists established a system of classification whereby women were assessed, diagnosed and compartmentalized as relatively safe to the progress of society or as degenerate and criminal, according to the color, texture and distribution of their hair" (295-6). For Felice to wear another woman's hair means that she is falsely locating herself along the spectrum of social progress. As aforementioned, darker hair was thought to correlate with "more libidinous" women who were "governed by sexual passions," so Marty's chestnut hair falls into this color distinction (Ofek 296). Therefore, by wearing Marty's hair, Felice is choosing to showcase her sexual vigor, even if it is artificially-obtained. While Ofek's exploration of the Victorian medical and scientific communities' perceptions of female hair does not specifically comment on those communities' impressions of a woman wearing false hair, it is fair to argue that Hardy employs false hair in his narratives to denote women who aim to entrap men.[6]

[6] We see Hardy replicate an analogous scene in which a woman falsifies her appearance in *Jude the Obscure* when Arabella discloses her false hair after duping Jude into marrying her. Jude's reaction, like Dr. Fitzpiers's, is a combination of shock and displeasure at being deceived. Hardy also includes literal man-traps in *The Woodlanders*, including Mrs. Charmond's. We see man-traps a second time in this novel when Tim Tangs sets one to catch Fitzpiers after learning that the latter has been intimate with Tim's wife, Suke Damson. Instead of catching Fitzpiers, however, this man-trap accidentally catches Grace.

When we again turn to Marty with this framework in mind, we can see that Marty's potential for belonging to a sexual community is, consequently, the result of all of the components of her character. If we recall Yuval-Davis's description of how belonging manifests, it is the summing up of all of these character traits—gender, class, etc. Most significantly, however, it seems that her status as an environmental insider plays a key governing role in determining her limits of sexual expression. Having already discussed Giles's insider relationship with the environment and outsider status to his gendered community of belonging, we can draw a similar parallel by looking at Marty: "Marty South alone, of all the women in Hintock and the world, had approximated to Winterborne's level of intelligent intercourse with Nature" (*Woodlanders* 330). She is "his true complement," and can read her physical environment like Giles does. When looking on woodlands, both Giles and Marty "had been possessed of its finer mysteries" and "had been able to read its hieroglyphs as ordinary writing" (330-1). Over their years of working side by side in the woodlands, "together they had, with the run of the years, mentally collected those remoter signs and symbols which seen in few were of a runic obscurity, but all together made an alphabet" (331). These two characters can read the physical environment like others read text: all the "signs and symbols" of nature create an obscure language that only true environmental insiders can understand. Rather than gazing on the woodlands as a "spectator" does, the "artifices of the seasons were seen by them from the conjuror's own point of view," which is a reference to Hardy's early description of Giles exercising his "conjuror's touch" while untangling the roots of the young trees (331, 64). Marty and Giles could "'speak in a tongue that nobody else

knew,'" that is "'the tongue of the trees and fruits and flowers themselves,'" and yet Marty never manages to articulate her feelings for Giles (331). The language of love and intimacy, words of sexual expression are absent from her vocabulary as she explains, "'[i]n all our outdoor days and years together, […] the one thing he never spoke of to me was love; nor I to him'" (331). In spite of their complementary relationship, shared occupation, and common natural language, Marty and Giles are both unable to express their sexual desires, which again seems to suggest that Hardy is acknowledging an incompatibility between their positions as environmental insiders and their autonomy to perform sexualized femininity or masculinity.

While I do not think it is as simple as drawing a correlation between environmental inclusion and gendered exclusion, it is interesting to consider the cause and effect relationship between these individual identity categories and constitute an identity narrative. Giles and Marty have only ever lived in Little Hintock, and their families' historical relationships with the land required land-based labor. Without parents to provide for them, both characters must continue in the tradition of working with the land. When only Little Hintock residents existed in the town, in a time before the touch of modernization started encroaching, there was no contrast against which to draw a distinction between the rural and the modern. In that time, it was reasonable to assume that the collection of environmental insiders had access to a different level of gender expression. With the introduction of characters who we associate with modernization, however, this community dynamic changes. Suddenly there is a level of competition in

the sexual arena that previously did not exist, and this competition correlates with the shift in environmental literacy among the people of and in Little Hintock.

While Marty is unable to access her own tools of sexual expression, Mrs. Charmond enjoys free sexual expression. As an outsider to the community, Felice seems to exist outside of the public purview in such a way that affords her increased autonomy in her solitude compared to other female residents. Also, her financial independence that is intertwined with her solitude further distances her from Marty. For example, after a minor carriage accident, Mrs. Charmond orders for Dr. Fitzpiers to be called to her residence immediately to attend to her self-declared injuries. When the doctor arrives, he sees "a woman of a full round figure reclining upon a couch in such a position as not to disturb a pile of magnificent hair on the crown of her head. A deep purple dressing-gown formed an admirable foil to the peculiarly rich brown of her hair-plaits" (*Woodlanders* 187). It is notable that the narrator mentions her hair twice in this description because while the hair is Marty's, its artificial placement on Mrs. Charmond's head gives her a striking appearance. Continuing the description of what Fitzpiers sees, the narrator describes the rest of her body: "her left arm, which was naked nearly up to the shoulder, was thrown upwards, and between the fingers of her right hand she held a cigarette, while she idly breathed from her plump lips a thin stream of smoke towards the ceiling" (187). As Ingram mentions in her notes to the book, Felice's naked arm is a "clear indication of a woman who flaunts her sexuality," and her wearing of a dressing gown also alludes to her sexual availability because of her incomplete dress (399). Furthermore, smoking a cigarette is a "mark of a 'fast' or loose-living woman" (399). In the solitude of her home,

Mrs. Charmond dresses and performs her sexual availability, which contrasts the scene of Marty's solitude in the home in which the latter is forced to labor. For Felice, her solitude enables her to solicit socially inappropriate attention from a married man. As there is nothing wrong with Mrs. Charmond for Dr. Fitzpiers to treat, they speak together instead, and we soon learn that they met once when they were younger and experienced mutual attraction, an attraction Fitzpiers calls "'a colossal passion in embryo'" as they never had the opportunity to act on it (189). Surmising that the potential for a relationship between them is null, Fitzpiers somewhat flirtingly says to Felice, "'you have […] outgrown the foolish impulsive passions of your early girlhood. I have not outgrown mine'" (189). At this point in the novel, we know that Fitzpiers has engaged with Suke Damson, another Little Hintock resident, in sexual activity in spite of his marital pursuit of Grace (150). In response, "with vibrations of strong feelings in her words," Felice counters his remark: "'I have been placed in a position which hinders such outgrowings. Besides, I don't believe that genuine subjects of emotion do outgrow them'" (189). While poverty and her repressed solitude force Marty to suppress and abandon her feelings of sexual desire, Felice's wealth and the particular privilege of being a widow combines with the freedom of solitude to act on her sexual desires. This exchange also foreshadows the impending affair between Fitzpiers, who is Grace's husband, and Felice.

Felice's unique position of belonging affords her freedoms and opportunities that other women cannot access. As I have argued, Felice is absolutely an environmental outsider who feels no connection to the Little Hintock land she owns. In fact, she remarks that she was brought there by her husband in the same way that other women are directed

by patriarchal influences, noting that "'[w]omen are always carried about like corks upon the waves of masculine desires'" (*Woodlanders* 190). Felice's acknowledgement of the role of masculine desire in dictating the course of a woman's life, affords her the distance necessary to resist that social norm now that her husband is dead. In this sense, I would suggest that Felice's sexual knowledge and awareness of patriarchal social structures enables her to position herself as outside of the traditional masculine/feminine relationship dichotomy and instead satisfy her sexual desire independent of patriarchal constructs. Her performance of femininity, however, includes artificiality because Marty's hair is an essential mark of false femininity that Felice utilizes to secure her artificial belonging. When Felice's false hair is revealed, she loses her guise of gendered feminine belonging and simultaneously loses Fitzpiers. Then, when Felice is killed by her ex-lover, we can read her death as the breaking down of Felice's resistance: after her sexual promiscuities that carried little to no consequence, a man takes her life as a way to permanently possess her and reclaim the patriarchal narrative by satisfying his masculine desire. In the end, while Felice's unique access points on the spectrum of belonging afforded her social and sexual freedoms, the artificiality of those freedoms ultimately breaks down when she meets the same common fate as other "impure" women, which is death.

If we range over Marty's placement on the spectrum of belonging, her extreme environmental insider status removes her from the social sphere, which mirrors Giles's parallel experience. As the levels of displacement shift Marty further and further away from belonging in the community, she barely exists in the community consciousness.

When the community members of Little Hintock learn of Mr. South's death, they focus their thoughts on Giles, knowing that he will lose his home since South was the last life to uphold the life-lease; however, Hardy emphasizes Marty's isolation in this same moment of loss, noting that "nobody thought of Marty" (*Woodlanders* 105). Her father's death leaves her utterly alone. Furthermore, if "any of them looked in upon her during those moonlight nights which preceded the burial of her father, they would have seen the girl absolutely alone in the house with the dead man" (105). Unlike the typecast Victorian female who needs a caretaker, Marty's well-being is not really anyone's concern, and in fact, she is the caretaker to her father for the first part of the novel. Then in the end, she is the sole caretaker for Giles's grave after Grace leaves with Fitzpiers once again. For Marty, solitude represents her displacement from her gendered community of belonging and her extreme insider status vis-à-vis the environment. Instead of choosing to seclude herself, Marty is forced into this social position by poverty and her gender. In Hardy's last description of Marty, she stands alone at Giles's grave:

> As this solitary and silent girl stood there in the moonlight, a straight slim figure, clothed in a plaitless gown, the contours of womanhood so undeveloped as to be scarcely perceptible, the marks of poverty and toil effaced by the misty hour, she touched sublimity at points, and looked almost like a being who had rejected with indifference the attribute of sex for the loftier of abstract humanism. (366)

Marty is alone and still without womanly curves, but nature's "misty hour" erodes our ability to see the way that "poverty and toil" have marred her body. Her femininity is still

largely inaccessible, but the role of nature undercuts her poverty. Instead of impressing upon his reader a final image of Marty as a woman defeated by her class-based and gendered belonging, Hardy edges her towards the sublime, presenting her as "a symbol of humanity at its morally highest level" as he celebrates her status as an environmental insider who will continue to work in the tradition of the woodlanders (414).

Unlike the competition between Giles and Fitzpiers in which each man either experiences tragedy or success in his narrative, when we turn to a comparison of oppositional female characters, the correlation between the terms of one's belonging and a successful narrative is not as clear. Marty's fate mirrors Giles's, and while she does not die, her picking up of Giles's trade gestures towards the likelihood of her continuous regression as an extreme insider until her eventual disappearance and death. In contrast, Felice's ability to perform sexuality with autonomy speaks to her environmental distance and class. In spite of these advantages, however, Felice still belongs in the female community and suffers at the hands of the second-class citizenship that femininity implies. Perhaps the fact that they both experience some degree of tragedy that is worse than their minor successes throughout the novel points to the patriarchal dominance in Victorian England.

2.3 The Unique Case of Grace Melbury

Grace is in a unique position as an insider and an outsider to the Little Hintock community, which leads to her great suffering. According to Kerridge, Grace is an "alienated outsider" to the people who live in Little Hintock, yet Fitzpiers thinks of her as an insider, "indigenous to that community" because of his position outside of it (137).

Rather than positioning Grace as an insider or an outsider, I argue that she fits best in her own composite insider/outsider category that posits her in a tenuous space between the two distinct community groups. To make this distinction for Grace's unique category, I argue that while Grace's absence from Little Hintock makes her unfamiliar with and distant from her home community, Hardy writes scenes in which she drifts between inhabiting and gazing at her natural surroundings. Grace occupies a unique space in her physical community, and her gender performance analogously correlates to her complicated relationship with place-based belonging.

When we first meet Grace, we see how her historic relationship to her home community and its environmental landscape is influenced by recent distance from the physical place. Upon returning from her schooling in a more urban environment, Grace is unimpressed by her rough, woodland beginnings. In spite of her beginning as a resident and insider to the Little Hintock community, her physical separation from it encouraged her emotional distance from the space. Also, because Grace has been away for her education, a decision made by her father to improve her social status, Grace's time away from her home has also created a class-based divide. When Grace arrives in Little Hintock, she looks "glorified and refined to much above her former level," and upon taking off the "new gloves she had bought to come home in," she extends her "hand graduating from pink at the tips of the fingers to white at the palm" to Giles (*Woodlanders* 37). This description of Grace's hand greatly contrasts the imagery surrounding Marty's hand as she engages in work: her left hand wears a man's glove while her right hand is exposed, and her "palm was red and blistering" (10). Since

characters who belong in Little Hintock are most likely to be wearing work gloves while laboring, Grace's fashionable gloves and delicate hands distinguish her class-based difference from her community members. Furthermore, as Grace moves next to Giles, Hardy explains that in spite of Giles being "well-attired and well-mannered for a yeoman," he "looked rough beside her" (37). The softness of her overall appearance, like the softness of her hands, distinguishes Grace as being different from the Little Hintock insiders.

Grace's return to Little Hintock also marks her waning familiarity with the physical aspects of her community. As he drives her home from the station, Giles points out the relocation of farm-buildings on a resident's property remarking on their "strange" look now that they are in a new space, which suggests that they stood in the old, familiar place for a long time (*Woodlanders* 41). While Grace politely agrees with Giles's assessment, "she should not have seen any difference in them if he had not pointed it out" (41). Her absence from the community contributes to her lost familiarity with it, so the changes do not seem "strange" to her; in contrast, she does not even recognize them. More laden with meaning than Grace's inability to recognize the changes in someone's farm-buildings is her inability to identify trees. Continuing the same conversation with Giles, he remarks, "'They had a good crop of bitter-sweets, they couldn't grind them all'—nodding towards an orchard where some heaps of apples had been left lying ever since the ingathering" (41). Grace responds "'Yes'" to acknowledge Giles's statement while "looking at another orchard," which causes him to identify her mistake and simultaneously ask about her former knowledge: "'Why, you are looking at John-apple-

trees! You know bitter sweets—you used to well enough?'" (42). After Grace plainly responds, "'I am afraid I have forgotten,'" the conversation between Grace and Giles fizzles: "[i]t seemed as if the knowledge and interests which had formerly moved Grace's mind had quite died away from her" (42). Instead of sharing in the scene together, both Giles and Grace are seeing different scenes: "where he was seeing John-apples and farm-buildings she was beholding a much contrasting scene" that carries from her experiences in the city, a scene with "a broad lawn in the fashionable suburb of a fast city" (42). Her inability to read the landscape of her hometown suggests that she has become an outsider, one who can only gaze at the land, and her outsider status is a barrier to an intimacy between Grace and Giles. Furthermore, her gaze seems to commodify the view by noting its deficiencies in comparison to the suburbs.

As Hardy continues to describe the traveling conversation of these two characters, he interestingly shifts into an environmental metaphor that mirrors the kind of natural growth and development of a tree: "[i]t was true; *cultivation* had so far advanced in the *soil* of Miss Melbury's mind as to lead her to talk of anything save of that she knew well, and had the greatest interest in developing—herself" (43-4, emphasis added). This "cultivation" is referring to the social cultivation that Grace's education imparts on her that aims to elevate her social status. With this change, it is clear that Grace has "fallen from the good old Hintock ways" (44). This new unfamiliarity and distance from her home marks the shift of Grace from her former insider status as a resident of Little Hintock to what Kerridge describes as "the alienated lover [who] *gazes*" (134). When Grace returns to Little Hintock from school, Hardy describes her observations of her

home: "[t]o Grace these well-known peculiarities were as an old painting restored" (*Woodlanders* 51). By describing the rural environment in which Grace and her father are walking as assuming the form of a restored "old painting" for Grace, Hardy further distances the former resident from her home. Instead of expressing her reconnection to the land, Grace compartmentalizes it into an object for consumption. As a gazer on her environment, she loses the level of environmental intimacy with which Giles and Marty interact.

Simultaneously, as she finds herself shifting away from the belonging she once felt to her home, Grace's devotion to her promised lover, Giles, also wanes. After their drive together from Sherton Abbas to Little Hintock, Giles delivers Grace to her father and expects to be invited inside the house with the family, but Mr. Melbury "quite forgot the presence of Giles without, as did also Grace herself" (*Woodlanders* 45). As he waits outside and considers whether he should interrupt, reminding the Melbury family of his existence, Giles is "mechanically tracing with his fingers certain time-worn letters carved in the jambs,—initials of bygone generations of households who had lived and died there" (45). Giles's inclination to trace the initials of the house's past inhabitants in this moment of idleness draws the reader's attention to the social history of the house. It also draws a connection between Giles and the past, which further separates him from Grace. After a while, he decides that "he would not enter and join the family; they had forgotten him" (45). Rather than asserting himself and performing in a traditional masculine role, Giles shrinks into the background. Furthering the divide between Grace and Giles, the introduction of a unique, modern foreigner in the form of Dr. Fitzpiers into Little Hintock

excites her interest in another man. Upon hearing about Fitzpiers having taking up residence in Little Hintock from her father's servant, Grace reflects on the strangeness of coming "back from the world to Little Hintock" and finding "in one of its nooks, like a tropical plant in a hedgerow, a nucleus of advanced ideas and practices which had nothing in common with the life around" (50). By likening Fitzpiers to "a tropical plant in a hedgerow," Hardy is emphasizing the level of exclusion and difference that the doctor represents. If we think about Fitzpiers and Giles as sexual competitors, their difference is bound up in their foreign and native relationships to Little Hintock.

However, in spite of the allure of a new man of romantic interest, the effect of Grace's physical location in Little Hintock slowly begins to resurface the physical place attachment that she experienced before leaving her home. When Grace has been back only a short time and begins to regain her affection for Giles, Hardy writes that "already the homeliness of Hintock life was fast becoming effaced from her observation as a singularity" (*Woodlanders* 84). Hardy writes that this process occurs in Grace "as the momentary strangeness of a face from which we have for years been separated insensibly passes off with renewed intercourse, and tones itself down into identity with the lineaments of the past" (84). The distance from her home may have initially proved to separate Grace from the knowledge of the history of the place, as evidenced in her inability to recognize the changes in the landscape that Giles points out on the day of her initial return, but as she spends more time in her home, it becomes clear that her sentimental attachments to nature are resurfacing. Her attachment continues to develop when the next day is a "day of rather bright weather for the season," and Grace chooses

to go walking in the woods with her father (84). In the woods, "Grace's lips sucked in this native air of hers like milk" (84). Hardy's simile draws a connection between the "native air" of Little Hintock and the suckling of milk, which is obviously maternal in nature. Grace suckles the woodland air, feeling more refreshed and increasingly reconnected to her lost home.

As Grace begins to locate herself inside of her community again, stabilizing her sense of belonging, her affection for Giles also flourishes. In spite of the contentment that this relationship might afford Grace, her father seeks to influence his daughter to focus her affections on a different class of man in spite of his original promise of the marriage between Grace and Giles. Having sent his daughter for education in the city, Mr. Melbury now believes that his daughter ought to marry a man who is not from Little Hintock. As he and Grace walk together on the sunny day, he takes the opportunity to discourage her reintegration into the Little Hintock community. First, he states that "'a woman takes her colour from the man she's walking with,'" and while Mr. Melbury is literally talking about himself as Grace's current walking partner, he is suggesting that despite being a refined woman, if Grace chooses Giles for her husband, his native woodsman status will depreciate Grace's status and honor (*Woodlanders* 85). Grace, recognizing her father's appeal, grows "more and more uneasy at being the social hope of the family" as her father seeks to artificially elevate his daughter to a social status to which she has no real belonging (86). Mr. Melbury continues, "'if it costs me my life you shall marry well!'" (86). When Grace asks explicitly whether Giles is a suitable option for marrying well, her father defers a response. That same evening, Mr. Melbury says to Grace, since "'you've

been staying with us, and have fallen back a little, and so you don't feel your place so strongly'" (87). What is most distressing about Mr. Melbury's observation is that by pushing Grace to fit into his mold of who he wants her to be, he is not allowing her to be who she actually is. He wishes "[t]o sow in her heart cravings for social position" that is above her existing social station (88). His increasing discouragement of her assimilation to Little Hintock, which he describes as falling back, ignores the increased comfort that Grace is beginning to feel as she reestablishes her position as an insider to the Little Hintock community.

Still fixed on his daughter's pursuit of an elevated social station, Mr. Melbury takes Grace on another walk later in the novel to discuss the possibility of her marrying Dr. Fitzpiers. Mr. Melbury desires his daughter to advance her social standing so much that he asks her to sacrifice their own relationship in a heartbreaking monologue: "'[i]f you should ever meet me then, Grace, you can drive past me, looking the other way. I shouldn't expect to see you speak to me, or wish such a thing—unless it happened to be in some lonely private place where 'twouldn't lower ye yet at all'" (*Woodlanders* 161). If she marries the doctor, Mr. Melbury asks that Grace all but forget her home and her family to turn away and pretend her father, who raised her after her mother's death, is a stranger. With his rejection of Grace's "natural" social position in Little Hintock, he removes her access to her community of belonging. Instead, Mr. Melbury's singular focus on elevating Grace's social station encourages or even forces Grace's hand towards Fitzpiers in spite of the latter's ethical shortcomings.

Of course, with Mr. Melbury's ready blessing, Grace and Fitzpiers marry. Before the marriage, Fitzpiers already begins tugging Grace away from her community, in this instance tied predominately to class and social location, by insisting that they marry at a registry office instead of a church (*Woodlanders* 165). In response to Fitzpiers, Grace explains "with real distress, 'How can I be married except at church, and with all my dear friends round me!'" (165). Rather than conceding, Fitzpiers maintains that a private, matter-of-fact marriage will be preferable to facilitate a future move out of Little Hintock—Grace's home and the place Fitzpiers finds dreadfully isolating. He explains, "'it will be far better if nobody there [in their new home] knows where you come from, nor anything about your parents. Your beauty and knowledge and manners will carry you anywhere if you are not hampered by such retrospective criticism'" (165). Mirroring the earlier comment from Mr. Melbury, Fitzpiers also argues that Grace must abandon the points of access she has to her communities of belonging and instead nurture the growth of her artificial, cultivated self that male forces in her life are molding. Instead of fostering her reconnecting to the natural woodland of her home or allowing her to follow her feelings to spend a life with Giles, Grace finds herself standing moreover on the threshold between country woman and doctor's wife, inhabitant of and gazer at nature, and happiness and unrelenting sorrow. Grace is balancing in a liminal space between being an insider and being an outsider.

Ultimately, Grace finds herself exasperated with her strained navigation between insider and outsider status and exclaims to her father: "'I wish I worked in the woods like Marty South! I hate genteel life, and I want to be no better than she'" (221). Grace's

frustration with the life she is forced to try and fit into leaves her feeling more isolated, especially when she learns that her husband committed adultery. She continues to explain to her father that "'cultivation has only brought me inconveniences and troubles. I say again, I wish you had never sent me to those fashionable schools you set your mind on. It all arose out of that, father. If I had stayed home I should have married—'" (221). Breaking off mid-sentence, Grace is overcome with emotion and withholds the name of her love, Giles. Grace, however, has no idea what Marty's life is like, so it is hard to read this passage and feel sympathy for someone who has escaped the grip of poverty or the utter devastation of not just unrequited love but the inability to express love for another.

Fitzpiers's adultery is the nail in the coffin of their relationship, and Mr. Melbury aims to obtain a divorce for his daughter, freeing her from his disastrous son-in-law. Divorce, however, is not available to Grace. In the novel, Hardy references "the new law" that makes "unmarrying […] as easy as marrying" (*Woodlanders* 271). This law is a reference to "the legislation of 1857: an Act to Amend the Law relative to Matrimonial Causes in England" (377). This law allowed men whose wives committed adultery to seek a divorce and, in turn, "avoid the risk of having an illegitimate child passed off as his heir" (377). For a wife to obtain a divorce, however, her husband's adultery needed to be "aggravated by, for instance, being incestuous" (377). Since Fitzpiers has committed adultery without a secondary offense, divorce is not a viable option for Grace, but her father's limited understanding of the new law causes him to pursue divorce for his daughter while simultaneously encouraging her to renew her attachment for Giles. In the appendix to the Penguin Classics 1998 edition of *The Woodlanders*, Patricia Ingram

writes that "[b]y this extended pivotal episode in the narrative Hardy draws attention forcibly to the double-standard enshrined in the major divorce legislation of the nineteenth century" (379). She continues to explain that this "inequity was not removed until 1923" (379).

As Grace's marriage to Fitzpiers falls apart, so do her connections to the genteel life that distanced her from her home, and we see her perception of the land and of Giles shift simultaneously. In this metaphorical bloom of the young lovers' spring, Grace fantasizes about Giles as a fantastical woodland being: Giles "rose upon her memory as the fruit-god and the wood-god in alternation: sometimes leafy and smeared with green lichen, as she had seen him amongst the sappy boughs of the plantations: sometimes cider-stained and starred with apple-pips, as she had met him on his return from cider making" (*Woodlanders* 278). Her fantasy recollections of Giles situate him in the woods throughout the cycle of the seasons, and it seems that his integration with nature is precisely the component of Giles's belonging that makes Grace most attracted to him. Grace "bloomed again" during this time of their love's regrowth, which suggests that she has the opportunity to start fresh in a new season of love (279).

At the close of the novel when Grace is staying in Giles's hut in the woods while he lies sick and dying outside of it (without her knowing his gravely poor health), Hardy momentarily restores Grace's access to belonging in the natural world, mirroring her love for Giles. In this particular scene, Grace sits in "solitude" in Giles's cabin as she worries about his prolonged absence (*Woodlanders* 311). Further distancing her from humanity, Hardy expresses that her "solitude was further accentuated to-day by the stopping of the

clock for want of winding," which also symbolizes a presumed paralysis of time while she waits (311). Interestingly, however, Hardy's next line indicates that time of day when Grace makes a hyper-realized observation about her environment: "[a]t noon she heard a slight rustling outside the window, and found that it was caused by an eft which had crept out of the leaves to bask in the last sun-rays that would be worth having till the following May" (311). To hear an eft crinkling on the leaves exaggerates the possibility of human perception. This moment of environmental awareness signals Grace's reentry into the community of environmental insiders. Kerridge argues that Hardy employs literary techniques that showcase inhabitants' keen, heightened awareness of non-human nature, and in this moment, Grace's "heightened, expectant senses catch a sound she would normally miss," describing Hardy's example as "almost hallucinatory in its extension of normal perception" (135). As we see earlier in the novel with other inhabitants of nature, such as Giles and Marty, they repeatedly are sensitive to the expressions and emotions in nature in ways that other characters cannot comprehend. For example, as I discussed in 2.2, Marty hears the trees sigh as she plants them. In *The Environmental Imagination*, Buell calls this technique "a deliberate dislocation of ordinary perception" (Buell 104, 107) (Kerridge 135). Hardy writes an environmental space in which the reader is reminded of the "neglected human perspectives" (135). It is an ecocentric vision of the environment.

Continuing moreover with the correlation between human and nature, the expressions of the woods begin to foreshadow the narrative outcome for Grace and Giles, suggesting that Hardy is writing in another kind of symbolic relationship between Grace

and nature. In a scene filled with foreboding, Hardy describes the "dead boughs" and "perishing woodbine" that Grace views from one window of the hut (*Woodlanders* 311). From the other, she sees trees with "branches disfigured with wounds resulting from their mutual rubbings and blows" and the "rotting stumps of those of the group that had been vanquished long ago, rising from their mossy setting like black teeth from green gums" (311). This "desolate day" instills in Grace a "horrid misgiving," and for perhaps the first time, she can finally read the cues of nature as it is on this day that she discovers Giles is fast-approaching his demise (312).

Grace is constantly pushed and pulled in a way that makes her navigation of gender, sexuality, and her community especially challenging. In terms of sexual desire, she has to choose between Giles and Fitzpiers, and this choice is analogous to her choice between Little Hintock and the city. In spite of her comforts in the woodland community and regard for Giles, she succumbs to the pressures of the city and the allure of Fitzpiers's intoxicating masculinity. Realizing her mistake, she tries to choose again, but the patriarchal structures prevent her from divorcing her adulterous husband because of the limited autonomy available to women. While the reestablishment of the relationship between Grace and Giles begins to blossom, coinciding with Grace's immersion in her homeland, after Giles's death, the distance between Grace and the natural spaces of Little Hintock increases again. Hardy writes, "[t]he woods were uninteresting, and Grace stayed indoors a great deal" (343). With the passing of time, Grace eventually accepts her position as Mrs. Fitzpiers and leaves her home. In doing so, Grace's gender performance aligns with the expectations for a female laid out by the law because she does not have

the right to divorce her adulterous husband. Even though Grace ends the book with her husband, she is more isolated now than she ever was in Little Hintock. She is removed from her family, her homeland, and her lover and left to embrace the dreariest of solitudes as Mrs. Fitzpiers in the threshold of non-belonging between community insider and outsider.

2.4 Conclusion

Patricia Ingram writes in *Thomas Hardy* that Thomas Hardy's "Wessex is a place, a history, a celebration, an elegy; it is not merely a region, imagined or real" (103). With his creation of Wessex, Hardy "was not merely creating a distinctive landscape. He was creating a mythical kingdom which dislocates not only place but time" (Ingram 103). Ingram's assessment echoes Hardy's own description of Wessex in the preface to *Far from the Madding Crowd* in which he describes it as "a partly real, partly dream country" (*Far* xxx). Wessex "involves an older and more stable community," which makes it "elegiac" in a sense (103). In *The Woodlanders*, Little Hintock is Hardy's representation of the disappearing rural community. While many scholars problematize Hardy's distance from the rural communities that inspired his creation of Little Hintock, I maintain that Hardy's distance from the rural communities that he wants to preserve in social memory is precisely what makes his literary work possible. Throughout the novel, insiders to the rural community either fail to realize or refuse to acknowledge that their homes and their ways of life are gradually disappearing. Repeatedly, it takes an outside observer's input to call attention to the community's instabilities.

While characters often slip in and out of this position of the observer (versus the observed), Hardy's narrator is steadfastly the one watching from a distance and reporting on the observed activities. The narrator opens the novel by observing the loneliness of the countryside. On the first page of the novel, Hardy writes, "[t]he physiognomy of a deserted highway expresses solitude to a degree that is not reached by mere dales and downs, and bespeaks a tomb-like stillness more emphatic than that of glades and pools. The contrast of what is with what might be, probably accounts for this" (*Woodlanders* 5). Unlike "the pleasing sadness of the landscapes of Gray or Wordsworth" that express a harmony with the natural landscape in the absence of humans, Hardy's lonely, empty road seems to express a different kind of social isolation (Kiely 190). The "emptiness" of this place seems to alert a traveler to "the simple absence of human companionship for an incubus of the forlorn" (*Woodlanders* 5). By opening the novel with the empty road that leads into Little Hintock, Hardy juxtaposes the solitude of the place with the human movement that a road signifies. Furthermore, on this first page, Hardy also introduces a character who "did not belong to the country proper," who, after walking onto the road, "was temporarily influenced by some such feeling of being suddenly more alone than before he had emerged upon the highway" (5). The loneliness of Little Hintock is so palpable to someone who does not belong there that even though this traveler arrives at a road, it leaves him with "some such feeling of being suddenly more alone."

Central to this opening scene is the role of observation as the narrator watches the lonely outsider on the road. Readers of the text fulfill yet another level of observation. As readers, we are necessarily separated from the text, but "Hardy demands that readers

should take seriously the way their presence is implied by the narrative" (Kerridge 129). Kerridge and Dolin both assert that the reader occupies the role of the tourist, much like the narrator, gazing on the residents of Little Hintock. We are visitors in Wessex, but Hardy demands that his reader "acknowledge that a visitor is not a ghostly, free-moving figure who watches and leaves no imprint but a bodily presence engaged in an act of consumption that will have material consequences" (Kerridge 129-30). Hardy's narration implicates his readers, demanding that we feel connected to the characters in a bodily way as we read about their suffering (Kerridge 128). Playing with the alternating separation and closeness of his narration, Hardy sometimes writes the narration so we feel "close to a character" who inhabits the place, and other times, we are "made to retreat to the perspective of a passing tourist" (133-4). This separation between an inhabitant and a tourist maps to a parallel separation between those who belong in a place and those who visit it. There is, however, an important difference in this comparison: the reader, unlike the Little Hintock outsiders, has sympathy for the insiders in spite of still realizing the difference between the insiders and the reader.

"Phases of her childhood lurked in her aspect still. As she walked along to-day, for all her bouncing handsome womanliness, you could sometimes see her twelfth year in her cheeks, or her ninth sparkling from her eyes; and even her fifth would flit over the curves of her mouth now and then."

"The only exercise that Tess took at this time was after dark; and it was then, when out in the woods, that she seemed least solitary. She knew how to hit to a hair's-breadth the moment of evening when the light and the darkness are so evenly balanced that the constraint of day and the suspense of night neutralize each other, leaving absolute mental liberty. It is then that the plight of being alive becomes attenuated to its least possible dimensions."

--Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

3 REWRITING THE EXPECTATIONS OF BELONGING: HARNESSING LIMINALITY IN *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*

For my second body chapter, I concentrate my analysis on *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891). Focusing on how the feminine body interacts with the land, I explore the way the shifting standard of farm work rewrites the social and physical expectations of the female body and how Tess mediates these expectations. Nearly all of the characters in Hardy's

prose work in their communities, which is part of what sets his pastoral apart from the traditional conception of the pristine rural landscape. Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* follows Tess Durbeyfield's work as a field laborer and dairy maid outside of her community after an undesired sexual experience pushes her to the margins of her home's social sphere. More than any other character Hardy writes, Tess frequently travels throughout Wessex to find work. In part, her continuous migration is necessitated by the forced sexual impurity that positions her as an outsider to her home in the village of Marlott within the "fertile and sheltered" Vale of Blackmoor and makes her socially unfit for certain kinds of labor in her home community (*Tess* 12). Simultaneously, the changes in farm labor standards that are encroaching on the isolated Marlott compel Tess to move further from her home, and the financial strain of her isolation forces her to accept undesirable forms of employment. Both of these key factors, Tess's sexual assault and the shifting standards of farm work, intersect repeatedly to influence Tess's migration patterns, and the remainder of the chapter explores the relationship between these intersecting issues. Hardy repeatedly offers mimicry between Tess's physical and emotional state and the landscape in which she finds herself, making an investigation of Tess's navigation of her gender performance and her integration with the natural space in which she exists especially fruitful.

Unlike the earlier chapter in which I map characters onto a spectrum of belonging, in this chapter, I explore the range of Tess's liminal belonging. Tess Durbeyfield's paradoxical social and physical existence make her an unusual character: she occupies the spaces between child and woman, sexually-experienced and pure, and working-class

Durbeyfield and high-class D'Urberville. She is both a child and woman because at just 16 years-old, she must leave the only home she knows, armed with her limited understanding of the world, and assume the role of a woman through her unconsented sexual experience of rape. Her rape marks her as a "fallen woman" in the eyes of her community, but Hardy's descriptions of Tess as "pure" emphasize her lasting, natural purity in spite of the sexual act that was forced on her body. Socially, Tess is a working-class woman whose historic name (i.e., D'Urberville) offers her the presumption of upward social mobility but never affords her any real advantages. Even though I describe Tess's belonging as liminal, as a category of person, she must belong somewhere. Her cultural and social sphere, however, cannot understand someone like Tess, so she is left to exist in the in-between space of a society defined by binaries. Arguably both in spite and because of the difficulties that her liminality causes, however, Tess executes a level of agency over her existence that her community problematizes. To explore Tess's liminality, I have divided the chapter into three areas of focus: the mapping of Tess's pure body onto the land in section 3.1, the shifting expectations of Tess's laboring body in section 3.2, and Tess's mediation of the liminality between day and night in section 3.3.

Before transitioning into the textual analysis in which I identify the passages that inspired me to engage with the seemingly oppositional concepts of liminality and belonging, it is important to explore this terminology and what it represents in my analysis. It is most obvious to consider liminality as not belonging to, for example, a social class, physical location, or sexual community; however, when I contemplate the

relationship between liminality and belonging in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, I am considering Tess's liminality as an alternate to, rather than in opposition to, her belonging. I describe her liminality as an alternate kind of belonging because belonging is a complex, intersectional concept: numerous aspects of one's identity constitute the terms of his/her/their belonging. Tess's liminality is both a persistent inability to belong and a refusal to make concessions for the sake of belonging. Throughout Tess's life, physical and social circumstances complicate her belonging. For example, while only 16 years-old at the outset of the novel, Tess's glimpses of physical maturity position her in the space between girl and woman. Her parents' recklessness builds on her liminal physical appearance when they send Tess to the D'Urbervilles' family estate to claim kinship. Alec D'Urberville sees Tess as a woman and assumes that her country upbringing implies her sexual willingness, and when Alec rapes Tess, he pushes her into another dimension of liminality: a sexually-experienced yet pure woman. Tess did not consent to the sexual encounter with Alec, but, nevertheless, it forces her to become an outsider to the acceptable Victorian social mores and values. While she does eventually have the opportunity to overturn her sexual outsider status by marrying Alec, she refuses his invitation. Furthermore, as industrializing agricultural processes redefine the expectations for farm labor, rewriting the physical landscape in which Tess exists, Tess similarly must rewrite her relationship with the land, a challenge further complicated by the liminality of her social and economic status.

While exploring the ways in which Tess finds herself forced into liminality, I have found that she develops a complicated relationship with this perpetual state of being

in-between. It seems fair to contend that Tess repeatedly strives to belong in her social community, but in spite of her attempts to navigate the spaces between social and physical communities of belonging, Tess's complicated positionality makes full assimilation impossible. At the same time, Tess finds moments of satisfaction and belonging in spite of being outside of the typical communities of belonging. For example, when Tess is in nature, specifically when she is in uncultivated natural environments, she experiences a heightened degree of comfort via her connection to the inhabitants of nature. These natural spaces, unlike the manmade social sphere, follow the rules of nature, and the meaning of some language shifts when used in this space. Most importantly, as Hardy highlights in his introduction to the text, the meaning of "pure" in nature does not align with its cultivated meaning from the Victorian social arena. These moments of belonging in nature, however, are not permanent for Tess. Similarly, another key series of moments when Tess locates points of belonging occur in the temporal space between day and night. By isolating her belonging to this fleeting yet reoccurring moment, Hardy repeatedly gives Tess access to a kind of belonging, however limited it may be.[7] As a fallen woman, Tess's liminality affords her a singular option for sustained belonging, and ultimately, by ending the novel with Tess's death, Hardy seems to assert that the only kind of permanent belonging accessible to a fallen woman like Tess, under the restrictions of the society in which she lives, is death.

[7] Tess's liminality, a positionality that disrupts idealized Victorian binaries, aligns her with the other categories of Victorian women who do not fit neatly into the binaries that society pretends to uphold (e.g., governesses and "redundant" women).

While other literary scholars have not discussed liminality and belonging with relation to Tess in the same way that I am combining the subjects, Gregory Tague does explore Tess's liminality from a metaphysical perspective in his chapter "Thomas Hardy*: Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Jude the Obscure,* and Character in Nature" from his book *Character and Consciousness: George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, E.M. Forester, and D.H. Lawrence (Phenomenological, Ecological, and Ethical Readings)*. Tague's application of Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy of metaphysical consciousness to the text encourages a reading of Hardy's works that focuses on "the more sophisticated unfolding of a character's consciousness about him or her *self*" (70, 72).[8] If we think specifically about Tess, the places she inhabits are relevant to her growing metaphysical consciousness about her sense of self: "[t]he land for Hardy is not a landscape, not a backdrop, but a platform on which the human beings struggle with each other and with larger elements. There is a common ground where 'nature and consciousness' meet (Bayley 66)" (Tague 84). In this common space between nature and consciousness, some characters "have a special relationship with the land as a metaphor for the boundary in relation to another consciousness, part of a larger whole with which one can communicate" (84). The ability to navigate this boundary between the land and consciousness is what Tague refers to as "the liminality of Tess" (84). While Hardy sometimes enables Tess to navigate this liminal space, which I will argue occurs most often in the temporal moment between day

[8] Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) was one of the first Nineteenth-Century philosophers "to contend that at its core, the universe is not a rational place. Inspired by Plato and Kant, both of whom regarded the world as being more amenable to reason, Schopenhauer developed their philosophies into an instinct-recognizing and ultimately ascetic outlook, emphasizing that in the face of a world filled with endless strife, we ought to minimize our natural desires for the sake of achieving a more tranquil frame of mind and a disposition towards universal beneficence" (Wicks).

and night, Tague also impresses on his reader that Tess experiences limitations to her "field of consciousness" when other characters impose their individual consciousnesses on Tess (85). When she is alone, however, "Tess is capable of experiencing what can be termed metaphysical consciousness, when, through her body she experiences a liminality, a relationship and relatedness to the greater elements (land, atmosphere) in the environment" (86). Tague argues that Tess's ability to experience a state of metaphysical consciousness means that Tess is able to engage in an abstract consideration of her sense of self, not her physical being, in this liminal moment: "[f]or a brief moment of consciousness the human person becomes, via the body, bodiless" (86). Identifying an example of this moment in the text, Tague calls attention to Tess's ability to navigate "to a hair's-breadth the moment of evening when the light and the darkness are so evenly balanced that the constraint of day and the suspense of night neutralize each other," a point at which "her liminal state between the human and the natural is heightened" (*Tess* 85, Tague 86). It is in this moment that Tess achieves "abeyance," or a state of temporary suspension, in which she "'escape[s] from *being* into *seeing*'" (Tague 86). In this liminal moment, I suggest that Tess exerts agency when she transitions from the passive state of being into the active state of seeing. Her relationship with the land, brought on by her state of metaphysical consciousness, creates a place and space in which Tess nearly achieves a permanent kind of belonging in the natural world; however, the limited temporal moment that is inherent in this fleeting time of day reminds us that Tess cannot fully assimilate to the natural community because her access points to belonging are bound up in transient moments. Instead, Hardy creates these brief glints of a moment in

which she can figure herself as a bodiless dimension of the natural land, but then the light changes, and Tess again recognizes her physicality and its separation from the natural world.

In Tess's case, it is important to consider the difference between belonging that involves other people and belonging that does not, which is a difference to which Tague's argument directs us. Tess's liminality in relation to social communities is not positive for her because in those social spaces, she cannot, as Tague describes it, experience metaphysical consciousness that separates her physical self from her sense of self. Instead, the physical components that constitute Tess's identity are formed and/or reinforced by external social forces. As aforementioned in my introductory chapter, according to Yuval-Davis, the "dynamic process" of belonging to a community is constructed on three analytical levels of belonging: "social locations," "individuals' identifications and emotional attachments to various collectivities and groupings," and the "ethical and political value systems with which people judge their own and others' belonging/s" (199). These analytical levels of belonging intersect to encourage a multi-dimensional understanding of what it means to belong to a community. Furthermore, instead of looking at identity categories like gender or class in isolation, Yuval-Davis argues that it is necessary to look at how the series of identity categories to which one aligns "constitute each other" (200). Failing to look at the entire portrait simplifies the complexity of identity. When we look at Tess's productive liminality in, for example, the threshold between day and night, people are absent. In their absence, Tess's belonging is

simplified because it is no longer a constitution of her identity categories but is based only on her occupation of a physical space and time.

3.1 Mapping Tess's Pure Body onto the Land

The way Tess's purity is mapped onto her relationship with the natural world contrasts with the social sphere's valuation of her body, and her liminal existence as a child-woman who is sexually-experienced and pure further complicates her relationship. With purity acting as the point of evaluation, Victorian social mores commodified the female body. In "The Politics of Place Attachment and the Laboring Body in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*," Jillmarie Murphy offers a historical framework that tracks the Victorian social and cultural valuation of the female body and elucidates the ways in which Hardy's writing of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* challenges the moral principles of Victorian society. Murphy introduces the Girls' Friendly Society (GFS), which was an 1870s group that aimed to ensure dairy maids and other working "girls" (i.e., not proper women) were morally upright and remained sexually pure (69). The GFS "politicized female bodies by imposing strict sexual mores on poor, working-class women," specifically targeting women who lived in rural spaces like Tess does (Murphy 70). The forced application of the social virtues of a group of "affluent society matrons" on the poor, rurally-located dairy maids leads us to understand that the ruling class was relentless in the perpetuation of their values (69). Murphy builds on this historical background when she argues that "Hardy provides an important connection to the way in which attachments to a destabilized rural culture can create emotional conflict, social disorganization, and destructive attachments within gendered political debates" (72).

With this statement, Murphy suggests that there is value in considering the role of place attachment in Hardy's writing through a gendered analytical lens. By classifying Tess, who is a rape victim, as a "pure woman" in the subtitle of the novel, Hardy challenges the GFS principle that classified women who were victims of sexual assault as impure (70).

In his preface to the fifth and later editions of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, dated July 1892, Hardy calls attention to his critics' misreading of the word "pure." The critics, he argues, "reveal an inability to associate the idea of the sub-title adjective [i.e., pure] with any but the artificial and derivative meaning which has resulted to it from the ordinances of civilization" (Hardy and Orel 27). Furthermore, "[t]hey ignore the meaning of the word in Nature, together with all aesthetic claims upon it, not to mention the spiritual interpretation afforded by the finest side of their own Christianity" (Hardy and Orel 27). The meaning of the word "pure" in Nature, as Hardy emphasizes in his preface, is where I would like to focus. In "Thomas Hardy: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure*, and Character in Nature," when Gregory Tague discusses Hardy's use of "pure," Tague also focuses on Hardy's deliberate defining of the word's meaning in the preface, writing, "Hardy's Preface to the Fifth and later editions clearly states that *pure* has a meaning in Nature (4) and is, therefore, not simply an adjective. Moreover, purity is an estimation of the character of Tess (7), not simply of her superficial personality" (Tague 81-2). Similarly, Tague cites Michael Millgate's mediation of the same language: "Millgate points out how Hardy's insistence on Tess as being pure is a 'deliberate challenge…' (319) to all readers, encapsulating the polarities of Hardy's own anxieties about his bold effort through her" (82). Ultimately, "Tess is pure in nature; marriage has

nothing to do with purity or with nature (Millgate 480)" (82). When I read Hardy's preface, I agree with Tague's and Millgate's assessments of the text; however, I would like to extend the conversation about purity in nature beyond its existence as a social challenge and consider the way it connects Tess with nature. Concentrating specifically on the description of Tess as "pure" "in Nature," Hardy seems to map Tess's purity onto her relationship with the natural land. When we meet Tess at the start of the novel, she is living in the Vale of Blackmoor. Like the maiden Tess, the Vale of Blackmoor is also "untrodden" (*Tess* 12). In his opening description of the Vale of Blackmoor, Hardy describes the land as being "fertile and sheltered," which is similar to the way the reader comes to know Tess: she is still a "sheltered" child in both age and knowledge about sexual encounters with men, but when Alec D'Urberville rapes Tess, her pregnant body shows that she is "fertile" (12).

Wrestling between her positionality as a child and a woman, Tess exists in a liminal position between the two age markers. Hardy repeatedly plays with Tess's sliding in and out of girlhood and womanhood, often in single sentences, encouraging his reader to feel the same instability that Tess experiences. Her appearance clouds the reality of her childish form while glints of her womanly curves complicate her belonging to either childhood or adulthood. For example, while Hardy describes Tess as exhibiting her "bounding handsome womanliness," he simultaneously emphasizes the "[p]hases of her childhood [that] lurked in her aspect still" (*Tess* 15). These phases appear and disappear from Tess's figure: "you could sometimes see her twelfth year in her cheeks, or her ninth sparkling from her eyes; and even her fifth would flit over the curves of her mouth now

and then" (15-6). To make more explicit the trouble that Tess's liminal positionality as a girl-woman affords her, Hardy describes the way in which Tess's "white frock" and its "airy fulness" "imparted to her developing figure an amplitude which belied her age, and might cause her to be estimated as a woman when she was not much more than a child" (49). The tension produced by Tess's exhibition of womanly and girlish traits contributes to her liminality. As neither woman nor girl, Tess exists in the liminal position between adulthood and childhood, which complicates the way others treat her. For example, her mother ignores that Tess is susceptible to the kind of sexual pressure or force that sexually mature women experience, regarding Tess as a girl. Simultaneously, Alec sees Tess's physicality as womanly and therefore tempting of his sexual desire.

For Tess, "[t]he Vale of Blackmoor was to her, the world," and her isolation and youthful ignorance about danger that men present to women stems largely from her mother's own childishness and failure to warn her (*Tess* 36). Overjoyed by Alec D'Urberville's early interest in her daughter, Mrs. Durbeyfield sends Tess to his estate to claim kinship and improve the Durbeyfield family's social and economic status. First, Hardy conveys the unnaturalness of the D'Urberville name that Alec's family claimed for themselves, describing the way in which Mr. Simon Stoke claimed the D'Urberville name for his family as a part of his rebranding effort because it "looked and sounded as well as" any of the other names he came across while scanning "the pages of works devoted to extinct, half-extinct, obscured, and ruined families appertaining to the quarter of England in which he proposed to settle" (39). While Tess and her family think the name is "a family name [that] came by nature," the reader knows that neither family has

any real claim to the D'Urberville name (40). Then, Hardy contrasts the pureness of Tess's nature with Alec's unnaturalness during their first meeting at the D'Urbervilles' estate. Alec compels Tess to eat strawberries and gives Tess roses to place in her breast, both of which are grown in hot houses, making them similarly unnatural for the early June season (42). Tess displays "a slight duress [as] she parted her lips and took it in" when Alec forces a strawberry to her mouth (42). By writing Tess as taking in the artificially-grown fruit from a man whose name is usurped, Hardy juxtaposes the natural Tess with Alec in this scene and foreshadows her impending sexual assault. Hardy uses the unnatural roses that "pricked her chin" to again foreshadow Tess's upcoming tragedy, describing the action as "an ill omen" (44).

Shortly after their first meeting, Alec calls on Tess to come to his family's estate for employment. Hardy describes Mrs. Durbeyfield as "clapp[ing] her hands like a child" when Alec comes with a "spick-and-span gig or dog-cart, highly varnished and equipped" to take Tess away with him (*Tess* 52). Overtaken by the spectacle of the cart and the presumed promise of social advancement, Mrs. Durbeyfield fails to recognize the perilous situation into which she is pushing Tess as she forces her to leave the Vale of Blackmoor, which is the limit of Tess's world experience and is the only place she has ever belonged. Hardy appears to mirror Tess's departure from the Vale of Blackmoor with her departure from childhood: both experiences are thrust upon Tess by patriarchal forces. On the day of Tess's rape, Hardy foreshadows her impending tragedy by describing her as "standing moreover on the momentary threshold of womanhood" (64). The most likely conclusion equates sexual experience and fertility with womanhood, so

Tess's rape makes her cross the threshold to womanhood; however, it is important to note that Hardy describes her in this moment as standing "*on* the momentary threshold of womanhood" and not passing over it (64, emphasis added). Hardy seems to gesture to this socially-expected change in classification with the titles of the first and second phases of the book: the first phase, "The Maiden," ends with Tess's rape, and the second phase, "Maiden no More," begins with Tess's return to her village of Marlott with Alec's baby growing inside of her. He further complicates the usual perception of Tess's girl or woman status with his alternating girl and woman language: after her rape, we understand that Tess has the sexual fertility of a woman, but by continuing to refer to Tess's girlishness, Hardy maintains her liminal position between girlhood and womanhood. By writing Tess as both a girl and a woman, Hardy cements Tess into the liminal position as a girl-woman.

Four months later when Tess returns from the D'Urbervilles' estate, she tells her mother about her rape, and Mrs. Durbeyfield chastises her daughter, exclaiming, "'You ought to have been more careful if you didn't mean to get him to make you his wife!'" (*Tess* 82). In Tess's response, Hardy's diction emphasizes the detrimental role ignorance played for the young girl: "'O mother, my mother!' cried the agonized *girl*, turning passionately upon her parent as if her poor heart would break. 'How could I be expected to know? I was a *child* when I left this house four months ago. Why didn't you tell me there was danger? Why didn't you warn me?'" (82, emphasis added). Hardy uses "girl" to characterize Tess during this conversation, and Tess describes herself as a "child." Both references remind the reader of Tess's young age. As a child with the forced sexual

experience of a woman, Tess slips into sexual liminality. Continuing her response to her mother's too-late advice about being careful, Tess continues, "'Ladies know what to guard against, because they read novels that tell them of these tricks; but I never had the chance of discovering in that way, and you did not help me!'" (82). Emphasizing that Tess is not just a child but is also *not* a lady, Hardy points out the class distinction that Murphy discusses in her article: the GFS aimed to educate women like Tess since young women living in rural spaces do not have the same educational opportunities that are afforded to "ladies."

While Hardy chooses to write about Tess as a singular character who exhibits ignorance about the "danger" men present to young girls, Tess's experience is not a unique or an isolated incident of a young, country girl being taken advantage of by an upper-class man. Written in 1885, just six years before Hardy wrote *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, William Stead published "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" for *The Pall Mall Gazette*. This series of articles in the widely-distributed evening newspaper shared information about the problem of sex trafficking in England and called for the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, which raised the age of consent for girls from 13 to 16. Stead hinges his argument for raising the age of consent on the fact that there is no sexual education available to girls unless their mothers or other female relatives decide to explain what constitutes a sexual act, or as he describes it, a seduction. The girl recruits for the brothels, he explains, often come from the country in a way that mirrors Tess's relocation to the D'Urbervilles' estate. Commonly, the brothel keepers gain access to "fresh girls" by taking them from their rural homes with the offer of

employment (Stead 42). He explains, “The child—she is seldom more than fifteen or sixteen—comes up from her country village with her box, and is installed in service” (42). Like the girls Stead describes, when Tess went to work for the D’Urbervilles, she was 16 years-old. While initially there is no mention of the plan to sexually exploit the girls who are hired to serve at estates or London homes, the girls are eventually tricked, drugged, and/or forced to submit to sex (42). One of the procuresses of young girls who Stead interviewed describes how one girl “was asleep when he did it—sound asleep. To tell the truth, she was drugged. It is often done” (24). Like this girl, in Tess’s scenario, Hardy describes Alec as taking out a “druggist’s bottle” and pouring the liquid into Tess’s mouth as she “sputtered and coughed” (*Tess* 72). When Tess is “sleeping soundly,” Hardy describes her as being “in the hands of the spoiler” before turning his narrative voice to the reader: Hardy writes, “Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive; why so often the coarse appropriates the finer thus” (73-4). Instead of offering a response to these rhetorical questions, Hardy seems to implicate the reader’s complacency in the sexual exploitation of Tess, which mirrors the rhetorical techniques that Stead uses to achieve the same result. We know the maiden Tess is no longer the girl she was, and Hardy symbolically calls her “Tess D’Urberville” instead of “Tess Durbeyfield” after her rape because Alec’s “coarse appropriat[ion]” of her body asserts ownership over a part of her (74). Looking at the similarities between Stead’s articles and Hardy’s text, it is possible to conclude that

Hardy was aware of the sexual trafficking of young, country girls and built his description of Tess's rape on this realistic scenario.

Country girls who, like Tess, were lured into scenarios in which they were raped, became impure, according to the social expectations impressed on women, but this forced impurity resulted largely from the ignorance among young girls who did not realize the danger that men could impose to degrade their commodified bodies. Furthermore, this categorizing of women as pure or impure dictated the social and cultural valuation of the female body. Murphy notes that "many Victorian era girls' societies envisioned women's bodies as a type of asset that needed to be controlled" (79). She goes on to argue that "[t]he body becomes a politicized *place* when it is viewed as an object to be possessed, controlled, or used" (Murphy 74). While a few of the GFS members thought the society should help "rehabilitate" women who were sexually experienced, the majority of the members wanted to exclude impure women, so sexually-experienced women were not permitted in the GFS (75). In Tess's situation, her body is treated as a piece of property, shaped by her country upbringing, so when she rejects Alec's early advances, he remarks with surprise that she is "sensitive" since she is a country girl and he is a gentleman. During their trip from Tess's Marlott home to the estate in Trantridge, Alec drives the cart erratically to force Tess to hold onto his waist, at his direction, to avoid falling out of the cart (*Tess* 54). Then, as a bargaining chip to stop his dangerous, aggressive driving, Alec asks Tess to let him "'put one little kiss on those holmberry lips […] or even on that warmed cheek,'" which surprises Tess "beyond measure" (55). Eventually, for fear of having an accident, Tess sacrifices her cheek to Alec in spite of her imploring protest of

"'I don't want anybody to kiss me'" as she begins to cry and her lips tremble with emotion (56). Nevertheless, "D'Urberville gave her the kiss of mastery," causing Tess to "flush with shame" and instinctively wipe the kiss from her cheek, as if she could erase it (56). At her reaction to his kiss, Alec, feeling snubbed, reacts by accusing Tess of being "'mighty sensitive for a farm girl'" (56). While both Alec and the GFS assert their superiority over country girls, their assumptions about the country girls differ. The GFS assumes that the country girls are sexually-ignorant and vulnerable to seductions, to use Stead's term, so they are in need of protection from their own latent sexuality. In contrast, Alec assumes that a country girl is necessarily sexually willing. By describing Tess as "'mighty sensitive *for a farm girl*,'" Hardy makes it clear that Alec thinks of her as a laboring farm or country girl above all (56, emphasis added). Alec assumes that Tess should succumb to his advances because of the class disparity between them. In both instances, with the GFS and with Alec, external forces seek to remove the country girl's agency over her own body.

As Hardy continues emphasizing the multi-layered dimensions of Tess's liminality as a child-woman who is sexually experienced and pure, he contrasts the friction she feels in the social world with the pure inclusion she feels in the natural world. His decision to create these opposing scenarios reflects back on his comments about the subtitle of the novel in which he distinguishes the valuation of purity in Nature and how the socialized perceptions of purity differ from it. He describes Tess's integration with the landscape in the Vale of Blackmoor during her pregnancy:

> On these lonely hills and dales her quiescent glide was of a piece with the element she moved in. Her flexuous and stealthy figure became an integral part of the scene. At times her whimsical fancy would intensify natural processes around her till they seemed a part of her own story. Rather they became a part of it; for the world is only a psychological phenomenon, and what they seemed they were. (*Tess* 85)

Tess's integration with the land shows that she belongs in that space even while her pregnancy compromises her membership in the social community of belonging. While the social sphere of her community misreads and rejects her liminal position between the easily understood, binary categories of personhood, in nature she becomes a part of the place, and the challenges of her sexual liminality begin to dissolve. Describing the people who characterize Tess as impure as "a cloud of moral hobgoblins by which she was terrified without reason," Hardy characterizes the social critics as something out of a fantasy, or perhaps a nightmare (85). He continues to explain that they are "out of *harmony* with the *actual world*, not she," but even though Hardy is arguing that Tess is still in harmony with the "actual," or natural, world, he maintains that she feels the impact of the judgement that members of the social community impart on her (85). As she walks "among the sleeping birds in the hedges, watching the skipping rabbits on a moonlit warren, or standing under a pheasant-laden bough, she looked upon herself as a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence," observes Hardy; however, while Tess may feel as though she is "intruding" in the natural space of "Innocence" with her "Guilt," Hardy makes it clear that nature does not criticize or cast out Tess (85-6).

Instead, he writes that "all the while she was making a distinction where there was no difference," meaning that among the birds, rabbits, and pheasants of the Vale of Blackmoor, Tess's sexual liminality is not grounds for judgment against her character, and so it is in this same natural landscape that she continues to locate an access point to belonging (86).

As the Vale of Blackmoor begins to experience changes in agricultural practices, we see a similar change in Tess, suggesting that there is a continued metaphorical relationship between Tess and her homeland. Hardy repeats Tess's false perception of safety that arises through her integration with nature as she labors as a field worker picking up the heaps of wheat that the reaping-machine leaves behind (*Tess* 87). As the reaping-machine cuts the field, the "narrow lane of stubble encompassing the field grew wider with each circuit," and as the day continues, there is less and less crop left standing in the field (87). Shifting his focus from the harvesting process to the creatures that live in the field, Hardy describes the progressive entrapment of the animals that seems to mirror Tess's own plight of enclosure:

> Rabbits, hares, snakes, rats, mice, retreated inwards into a fastness, unaware of the ephemeral nature of their refuge, and the doom that awaited them later in the day when, their covert shrinking to a more and more horrible narrowness, they were huddled together, friends and foes, till the last few yards of upright wheat fell also under the teeth of the unerring reaper, and they were every one put to death by the sticks and stones of the harvesters. (87)

Hardy's use of a run-on sentence seems to write in the inevitability of the process, almost as if adding a period would enable the animals to have a moment of reprieve or a chance for escape. Instead, Hardy's use of only commas mimics the constant humming motion of the reaping-machine that encroaches on the animals' home more and more. Furthermore, the animals' deaths at the hands of the harvesters foreshadows Tess's own end in which she is put to death by her community. Clarifying the metaphorical relationship between Tess and the field, Hardy describes the way in which a woman working in the field becomes a part of the space in which she labors: "a field-woman is a portion of the field; she has somehow lost her own margin, imbibed the essence of her surroundings, and assimilated herself with it" (88). Integrated into the field, Tess accesses a similar level of belonging to the connection she experiences with the natural landscape of Marlott in earlier scenes of the novel. Drawing attention to the kinds of people who can integrate into the land, Tague argues that the lower-class field women "become, by virtue of their labor (perhaps even their gender) and class a part of the landscape" (97). Tess, for example, breast-feeds her baby while taking a break from her field labor (*Tess* 90). In this intersection between class, gender, and the land, we can recall Richard Kerridge's distinction between the inhabitant of a natural community and the tourist who gazes on the environment in *The Woodlanders*. The field-women, like Tess, are a part of the place's ecology. Tague writes, "Tess and others are *within* the land (not just the land-scape)" (97). Unlike those who gaze at the land, either tourists who are only passing through the physical space or farmers who see the land as "an opportunity," women like Tess find themselves within the physicality of the land. They are a part of nature. Instead

of a Romantic conception of the land, however, Tague distinguishes Hardy's characterization of nature as something different: "[f]or Hardy, nature is not something external to humankind (as the Romantics from Rousseau conceive of it) but rather immanent, permeating the human world. His empathy is a consciousness, a functionality of his entity, his being in the world" (105). Hardy's nature is intertwined with humankind, as if both are woven together like a single piece of cloth.

Much like the field animals, however, Tess's intimate access to the land is unstable because the way that people work with the land is changing. Most notably, we can draw a connection to the way in which the process of enclosure is changing the landscape of the Vale of Blackmoor. In her book, *Farmers, Landlords and Landscapes: Rural Britain, 1720 to 1870*, Susanna Wade Martins explores the changes in farm design and the implementation of landscape changes in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century England that aimed to improve farming yields. One of the key changes was the process of enclosure through which public farm land was sectioned off into segments of ownership to increase the outputs for the farmers who owned the large tracts of land. Rather than land being available for common use, the enclosed land became a restricted space that only the owner could access. While the processes of enclosure date back well before the Nineteenth-Century, the British Enclosure Acts passed between 1750 and 1860 solidified the transfer of community land to private land. Martins explains that "[e]nclosure has long been seen as the most fundamental landscape change of post-medieval times. However, it cannot be regarded as a single process and attitudes towards it changed considerably over time" (18). This change in the design of farms, from small to large,

was made increasingly possible through the introduction of machinery, like the reaping-machine with which Tess works in the Vale of Blackmoor, which accelerates the speed at which farm labor can be performed. Martins explains that "[a]s late as 1688 it is estimated that a third of England was still owned by small-scale freeholders. By 1800, this had dropped to 10 percent" (18). The group of people most negatively impacted by the change in farming practices were the lower-class populations like Tess. With decreased access to public farm land, it became increasingly necessary for lower-class families to work as laborers on large-scale farms or, eventually, to migrate out of their country homes to find work, much like we see Tess do. In the novel, the encroaching process of enclosure redefines the way work happens in the Vale of Blackmoor, and we watch Tess react to these changes. I explore this shifting relationship between Tess as a laborer and the land on which she labors more extensively in section 3.2, but I mention it here because we see Hardy exploring the ways in which these changes in labor practices force Tess into a new relationship with her natural homeland when she chooses to "undertake outdoor work in her native village" (89). During this time when Tess is still living and working in the Vale of Blackmoor, Hardy plays with Tess's liminal state as being "somewhat changed—the same but not the same" as she is "living as a stranger and an alien here, though it was no strange land that she was in" (89). Alas, this changing relationship with the land via enclosure rewrites Tess's relationship to her native soil and complicates the connection between her purity and the Vale of Blackmoor.

Returning to the earlier emphasis of Tess's liminal positionality as a girl-woman, when Tess baptizes her dying baby, Hardy mimics his juxtaposed girl and woman

descriptors of Tess throughout the scene. Describing her baby as "a child's child," Hardy writes "and thus the emotional *girl* set about baptizing *her child*" (*Tess* 94, emphasis added). Hardy ensures that his reader does not forget the girlishness of Tess even though she has a child of her own by describing Tess as a "girl" and referring to her as a "girl-mother" (94). In spite of the emphasis on Tess's liminal position between girlishness and womanhood in this scene, Hardy also begins to offer glimpses of her transition away from her childhood, describing her as "singularly tall and imposing" while baptizing her child in "her long white nightgown" (94). Tess displays "an impress of dignity which was almost regal" during the christening, which is certainly not a characteristic reasonably ascribed to a child (94). After Tess compels the other children to partake in the christening of and prayers for her dying child, Hardy describes her changed aspect through the children's perspective: "[s]he did not look like Sissy to them now, but as being large, towering, and awful—a divine personage with whom they had nothing in common" (95). In the children's eyes, Tess is not suddenly an adult but "a divine personage," which seems to further highlight her liminal status because they correlate her with an undefinable divine being. Possessed by "calmness" during and after the baptism, Tess boldly secures a churchyard burial for her bastard child (95-7).

After the death of her baby and the passing of the winter months, we witness a change in Tess as she finally moves out of her liminal position as a girl-woman and emerges as a woman, hardened beyond her age by her experiences of the last few years. Hardy describes Tess's mental review of the key dates of the last year: "the disastrous night of her life at Trantridge," "the dates of the baby's birth and death," "her own

birthday," and "every other day individualized by incidents in which she had taken some share" (*Tess* 98). Quite suddenly, however, when she is "looking in the glass at her fairness," she realizes "that there was yet another date, of greater importance to her than those" (98). This date is "a day which lay sly and unseen among all the other days of the year" (98). As an abstraction of a date, it nearly passes by without being perceived, but we realize that the significance is not in the date itself but what it represents: this feeling of a date that arrests Tess is the realization of her own mortality, which is the same moment at which Tess leaves the liminal space between childhood and adulthood and fully becomes an adult. The day that is "doomed to be her terminus in time through all the ages," while not yet linked to a calendar date, arrests Tess's reality at this moment, and "[a]lmost at a leap Tess thus changed from simple girl to complex woman" (99). Mirroring the earlier passage in which he described the parts of Tess's overall aspect, Hardy describes the changes in her face, eyes, and voice that lend to the reader's understanding of the significance of Tess's transition to womanhood: "[s]ymbols of reflectiveness passed into her face, and a note of tragedy at times into her voice. Her eyes grew larger and more eloquent" (99). Instead of the lightness of girlhood passing across her cheeks, Tess's reflective and tragic aspect characterize her maturity. Most of all, "her soul was that of a woman whom the turbulent experiences of the last year or two had quite failed to demoralize. But for the world's opinion those experiences would have been simply a liberal education" (99). In spite of the changes in her aspect, Tess's soul remains hopeful; however, to start again, it is necessary that Tess must leave her home. Hardy explains that Tess feels "the pulse of hopeful life still warm within her," but if she

is to have an opportunity to escape the social memories of her past that removed her possibility of belonging in a community, it is necessary that she needs to "annihilate" the past and "to get away" from the village of Marlott to which she can no longer belong (99).

It is a shift in the Vale of Blackmoor as a social space that results in a necessity for Tess to leave it. As Hardy writes throughout the second phase, Tess is still integrated with the natural land, but the social community of Marlott rejects her. Gesturing again to the kind of purity that exists in nature, Hardy reflects on the terms of chastity: "[w]as once lost always lost really true of chastity? she would ask herself. She might prove it false if she could veil bygones. The recuperative power which pervaded *organic nature* was surely not denied to maidenhood alone" (*Tess* 99, emphasis added). In this passage, Hardy associates "organic nature" with a kind of "recuperative power" that appears to be absent from curated social spaces. In spite of her resistance to leave the place she still calls home, Tess realizes that while the physical land of the Vale of Blackmoor continues to facilitate her integration into its hills and forests, the Marlott community will not afford her the opportunity to "veil bygones." Instead, when a "particularly fine spring came round, and the stir of germination was almost audible in the buds; *it moved her, as it moved the wild animals*, and made her passionate to go" (99). Nature and Tess remain intertwined, and the purity of her body is not questioned by the natural world. Rather, it moves her as it does with the animals, so she follows nature's push and becomes "the dairymaid Tess, and nothing more" (100).

3.2 Shifting Expectations of Tess's Laboring Body

After Tess's sexual experience that socially devalues her body, Tess, like the Wessex landscape, is pressed to respond to shifting social and economic expectations. While *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is a work of fiction that explores the shifting standards in agricultural practices, Hardy incorporates the reality of changing labor practices in England into Wessex. In 1883, about eight years before publishing *Tess of the D'Urbervilles,* Hardy wrote "The Dorsetshire Labourer," which is an essay in which he reflects on the current condition of the agricultural laborer that was published in the July issue of *Longman's Magazine* (Hardy and Millgate 38). The magazine's editor, Charles J. Longman, explained that the series of essays of which Hardy's work was a part dealt with "the peasantry of the various parts of the kingdom, ... their way of life, their surroundings, their hopes and fears, joys and griefs etc" (Millgate 206). Pointing out the problematic nature of the assumptions that people make about farm laborers, Hardy contends, "[i]t seldom happens that a nickname which affects to portray a class is honestly indicative of the individuals composing that class" (38). Instead, he argues, "[t]he few features distinguishing them from other bodies of men have been seized on and exaggerated, while the incomparably more numerous features common to all humanity have been ignored" (38). Rather than considering the collection of laborers in England as individual people, the consensus, especially among the upper-class people who influenced the shifting labor standards, was to reduce the individuals to a collection of stereotypes. Hardy objects to this kind of synecdoche and suggests that after "living on

there [in a rural home] for a few days the sojourner would become conscious of a new aspect in the life around him" rather than dismissing it as inherently inferior (40).

Furthermore, as Hardy continues his essay, his focus shifts to specifically speaking out against the industrialization of farming and the changes in labor that result from the introduction of machinery. Rather than supporting the use of farm equipment that forces laborers to overextend themselves, both a physical and mental detriment, Hardy asserts that a "pure atmosphere and a pastoral environment are a very appreciable portion of the sustenance which tends to produce the sound mind and body, and thus much sustenance is, at least, the labourer's birthright" (Hardy and Millgate 41). In this statement, he is suggesting that it is the laborer's fundamental right to be able to engage with the environment in which he/she/they works in a way that is pleasing and returns energy to the self. Industrialized farming that increases both the size of the farm and the speed with which work must be completed eliminates the ability for a laborer to benefit from the restorative aspects of an environment. Many of the ideas that Hardy addresses in the essay surrounding the negative shift in labor practices reappear in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* with Tess as the laborer. For example, he notes that "[i]n winter and spring a farm-woman's occupation is often 'turnip-hacking'—that is, picking out from the land stumps of turnips which have been eaten off by the sheep—or feeding the threshing-machine, clearing away the straw from the same, and standing on the rick to hand forward the sheaves" (54). As I will later explore in this section, turnip-hacking is the work that Tess completes when at Flintcomb-Ash Farm (*Tess* 285). Continuing his essay, Hardy describes the universal hatred that laboring women, like Tess, feel towards the

threshing-machine: "[n]ot a woman in the county but hates the threshing-machine. The dust, the din, the sustained exertion demanded to keep up with the steam tyrant are distasteful to all women but the coarsest" (55). Likewise for Tess during her time as a laborer at Flintcomb-Ash Farm, Tess worked on top of the threshing machine, feeding the sheaves into the machine until her body nearly collapses from exhaustion (*Tess* 327).

Hardy's inclusion of labor in his pastoral is what sets apart his writing from the traditional pastoral representations. According to Indy Clark's *Thomas Hardy's Pastoral: An Unkindly May*, Hardy foregrounds the role that labor plays in pastoral environments while many other authors and artists remove laboring bodies from the landscape. In the introduction to his book, Clark argues that in representations of the pastoral, there is a "dialectical relationship between literary convention and actual experience" (2). Instead of including the "poverty and hardship of the countryside," Nineteenth-Century "pastoral ideas and images upheld bourgeois valorizations of rural life" (Clark 2). In contrast to this literary tradition, Hardy's pastoral manifests "as an *adaptation* of the pastoral rather than a counter-pastoral" because "while it reveals the actualities of agrarian capitalism, Hardy's work does not abandon the literary conventions of the pastoral" (2). While outlining these parameters for his classification of Hardy's modified pastoral writing, however, Clark also concedes that the process of defining the "pastoral tradition" in itself "is complicated by considerations of both what is signified by the pastoral and what it meant by tradition" (6). Further clarifying Hardy's use of the term "pastoral," Clark asserts that Hardy, and other Victorian writers, "often meant it as an adjective for rural peace or simplicity" (8). Rather than stopping there, Clark continues to explain that

Hardy's work "illustrates a much deeper understanding of the range of creative possibilities that the tradition allows—an understanding of its breadth and complexity that has not been adequately explored by Hardy scholars" (8). At the crux of Hardy's added "breadth and complexity" to the pastoral tradition, according to Clark, is that "in addition to reinstating the original tensions, is a heightened awareness of complex communities in a capitalist world, particularly the relations of labour, class, and gender" (11). As this intersection is the main interest of my studies, I will apply Clark's analytical lens to my considerations of the tensions that characterize the changes that Tess's laboring body undergoes.

When Tess leaves the Vale of Blackmoor to be a dairymaid, she finds employment at Talbothays Dairy. While Tess engages in labor at the dairy, the almost pastoral setting of the dairy creates the impression of a kind of work that allows Tess to maintain some of the integration with nature that we see her exercise in the Vale of Blackmoor. This is an important distinction to highlight because as Tess's employment opportunities shift, the value of her physical body and her ability to connect to her physical environment also fall under threat. Hardy describes Tess in this new chapter of her life as "only a young woman of twenty, one who mentally and sentimentally had not finished growing" and with her plan to leave behind her past, in her mind she feels that it is "impossible that any event should have left upon her an impression that was not at least capable of transmutation" (*Tess* 103). Tess's hopeful demeanor suggests that this new employment in a new space can actually act like a reset for Tess's past, to a point. At the dairy, "Tess had never in her recent life been so happy as she was now, possibly never

would be so happy again. She was, for one thing, physically and mentally suited among these new surroundings" (129). Laboring by milking the cows at the dairy, Tess feels comfortable in her new environment. While the older dairymaids rested their foreheads on the cows as they milked, some of the younger maids, including Tess, "rested their heads sideways" (150). With "her temple pressing on the milcher's flank, her eyes fixed on the far end of the meadow with the gaze of one lost in meditation," Tess milked (150). Tess achieves harmony with her work, her environment, and herself at Talbothays.

Rather than viewing Talbothays Dairy as a pastoral retreat, some critics highlight the touch of industrialization on the place. For example, Jessica Martell's "The Dorset Dairy, the Pastoral, and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*" characterizes the dairy as a mechanical and not a pastoral setting while investigating the loss of rural communities, focusing on how the dairy industry's reliance on the railway shaped which small towns survived. The "interface between humanity and nature" that the dairy creates adds complexity to the traditional conception of the pastoral, one that allows connections between human and nature (Martell 72). She writes that the "industrial milk production oozes its way into the symbolic territory of the pastoral as the ecosystem it mirrors struggles to accommodate the explosive growth of British dairying" (74). While I agree that the dairy requires some mechanical processes to function in an increasingly-industrialized community, it still serves as a stark contrast to the highly mechanized labor and barren landscape at Flintcomb-Ash Farm. By situating the dairy farm within the cyclical seasons and focusing on the blooms of spring and summer that mirror female

sexuality, Hardy encourages us to draw connections between Talbothays and the Vale of Blackmoor rather than distinguishing them as completely separate kinds of spaces.

At the sensual, fertile dairy, Tess begins to fall in love with Angel Clare, a vicar's son who is working at the dairy to learn how to manage a dairy farm. Angel, noticing Tess as well, exclaims, "'What a genuine daughter of Nature that milkmaid is!' he said to himself" (*Tess* 120). Tess's ability to integrate with the natural components of the dairy make her appear as a very offspring of the maternal "Mother Nature" to Angel, which creates an idealized version of the female body. Hardy's narration emphasizes the close integration between Tess and nature, writing, "[t]he brimfulness of her nature breathed from her. It was a moment when a woman's soul is more incarnate than at any other time; when the most spiritual beauty bespeaks itself flesh; and sex takes the outside place in the presentation" (169). The full sensuality of nature appears to literally teem out of Tess, and, like the lactating cows, the natural sexuality of her body makes her irresistible to Angel. Tess, however, cannot freely accept his advances because while no one at the dairy knows about her sexual past, it is still woven into the cloth of her very being. Tormented by her sexual desire and shame, Tess finds herself in an impossible position: "Tess had never before known a time in which the thread of her life was so distinctly twisted of two strands, positive pleasure and positive pain" (176). Finding herself in yet another liminal position, Tess is bound by the pleasure and pain caused by her love for Angel. When the couple eventually marries, Tess continues to be haunted by her liminality. This time, her rape and marriage each pull at her, creating a tension between each man's surname and consequent ownership of Tess: "[s]he was Mrs Angel Clare,

indeed, but had she any moral right to the name? Was she not more truly Mrs Alexander D'Urberville?" (214). In this liminal space between D'Urberville and Clare, Tess is trapped, and the result is yet another level of social devastation.

After marrying her love, Angel, her new husband abandons Tess when he learns that she was raped when she was a girl. His rejection of his bride forces Tess to migrate again in search of work. This time, instead of finding work at a dairy, her social circumstances combine with her severe economic need, compelling her to accept work as a field laborer. In contrast to Hardy's description of Tess's labor practices at Talbothays Dairy with the fertile, lactating cows, Tess engages in a mechanical labor process as a field laborer at Flintcomb-Ash Farm. As Murphy circles back to the role of land and labor in her investigation of the historical context of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, she explains that the reduction of public land and consolidation of privately-farmed land through the Enclosure Acts forced poor people to support the industrializing farm operations (82-3). When Hardy describes Tess's arrival at Flintcomb-Ash, he uses language that suggests the inevitability of her new place: "Tess was 'doomed to come' to this place of 'stubborn soil'" (Murphy 83). To describe her work there, Hardy relies on male pronouns and allusions to foreignness to describe the machinery that accelerates the pace of agricultural life and, consequently, aggressively forces Tess to work beyond her body's ability. The acceleration of the pace of farm labor that compels Tess to work her body beyond its ability reminds the reader of the low social value of Tess's female body. With a socially devalued body because of her low socioeconomic status, lack of a reliable patriarchal head of household, and sexual experience, Tess must work. Furthermore, the desperation

of her sexual and social liminality force her to accept highly undesirable work. For example, Tess works as a field laborer at Flintcomb-Ash Farm, a position usually reserved for men or the most desperate women, like Tess. Murphy argues that "place-based identity is crucial in the construction of a community that is rooted in a specific area and embedded in a network of familial and neighborhood relationships," and in small, rural communities, like Tess's Marlott, "enclosure undermined attachments to place and destabilized critical dimensions of national identity" (83). This shift in labor practices forced lower-class people to reevaluate what labor entails, creating an increasingly migratory workforce that loses its communal network of relationships with each move.

In Hardy's phase "The Woman Pays," we follow Tess's forced migration, dictated by her social circumstances intersecting with her need for work as she leaves the "fertile" Vale of Blackmoor and engages in hard labor at Flintcomb-Ash Farm, a "starve-acre" place (*Tess* 12, 284). At Flintcomb-Ash Farm, Tess and her companion from Talbothays Dairy, Marian, work in a "swede-field" where they are "hacking" turnips, an activity Hardy also describes in "The Dorsetshire Labourer" (285). Instead of a small farm, the field in which they are working is "a stretch of a hundred-odd acres," offering a scale for the expanse of the work they are to complete (285). Hardy explains that their work consists of digging the turnip root out of the soil so it can be consumed, the leafy growth that protrudes from the soil having already been consumed by livestock (285).[9]

[9] While we can trace the labor of turnip hacking to "The Dorsetshire Labourer," the process of uprooting the turnips can also be characterized as a symbolic approximation to the kind of uprooting Tess

Hardy describes the barren appearance of the field in which the women work as being "in colour a desolate drab," and he continues his description with a metaphorical depiction of both the field and the sky as faces without details, staring at each other: the field "was a complexion without features, as if a face, from chin to brow, should be only an expanse of skin" (285). Like the field, "[t]he sky wore, in another colour, the same likeness; a white vacuity of countenance with the lineaments gone" (285). Hardy's imagery creates a literal conjunction of the body with the land, yet the body (i.e., the faces) is dehumanized through the empty visages. With an uncomfortable concluding image, Hardy describes the "desolate drab" field and the "white vacuity" of the sky as opposing each other: "[s]o these two upper and nether visages confronted each other all day long, the white face looking down on the brown face, and the brown face looking up at the white face, without anything standing between them but the two girls crawling over the surface of the former like flies" (285). In this disconcerting description of two featureless faces existing in opposition to each other with women crawling across the spaces between their visages "like flies," Hardy presents an image of field labor that likens the laboring women to flies, insects that are associated with rotting food and dead bodies. Tess and Marian are cast as insect-scavengers, picking at the dead body of the earth. No longer human women, Hardy's imagery dehumanizes the two laboring women just as he dehumanized the faces of the land and the sky. Rather than allowing his description of the laboring women to "remain stagnant and old-fashioned for the pleasure of romantic spectators,"

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experiences: she is sent away from her community at 16 and then later pushed out of it altogether because of her rape. Furthermore, she is compelled to accept the role of a field woman after Angel rejects their marriage on the basis of her sexual experience, at which point she is ousted from the partnership with Angel.

Hardy rejects the pastoral fantasy of farm labor and instead offers this uncomfortable, dehumanized image in which both the land and the laborers exist at a great distance from the bygone romantic perceptions of the pastoral (Hardy and Millgate 49). Hardy's reintroduction of farm laborers into the field recalls Clark's augment that in Hardy's texts, the land is not a landscape because a landscape is characterized as a space for observation, and the presence of laborers does not fit into a landscape scene (60). Instead of excluding the people who work the land, Hardy shapes his narrative around these characters.

As Hardy follows Tess's expected labor practices during her service contract at Flintcomb-Ash Farm, he shifts from the images of a barren landscape to focus on the role of machinery in the harvesting process. Hardy offers scenes that contrast the female laborer with the masculine, unfamiliar machinery that dictates the physical labor she must endure to illustrate the way that industrialization is reshaping the labor process. He describes the threshing-machine as "the red tyrant that the women had come to serve," and its operator as being "*in* the agricultural world, but not *of* it" (*Tess* 325, emphasis added). This foreign machine and its operator represent the industrializing shift in agricultural labor that replaces the past custom of "thresh[ing] with flails on the oaken barn-floor; when everything, even to winnowing, was effected by hand-labour" (326). As the laborer responsible for untying the sheaves to feed the machine, Tess cannot stop working: she must work at the pace of the relentless threshing-machine (327). Writing about an analogous scene in which Tess works for a reaping-machine earlier in the novel, Tague asserts that the machine is "symbolic of humankind's insistence that nature, while

wild and irrational, can be controlled," which is applicable in this scene too (84). The machinery, both threshing-machine and reaping-machine, represent a human desire to curate and manage the natural environment, and the added emphasis on the foreign, male aspect of the machinery suggests that the female laborers have even less control or connection to the labor process. This difference in labor, brought to fruition through machinery, contrasts Hardy's earlier description of the way that "a field-woman is a portion of the field" who has "lost her own margin" and become a part of the environment (88).

Like the "red tyrant" of a machine for which Tess and the other women must work, the relentless Alec reappears in Tess's life with the desire to master her. In her chapter, "Passive Victim? *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*," Rosemarie Morgan approximates the threshing-machine with Alec, arguing that the "'buzzing red glutton,' remorselessly grinding, bears a suggestive resemblance to the lusty Alec; man and machine alike reduce Tess to physical exhaustion and mental stupefaction" (90). When the group of laborers break for dinner, Alec D'Urberville, Tess's rapist who has been pursuing Tess since their chance meeting at an outdoor sermon he delivers, is there. Despite his recent conversion to the Christian faith, he wildly discards all of his faith-based engagements and blames Tess's looks and charm for his falling from his new-found faith (320). In the field, Alec approaches Tess again and offers to take her away from the hard labor of the farm and to marry her (331). Tess, however, refuses the offer that would reinstate her into the Vale of Blackmoor community—the offer that would rectify her financial strife and essentially erase the social deviance of her sexual experience by her marrying the man with whom

she gained that experience. Instead, she takes her leather glove and "passionately swung the glove by the gauntlet directly in his face," causing a "scarlet oozing" to seep from Alec's face (331). In this scene, Tess opposes the social expectation of her gender so passionately that she strikes the man to whom she is expected to remain subservient, and by doing so, she chooses the mechanical farm work that undermines her relationship with the land. Here, instead of mapping Tess neatly into sexual, social, or place-based belonging, Hardy complicates these relationships and offers confusion about the choice Tess makes. This scene is a place where by having Tess choose the machine over Alec, we understand that while the machine is an antagonist that contests her relationship with the natural land, Alec's role as an antagonist is much worse for Tess. Acting as the mouthpiece for Victorian patriarch, Alec grasps Tess and exclaims, "'Remember, I was your master once! I will be your master again. If you are any man's wife you are mine!'" (332). In refusing Alec's offer, Tess returns to her labor, feeding the threshing-machine, "untying sheaf after sheaf in endless succession" (332). Her rejection of Alec makes her a permanent outsider to Victorian society, but her return to the threshing-machine also means accepting her outsider status in relation to the natural land.

In this scene, Tess's choice of the mechanical glutton over the lusty Alec speaks to Morgan's resurrection of "Hardy's original strong Tess from the blurred stereotype of the sexually passive fallen woman" (85). While Tess receives an invitation to belong from Alec, she refuses him, exerting her agency over her not belonging. Reflecting on the challenges that Tess's liminality, her not belonging, have created, it would make sense for her to finally accept this opportunity to belong, regardless of the circumstances of the

invitation, and walk away from the physically grave work as a field laborer. Furthermore, even a simplistic understanding of Victorian norms suggests that people would choose to belong above all else, but Tess's story contests that resolution. To exert agency over her not belonging and to embrace the turmoil of liminality suggests that belonging is not always the ultimate goal. Instead, Tess's ability to reject Alec's invitation suggests that achieving a permanent access point to a traditional community of belonging does not outweigh the self-sacrifice included in an acceptance of Alec's invitation to this community.

3.3 Tess's Mediation of the Liminality between Day and Night

Throughout the pages of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy offers repeating Romantic descriptions of Tess's navigation of the liminal space between day and night. As Tim Dolin points out in the notes to the 1998, and subsequent 2003, Penguin Classics editions of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy "had explored the particular qualities of this 'transitional point' between day and night in the opening of *The Return of the Native*, and he further explores it in *Tess*" (*Tess* 419). While Hardy does sometimes employ the traditional practice of gendering the sun as male, in focusing specifically on the tenuous moment between the sun and the moon—between male and female—we can think about the transition instead of the distinct moments of a day (86). Tess's ability to mediate this transitional point between the times of day mirrors her liminal belonging and invites a complex reading of "belonging." The circumstances of Tess's life force her into a liminal position, in spite of her attempts to find an access point to belonging; however, Tess embraces the liminality that is inherent in the temporal moment suspended between day

and night. In this moment, Tess can access a kind of belonging that is otherwise kept away from her, but because this threshold between day and night exists in a limited period of time, Tess's belonging is always temporary.

After Tess returns to the Vale of Blackmoor from the D'Urbervilles' estate and is pregnant with the child that results from her rape, she is severely depressed, such that "she could have hidden herself in a tomb" (*Tess* 84). Hardy also describes her as wanting "[t]o be as much out of observation as possible for reasons of her own," which we can infer to mean her pregnancy is becoming increasingly visible, and residents of the Vale of Blackmoor whose observation Tess is shirking are aware of her unmarried status (84). As her pregnancy progresses, Tess's "bedroom that she shared with some of the children formed her retreat more continually than ever," which is another reminder to the reader that Tess is only a girl even though she is with child (85). A sexually experienced girl without a husband, Tess is a fallen woman, and her desire to remain "out of observation" compels her to only leave her childhood bedroom in the evenings, catching the precise moment between day and night. Hardy describes her navigation of this fleeting threshold:

> The only exercise that Tess took at this time was after dark; and it was then, when out in the woods, that she seemed least solitary. She knew how to hit to a hair's-breadth the moment of evening when the light and the darkness are so evenly balanced that the constraint of day and the suspense of night neutralize each other, leaving absolute mental liberty. It is then that the plight of being alive becomes attenuated to its least possible dimensions. (85)

In the isolated solitude of the wilderness, Tess feels the least alone. Her ability to navigate "to a hair's-breadth" the exact moment between day and night suggests Tess's intimate understanding of nature. The "absolute mental liberty" that this moment offers Tess can lead us to consider this passage as Hardy's metaphorical articulation of the liberty of liminality. As aforementioned, Tess is physically, sexually, and socially liminal as she is both a child and a woman, sexually experienced and pure, and working class with uncertain connections to the upper class. Tess's not belonging to distinct halves of these binaries invites a complex understanding of her belonging.

Hardy revisits the description of Tess's exploration of this transitional point of the day and night again in the third phase of the novel, titled "The Rally," when Tess leaves the Vale of Blackmoor in search of work and finds herself at the Talbothays Dairy. At this point in her time at the dairy, Tess has met and is developing an emotional attachment to Angel Clare, a son of a clergyman who is working at the dairy to learn dairy work so that he can eventually manage his own farm (*Tess* 113). The other dairy maids describe Angel as "'the earnestest man in all of Wessex, they say,'" but when Tess first sees him, she recognizes him as someone she met previously (113). Realizing that Angel is "one who she had seen before," Tess recalls that he was the same boy who, while walking past with his brothers, "joined in the club-dance at Marlott" when Tess was 16 and did not select Tess for his dance partner (111). When Angel is preparing to leave after dancing with another girl, "his eyes lighted on Tess Durbeyfield, whose own large orbs wore […] the faintest aspect of reproach that he had not chosen her" (18). While a seemingly insignificant incident, Hardy's narrator remarks that "[t]rifling as the

matter was, he [Angel] yet instinctively felt that she [Tess] was hurt by his oversight" (18). As Angel gazes on the group of girls while walking away, he describes Tess as "so modest," "so expressive," and "so soft" and he regretfully realizes he forfeited the opportunity to connect with Tess (18). While both Angel and Tess soon dismiss "the subject" from each of their minds shortly after the almost encounter, the same transference of instant emotion and attraction occurs when Tess and Angel meet again at Talbothays Dairy four years later.

In a sexually-charged description of Tess walking through the field on a summer night as she listens to Angel play the harp, we experience Tess's comfort in the temporal as she navigates the liminal space between night and day. Hardy seems to convey the naturalness of sexuality as he aligns the scents and secretions of sexual activity with the plants in the garden, and his sexually-charged, non-sanitized writing conflicts with the Victorian inclination to repress any kind of sexuality. Hardy writes, "It was a typical summer evening in June, *the atmosphere being in such delicate equilibrium* and so transmissive that inanimate objects seemed endowed with two or three senses, if not five" (*Tess* 122, emphasis added). The sky hangs in the intermediate position between day and night, carefully balancing this liminal space. Mimicking the interplay between light and dark, Hardy also compares the physical environment with Tess's sexual interest in Angel as she walks through the garden listening to him play the harp (122). The notes Angel plays on the harp "wandered in the still air with a stark quality like that of nudity" as Tess listens "like a fascinated bird" (122). Hardy then describes Tess's movement through the "outskirt of the garden," emphasizing the physical, sexual secretions of the garden (122).

The garden "had been left uncultivated for some years, and was now damp and rank with juicy grass" (122). Considering the garden as a metaphorical representation of Tess, we know that it has been "some years" since Tess's first and only sexual experience, and now that she meets a man for whom she has sexual desire, Hardy's "damp and rank" characterization of the garden seems representative of Tess's vaginal dampness. The garden has "tall blooming weeds emitting offensive smells," which are symbolic representations of a phallus (122). As she advances through the garden towards Angel, Tess collects the garden's physical, sexualized secretions on her body: Tess makes her way "stealthily as a cat through this profusion of growth, gathering cuckoo-spittle on her skirts" and "staining her hands with thistle-milk and slug-slime" (122). Rubbing on her "naked arms" are the "sticky blights which, though snow-white on the apple-tree trunks, made blood-red stains on her skin" (122-3). In this scene, oozing with sexuality and natural representations of fertility, Hardy seems to combine the sexual energy growing between Tess and Angel with the natural fertility of a summer garden. Instead of suggesting that Tess's sexual experience and current sexual desire for Angel constitute the impurity of her body, Hardy seems to focus on the naturalness of the scene and level of agency that Tess executes as she moves through the garden, collecting secretions on her figure.

Considering the same scene, Morgan argues that "Hardy's sensitive exposition of Tess in sexual ecstasy, the candour and poetic truthfulness of the evocation, gives forcible physical expression to a sexual consciousness refreshingly unvarnished, unprettified, and nowhere sanctified or trivialized to a delicate niceness" (88). Equating

Tess's sexuality with her nature, Morgan continues, explaining that Tess "emerges as 'pure' as the unbound wilderness, with which she is in complete accord" (88). In the unkept, fertile garden, Morgan argues that we experience the natural sexuality of Tess's world: "there is no sense of a fastidious, antiseptic, deodorised sexuality in Tess's world" (87). Hardy does not describe the relationship between Tess and nature, as brought together through sexuality, in pure or romanticized language; rather, as Morgan contends, Hardy describes the naturalness of fertility and sexuality with non-sanitized language. In the garden, Tess "absorbs, indeed celebrates, all its exuding essences, forces, sensations with a joy that the original Eve, assimilated not to nature but to man's moral law, is denied" (Morgan 89). By distinguishing Tess from Eve through the degree of their assimilations to nature's or man's moral laws, Morgan furthers the argument that Hardy writes Tess as being pure "in Nature," speaking to her integration with the land, while simultaneously discounting the unnatural morality of man's "moral laws." It is also worth noting that in this scene, Tess's purity "in Nature" is prompted by her feeling of sexual desire for a man, so her purity is not tied to a version of nature that is devoid of sexuality because this latter context for the term creeps into the socially-constructed notion of desexualized, natural purity against which Hardy is writing.

The budding relationship between Tess and Angel that Hardy fills with sexual energy can itself be characterized as being liminal: Hardy writes Tess's sexuality into his descriptions of the environment in which Tess and Angel coinhabit yet Angel presupposes Tess's "purity," in the societal sense of the word. Their relationship is predicated on Tess's sexual purity, but they eventually marry, which involves sexuality.

In this sense, Tess is expected to be both sexually pure and sexually willing for her husband. Joanna Devereux's chapter, "Internalizing the Ideology: *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*," from her book, *Patriarchy and Its Discontents: Sexual Politics in Selected Novels and Stories of Thomas Hardy*, explores the contrasting perceptions that Angel and Alec each hold about Tess's sexuality. Calling Tess a temptress and focusing on the sensuality of her physical form, Alec's perception "of Tess as somehow innately evil and ready to dominate men accords with contemporary medical theories about female sexuality as something powerful, dangerous, and animalistic—something needing to be kept rigorously in check at all times" (Devereux 117). While Alec immediately realizes Tess's sexuality, and opts to take advantage of it, Angel does not. Devereux contends that Angel's strict adherence to middle-class values, particularly "'maidenhood,'" compels him to refuse Tess's ability "to have a past distinct from his own" (117). Angel, the "sexually repressed, middle-class lover," cannot come to terms with the possibility of Tess's capacity for sexual expression, and "it is only after he has rejected Tess as unworthy in terms of the Victorian patriarchal code that Angel begins to feel some compunction for his behavior and to wonder if he may not have been too harsh in his judgment of her" (117). While Angel is never able to "see Tess as anything but permanently tainted by her early experience, he nevertheless begins to question the values which caused him to reject her in the first place" (117). Even though he begins to question the Victorian valuation of maidenhood, Angel fails to expand his "narrow morality" and fully accept Tess as an independent, sexual being; instead, he continues to suspend her in the liminal space between his desires for her maidenhood and sexual

availability (117). Tess seems aware of the temporary nature of Angel's supposed forgiveness and acceptance of her when they reunite after she murders Alec when she welcomes death, desiring to not live long enough for Angel to despise her again.

In another example of the liminal space between night and day, Hardy describes the setting in which Tess and Angel work together at the dairy in the early summer morning. When Tess and Angel rise at three in the morning to begin the milk skimming, Hardy describes the environment in which the young lovers regularly found themselves: "[t]he gray half-tones of daybreak are not the gray half-tones of the day's close, though the degree of their shade may be the same. In the twilight of the morning light seems active, darkness passive; in the twilight of evening it is the darkness which is active and crescent, and the light which is the drowsy reverse" (*Tess* 129-30). Specifying the difference between the transitional shades of dawn and dusk, Hardy's contrasting description of these liminal times of day seems to convey the unique agency that lightness and darkness have at each time of day. Tess and Angel are experiencing the active light and passive dark of the early dawn hours, which suggests that Tess, who is unable to cement her belonging because of the liminal dimensions of her existence, finds comfort in the temporal threshold between day and night. Accessing belonging only in this fleeting moment, however, is perpetually destabilizing for Tess. Furthermore, Hardy writes that "[t]he spectral, half-compounded, aqueous light" of this time of day "impressed them with a feeling of isolation, as if they were Adam and Eve" (130). In this moment, it seems that the "feeling of isolation" is a benefit to the couple rather than a disadvantage. The dusk makes them feel alone and innocent, like Adam and Eve, because

it enables a natural expressiveness that only solitude, or the impression of solitude, affords. This characterization of Angel and Tess as Adam and Eve speaks to the liminal nature of their relationship: even though they marry, their relationship is still cast in prelapsarian terms. Repeating his emphasis on the specificity of the time of day and the unique light it affords, Hardy notes that "[a]t this dim inceptive stage of the day," Angel begins to meditate on Tess's uniqueness: instead of being "asleep at midsummer dawns" like most "[f]air women," Tess "exhibit[s] a dignified largeness both of disposition and physique, an almost regnant power" over Angel (130). Angel's idealizing leads him to contextualize Tess as belonging in the company of fair, regal women. In the "mixed, singular, luminous gloom" in which they found themselves alone together, to him, "[s]he was no longer the milkmaid, but a visionary essence of woman—a whole sex condensed into one typical form" (130). Again, Angel's idealization of Tess as the "essence of woman" or as the "form" of woman similarly pushes her into a liminality with a double bind in which she is to be both an idealized form and a sexual wife. Tess, uncertain of his allusions and uncomfortable with the idealization of herself, asks Angel to "'Call me Tess,'" in an exercise of her agency over her sense of self. It is significant that Tess exerts her authority in this scene, telling Angel to call her "Tess" when we consider the contrasting scene in which the narrator calls Tess "Tess D'Urberville" after Alec rapes her (74). Instead of allowing Angel to appropriate her body and her sense of self, Tess maintains her individual agency. Furthermore, Tess's insistence on being referred to by her first name also recalls Hardy's narration at the close of the second phase of the novel as Tess prepares to leave Marlott and vows to reclaim her sense of self in the process. In

this moment, she resolves that "there should be no more "D'Urberville air-castles in the dreams and deeds of her new life. She would be the dairymaid Tess, and nothing more" (100). Tess's refusal of Angel's idealized names offers a comparable declaration of Tess's newly articulated sense of self.

Building on the representation of human activity and emotion through the interrelationship between day and night, in his chapter "Nature and Humanity," Norman Page offers a similar comparison between characters and the weather of their environments by further analyzing the way that "Hardy stresses the interrelationship between the external and the internal: between, for instance, the weather and human emotions" later in this same phase of the novel (63). When Tess and Angel are falling in love at Talbothays Dairy in the heat of July, their human lives share "the same impulses and rhythms as those of non-human and inhuman nature" (Page 60). Hardy focuses on the physical environment as he describes the "oozing fatness," "rush of juices," and "hiss of fertilization" that denote summer at Talbothays Dairy (*Tess* 149). With this description of the dairy, "Hardy creates a picture of the region at the height of the season of fertility" (Page 62). Like the fertile environment that is "oozing," "rush[ing]," and "hiss[ing]," the region's peaking "season of fertility" mirrors the sexual desire Tess and Angel feel for each other. Hardy finishes the opening paragraph, writing "[t]he ready bosoms existing there were impregnated by their surroundings," which seems to reference both the fertility of the environment he just described as well as the heightened sexual desire Tess and Angel feel for each other as they fall in love (*Tess* 149). Page argues that instead of stigmatizing sexuality negatively, in Hardy's writing "[h]uman sexuality is thus depicted

in the context of the natural and instinctive rhythms of growth and reproduction" (62). Hardy writes that the "stagnant and enervating" air "seemed an effort on the part of Nature to match the state of hearts at Talbothays Dairy" (*Tess* 149). Like the rising heat of the summer, the young couple's desire for each other grows in the sun. Furthermore, the internal heat of passion matches the external heat of the weather: "[a]nd as Clare was oppressed by the outward heats, so was he burdened inwardly by waxing fervour of passion for the soft and silent Tess" (149). As aforementioned, here again we are reminded of the liminal position into which Angel boxes Tess. His expression of sexual desire, the "waxing fervour of passion," for Tess not only ignores the possibility of Tess's sexual expression but champions what Devereux refers to as his middle-class moral values about "maidenhood" while allowing himself the agency of sexual freedom (117). At the same time, when Angel is making assumptions about Tess's sexual purity, he is assuming that she belongs in a traditional female community belonging. Hardy, of course, contests Angel's assumptions by writing sexuality into his descriptions of Tess.

Finally, Hardy's last description of the space of light and dark occurs when Tess and Angel arrive at Stonehenge. After murdering Alec in their hotel room so that she can be free to go with Angel, who has finally come back for Tess, Tess overtakes Angel as he travels along the wooded road, and they enjoy a short period of loving happiness together. The brevity of Tess's true pleasure abruptly ends after she and Angel, who are navigating in the dark, take rest at Stonehenge. As they travel, it is dusk, so if we keep in mind Hardy's earlier distinction between the active and passive light and darkness at dusk and dawn, we can conclude that the active darkness is overtaking the passive light.

He describes “a diffused light from some fragment of the moon” that is disappearing as the dark overtakes the light, describing the night as growing “as dark as a cave” (*Tess* 392). On this cave-like night, “all around was open loneliness and black solitude over which a stiff breeze blew,” which emphasizes the isolation of this pair of lovers who are making their way across the dark plain; however, as Hardy makes no suggestion of their fear of the dark, we can assume that, as before, Tess is comfortable in the suspended light of dusk (392). Once the dark completely fills the sky, Tess and Angel proceed until they unknowingly arrive at Stonehenge (392). Stonehenge, as Angel tells Tess, was a place where people sacrificed to the sun, foreshadowing Tess’s impending death (294).

As the morning approaches, we witness another change in light: this time, the active light is overtaking the passive darkness. Describing the rising sun, Hardy writes, “[t]he band of silver paleness along the east horizon made even the distant parts of the Great Plain appear dark and near; and the whole enormous landscape bore that impress of reserve, taciturnity, and hesitation which is usual just before day“ (*Tess* 395). The structure of Stonehenge “stood up blackly against the light,” with the “Sun-stone” and “Stone of Sacrifice” also both in view (395). Hardy’s description reminds the reader of the history of the place and the human sacrifices that may have occurred there, foreshadowing Tess’s impending death. With the rising sun, a man arrives from “beyond the Sun-stone,” and while Angel at first moves to defend Tess from the approaching men who arrive as “the dawn shone full” on them, the men are spread across the plain like the morning light, and he has no possibility of protecting her (395). Tess’s escape is hopeless. Hardy describes her breathing as “quick and small, like that of a lesser creature

than a woman," recalling the previous comparisons between Tess and animals and bringing to mind the inevitable fate of trapped or enclosed animals (395). As the group of men "waited in the growing light, their faces and hands as if they were silvered, the remainder of their figures dark, the stones glistening green-gray, the Plain still a mass of shade," Tess unknowingly sleeps (395-6). The liminal moment between night and day passes, and finally, "the light was strong, and a ray shone upon her unconscious form, peering under her eyelids and waking her" (396). This active morning light wakes Tess to her fate, but she does not respond with any elevated emotion. For her, there is an inevitability about this moment for which she is almost glad. At last the burden of Tess's liminality will slip away in her death. While I have argued that Tess's liminality is an alternate to traditional options for belonging, the very nature of accessing belonging only at a threshold of the day that is necessarily brief makes these points of access unstable. To access any kind of long-term, uninterrupted belonging, death seems like her only option.

Her ultimate desire for belonging appears to outweigh any reservations that Tess has about dying. At Stonehenge when the men come to arrest Tess for murder, she expresses relief to Angel that her end will come before his feelings for her can change again. Tess says to Angel: "'I do not wish to outlive your present feeling for me'" (*Tess* 390). While she has forgiven his harsh treatment of her from the outset of their marriage, Tess knows that Angel's shift in sympathy towards her is temporary. Soon, she supposes, his love will falter again because she will never be able to match the Victorian requirements for purity. Continuing to speak as she prepares to leave, Tess reiterates her

near satisfaction in the face of her impending death: "'It is as it should be,' she murmured. 'Angel, I am almost glad—yes, glad! This happiness could not have lasted. It was too much. I have had enough; and now I shall not live for you to despise me!'" (396). Rather than supposing that Angel might really have had a change in sentiment that encouraged him to fully convert his disposition towards Tess, she expects his love to waver once again, causing their brief happiness to dissipate. Wanting to avoid the moment in which Angel might despise her again, Tess welcomes her death, and in death, Tess, the fallen woman, escapes the unnatural criticism of her society. In this final scene, the light of the new day delivers Tess out of her liminal range of belonging in the temporal as it offers up her body for sacrifice. In this sense, Stonehenge's history of sacrificing to the sun reverberates in Tess's final moments and her inclusion in the history of sacrifices at Stonehenge.

3.4 Conclusion

At the outset of this chapter, I suggested that Tess's perpetual liminality compels her to develop a complicated relationship with belonging, which is itself an already complex, intersectional notion of numerous aspects of identity that constitute what it means to belong. In spite of her attempts to gain access to communities of belonging (i.e., social and natural communities), Tess is either consistently withheld membership or gains access to a given community by hardship or only temporarily at a precise, fleeting temporal moment. While Tess does strive to locate herself in communities of belonging, as I have discussed throughout the entire chapter, she also navigates the terms of her belonging in liminal spaces, which suggests that through her temporal liminality, she can

briefly experience a kind of belonging. Moments in nature in which the occupants adhere to what Hardy describes as “pure” “in Nature” manifest as the same moments during which Tess can access a point of belonging; however, while Tess is approaching purity in these isolated, natural spaces, she can never fully access it. This never-ending approach does not include the final reprieve of achieving belonging. Furthermore, as discussed in section 3.3, when Tess is in nature during the transitional point from day to night (or night to day), she is able to mediate the temporal transition and access a kind of physical and mental freedom that otherwise remains outside of her access. Due to the transient nature of the threshold between day and night, however, Tess’s access point to belonging in this temporal moment is necessarily short-lived and unstable.

Bringing these moments together, moments of being alone in nature and experiencing the transitional point of day, I would like to call attention to a scene in which Hardy writes the drawn-out, senseless murder of a flock of pheasants as a metaphor for the similar extended suffering that Tess endures. This scene occurs shortly after Angel, Tess’s new husband, leaves her after learning about her childhood rape, and in it, Tess enters the woods to escape the public purview. While there in the dark, she hears the dying breaths and the falls of pheasants that have been shot for sport. When Elisha Cohn examines this scene of Tess with the pheasants in “‘No Insignificant Creature’: Thomas Hardy's Ethical Turn,” she focuses on the role that Tess’s separation from herself and her society plays in the scene, which gestures back to Tague’s analysis of Tess’s metaphysical consciousness. Alone in the woods, Tess, or as Hardy describes her in this scene, the “wife of Angel Clare,” first engages in “whimsical fancies” about

her own death and decay, feeling the curve of her eye sockets and wishing for the exposure of the bare bone to be now and for her life to end (*Tess* 278). Referring to Tess as someone's wife rather than as "Tess" offers the first layer of separation, which is a separation of Tess from herself. Hardy's renaming of Tess as Angel's wife also seems to separate her from the reader because the character we have followed since her younger days in the Vale of Blackmoor is now distantly described as a wife. After fantasizing about her own death and decay, Tess hears "a new strange sound among the leaves:" "sometimes it was a palpitation, sometimes a flutter; sometimes it was a sort of gasp or gurgle" (278). She discerns that "the noises came from wild creatures of some kind" that were "in the boughs overhead," and then her speculation is confirmed by "the fall of a heavy body upon the ground" (278). In spite of the strange, uneasy feeling that the scenario should create, Tess is not alarmed because "outside humanity, she had at present no fear," which suggests that only in nature does Tess feel any comfort because she feels as if everyone has turned away from her (278). Existing in a space "outside humanity," argues Cohn, "positions her [Tess] outside humanity psychologically and spatially" (514). As the rejected, impure wife of Angel Clare, Tess finds herself compelled to retreat into this wooded area where she finds the birds, which leads to her spatial separation, but the social and emotional rejection by her husband and by her community contribute to the psychological separation that Cohn identifies. While Tess is more comfortable out of the purview of the social sphere as she nestles into the dark woods away from humanity, she, like the pheasants that were artificially brought into the woods to be hunted for sport, does not belong there.

Next, Hardy begins to transition into the light of day as the "assuring and prosaic light of the world's active hours" stretches over the forest (*Tess* 278). In this steady, unromantic light, Tess surveys the scene, finding an explanation for the sounds of the previous evening:

> Under the trees several pheasants lay about, their rich plumage dabbled with blood; some were dead, some feebly moving their wings, some staring up at the sky, some pulsating feebly, some contorted, some stretched out—all of them writhing in agony, except the fortunate ones whose tortures had ended during the night by the inability of nature to bear more. (278)

The dead and wounded pheasants that the light unveils demystify the sounds Tess heard in the evening, and the miserable pain they exhibit mirrors the pains of life Tess has also experienced. Just as Tess wishes for her death to end the suffering she is experiencing, the dead birds, relieved of their suffering, are categorized as "the fortunate ones" (278). The men who shot the birds "made it their purpose to destroy life," targeting "harmless feathered creatures, brought in by artificial means solely to gratify these propensities" (279). Not only are the birds described as "harmless," describing them as being brought in by "artificial means" also suggests another dimension of the unnaturalness of the hunting activity: the pheasants do not belong in the forest, and men choose to include them there only so that they can harm them. Similar to Tess, the birds themselves exist in separation from what is the "natural" order or arrangement of things. In her analysis,

Cohn draws attention to Hardy's emphasis on the "interference with 'Nature' (and its hyperbolic capital N)" that the transplanted birds represent (515).

When Hardy describes the patriarchal male society that acts "so unmannerly and so unchivalrous towards their weaker fellows in nature's teeming family," it seems that the comments extend from the pheasants to Tess as well, especially when we recall that Angel has just abandoned his wife before she retreats to these woods (*Tess* 279). Tess immediately feels empathy for the birds, identifying with their suffering and setting about to "put the still-living birds out of their torture" (279). If we recall her self-reflections at the opening of the pheasant scene, Tess fantasizes about her death and the subsequent decay of her body. By killing the injured pheasants, she delivers them the death she cannot yet access. Acknowledging their suffering as outweighing her own, Tess tenderly says to the birds: "'[p]oor darlings—to suppose myself the most miserable being on earth in the presence of such misery as this!' she exclaimed, her tears running down as she killed the birds tenderly" (279). Tess's evaluation of the unequal suffering separates the effect of physical pain from psychological pain. The physical pain that the pheasants experience is obvious and graphic: they writhe and cry out from the suffering caused by physical wounds. Unlike the pheasants, Tess does not have physical wounds from her own tragedies. Her baby, which is a physical representation of her rape, is dead and buried, so she carries only the non-visible weight of the psychological damage. Likewise, when Angel abandons her, she bears no physical wound from his callousness—only psychological. Her approximation of physical suffering outweighs the presumed impact of psychological pain, but while she can "tenderly" deliver the pheasants out of their

suffering through death, Tess continues to suffer from her psychological pain until, in the hands of the same society that contributed to her psychological suffering, she achieves relief in death. While Tess acknowledges that the pheasants' suffering is greater than hers, by inviting us to liken Tess's situation to that of the birds, Hardy directs us towards a different conclusion. By making Tess conclude that the pheasants' suffering is worse than hers, she does not dwell on feeling sorry for herself, which makes us, in turn, feel more sympathy for her. Furthermore, as readers, we can see that not only do the creatures, Tess and the pheasants, experience analogous suffering, but the combined physical and psychological torment that follows Tess is actually worse.

While Tess is able to help the injured pheasants, if we recall her rape scene, we are reminded of the unequal nature of the relationship between birds and Tess during her rape. Hardy describes the "gentle roosting birds in their last nap" that are in the trees above the sleeping Tess (*Tess* 74-5). In spite of their presence, the birds cannot alleviate Tess's suffering in the way that she does for them later, which seems to gesture towards Hardy's complicated evaluation of Tess's position in nature—a position that is not straight-forward, uncomplicated belonging. Kerridge describes these birds and the other animals in the woods during Tess's rape as "ironic, useless mock witnesses" (128). A "human witness, present in body" would be necessary for any kind of real intervention to protect Tess (Kerridge 128). While Hardy repeatedly utilizes metaphors that encourage a reading of Tess's engagement with the land, these moments of inequality remind the reader of the separation that her humanness demands.

After she kills the birds, Tess is "ashamed of herself for her gloom of the night, based on nothing more tangible than a sense of condemnation under *an arbitrary law of society which had no foundation in Nature*" (*Tess* 279, emphasis added). By closing the scene with this line, Hardy emphasizes the difference between Tess and the pheasants and recalls his diction emphasizing "in Nature" in the preface to the novel. Until this point, we can understand the similarity between the pitiful creatures, but Hardy draws his metaphor into reality when he separates the physical harm that the birds feel from the "condemnation" that Tess feels via an "arbitrary law of society" that does not originate "in Nature" but with the same patriarchal figures who "made it their purpose to destroy life" (279). The unequal distribution of power that persecutes Tess and the pheasants is part of Margery Cornwell-Robinson's focus in her article, "Of Cows and Catfish: The Reading of Nature by Thomas Hardy and Loren Eiseley" when she analyzes this scene. Cornwell-Robinson argues that "Hardy is unusually explicit in drawing an analogy between the misuse of the weak in nature and the weak in human society," drawing attention to the way that the hunters act "at once so unmannerly and so unchivalrous towards their weaker fellows in Nature's teeming family" (58, *Tess* 279). According to "the codes of their society," Hardy's characters' sympathies for animals "indicate weakness of character," but "Hardy makes clear he believes the opposite" (Cornwell-Robinson 58). Instead of looking at Tess's killing of the pheasants in isolation to support her argument, Cornwell-Robinson also draws her reader's attention to the scene in *Jude the Obscure* in which Jude and Sue kill a rabbit that is caught in a gin in order to limit its suffering (58). In either case, the small animals, especially when compared to humans,

are the "weak in nature," as Cornwell-Robinson describes them, and their destruction is as inevitable as Tess's is as she is representative of the "weak in human society" (58).

Like the hunters who take it upon themselves to kill the pheasants and the patriarchal society that dictates the terms of Tess's destruction, Cohn explores the "sense of duty" that Tess expresses in this scene when she kills the maimed birds: "[c]haracterizing Tess as having an articulate sense of duty shared with her narrator differentiates between animal victimhood and human agency to produce an extremely clear-cut obligation" (515). While Tess is often described in animal terms (e.g., like a cat or bird), Cohn reminds us that Tess is not an animal but a human. By blurring the presumed separation between animal and human suffering in this scene, Hardy seems to highlight the similar ethical considerations of each relationship, grounding Tess's "social critique in the ethics of relations with animals" (Cohn 515).

In Cohn's analysis, she also focuses on the ways in which Hardy's writing about Tess and the pheasants enters in to a larger discussion of human and animal ethics, explaining that the "construction of boundaries, in which the self confronts an other, signals an entry into ethics" (515). She argues that "Hardy links the human capacity for reflective action to responsibility for animal life" (Cohn 515). "Ultimately, while descriptions of Tess and her environment exceed creaturely logic and emphasize human-nonhuman ontological continuity, the novel separates these possibilities from the more constrained epistemology of encounter—the encounter of self and other that governs ethical behavior" (515). Citing Audrey Jaffe, Cohn suggests that "in typical Victorian considerations of sympathy the ethical encounter reinforces boundaries between different

kinds of subjects" (515). Instead of following the traditional Victorian perspective, however, "for Hardy such boundaries between the human and the nonhuman enable the perception of wrong, the defense of the powerless, and the critique of the empowered" (515). If we recall Nira Yuval-Davis's mediation of the politics of belonging, she argues that the creation of boundaries between communities separates "us" from "them" (204). The business of community boundary maintenance "is all about potentially meeting other people and deciding whether they stand inside or outside the imaginary boundary line of the nation and/or other communities of belonging, whether they are 'us' or 'them'" (Yuval-Davis 204). To bridge the gap between Yuval-Davis and Cohn, we can think about the way Hardy's separation of "us" from "them" enables the distanced perspective that is necessary to recognize the disproportionate suffering of the other. In this particular scene, Tess and the pheasants are both the "other" to the patriarchal and human social spheres of belonging. As a fallen woman and artificially-introduced game birds, they both exist outside of the community boundaries.

If we consider Tess's death as a parallel to the deaths of the pheasants, Hardy's metaphor opens up speculation about the kind of belonging that is available to those who necessarily do not belong. The pheasants, brought into the woods for sport, do not belong there, and the only way to restore the natural dynamics of the woods is to kill and remove them. Likewise, Tess, who I have argued occupies a liminal position that does not fit into Victorian social binaries, has a similarly singular option for belonging. By punctuating Tess's ending with her death, Hardy seems to argue that death is the only form of belonging available to a fallen woman, which is similar to the damaged pheasants. While

it may be more intuitive to read her death as Tess's ultimate failure to locate herself in a community of belonging, I would argue that death affords Tess a real freedom from persecution that otherwise remains out of her reach. Her acceptance of death with the words "'I am ready'" further suggests Tess's willingness to embrace her end (*Tess* 396). At this point in the novel, we have followed Tess's repeated attempts and failures to situate herself inside of imagined communities of belonging. Since repetitive practices assist "the construction and reproduction of identity narratives and constructions of attachment," Tess's repeated exclusion constructs an identity narrative that posits her as separate from the rest of her community (Yuval-Davis 203). Identified by others as a fallen woman, Tess's community of belonging exists in a liminal social space. Unable to develop a sustained attachment to a desirable community of belonging, Tess finds relief from the strain of her existence in death.

4 CONCLUSION

Now that I have identified the prevalent nature of musings on belonging in Hardy's prose and explored characters' mediations of belonging in *The Woodlanders* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, a continuation of this project would be to shift the same analytical framework to exploring the role of belonging in Hardy's collection of poetry. While this academic direction is beyond the scope of my thesis, I would like to briefly explore one of Hardy's poems that mirrors a crucial scene in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* to which I have already given extensive attention in section 3.4 in which I argued that the scene is a metaphorical representation of the complicated terms of belonging with which an "other," someone who is necessarily outside of a community of belonging, must grapple. Since I have already discussed the parallel scene from *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, I would now like to consider how the genre of poetry reframes a discussion of the terms of belonging by looking at "The Puzzled Game-Birds" (1901).[10] By choosing this particular scene, I intend to draw a parallel between Hardy's writing and rewriting of this particular moment and his own repeating mediations of his belonging.

First, it is relevant to give a little bit of biographical information about Hardy's disposition towards animals: Hardy was opposed to animal cruelty as a whole and explicitly renounced the hunting of birds for sport. In J. O. Bailey's *The Poetry of Thomas Hardy: A Handbook and Commentary*, Bailey traces multiple threads between

[10] While "The Puzzled Game-Birds" was eventually published in *Poems of the Past and the Present* in 1901, according to Hardy's letters to Florence Henniker, it is likely that he wrote "The Puzzled Game-Birds" in 1899. In a letter to Florence Henniker, dated 11 October 1899, he wrote "I was about to send a few rhymed lines to some paper, on Game Birds, but shall probably keep them by me now, for other slaughter will fill people's mind for some time to come" (Hardy, et al. 85-6).

this poem and Hardy's real-life convictions. In an anecdote, Hardy's bicycling companion, Clive Holland, describes a blackbird with a broken wing that emerged onto the path on which they were riding (Bailey 164). At the sight of the wounded bird, Hardy "'shuddered'" said, "'"I cannot bear such a sight, poor thing! Could you put it out of its misery?"'" (164). Holland obliged Hardy, wringing the bird's neck to end its suffering while Hardy turned away (164). Instead of attributing Hardy's compassion to "a common humanitarian instinct," Holland suggests that Hardy's reaction was "'a sheer sickness and revulsion against a helpless thing suffering'" (164). It seems significant that in this story, Hardy was both unable to wring the bird's neck or to watch his friend do it, but when he writes *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy gives Tess the courage and compassion to wring the necks of maimed birds.

Furthermore, Bailey explains that Hardy's "revulsion at the suffering of birds extended to active and scornful hostility towards the breeding and shooting of game-birds for sport," which is the subject of "The Puzzled Game-Birds" (164). In January 1882, Hardy recorded an encounter he had with a keeper of such game-birds in his notebook, describing the way that the hunters drive the birds across the pheasant plantation and then shoot as many of them as possible for sport. Hardy continues, "'[t]hey pick up all that have fallen—night comes on—the *wounded* birds that have hidden or risen into some thick tree fall & lie on the ground in their agony—next day the keepers come back and look for them'" (164). Having learned that this particular keeper found 150 suffering birds the day after the hunt, Hardy imagines the scene of the dying birds: "'[c]an see the night scene—moon—fluttering & gasping birds as the hours go on—the place being now

deserted of humankind'" (164). This is, of course, the scene that Hardy writes in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* when Tess, hiding in the woods, hears the sounds of the dying birds: "sometimes it was a palpitation, sometimes a flutter; sometimes it was a sort of gasp or gurgle" (*Tess* 278). Like the hunting scene Hardy is picturing as he writes in his notebook, Tess's secluded woodland space is also "'deserted of humankind.'" Only the mark of cruelty remains in both Tess's and the birds' lack of belonging. Tess, like Holland, kills "the birds tenderly" to stop their prolonged suffering while calling attention to the inequality in the relationship between humans and nature, an inequality that enables a person to be "so unmannerly and so unchivalrous towards their weaker fellows in Nature's teeming family" (279). In addition to being attributed to Tess, Bailey also aligns these feelings with Hardy because Hardy used "'wickedness'" to describe the action of hunting birds or harming any other living animal (164).

All this said, I would surmise that Hardy felt a real connection to and a true sense of belonging in the community of animals, which is why he was ready to defend them. For example, as Claire Tomalin writes in her biography of Hardy, when Hardy's cat died, he wrote a poem, "Last Words to a Dumb Friend," in remembrance of the cat he "described as his only friend" (304). Hardy's poem "exasperated" his companion, Florence Henniker, and "she objected that the cat was not by any means his only friend" (Tomalin 304). To brush off her criticism, Hardy said he was "'not exactly writing about himself but about some imaginary man in a similar situation,'" but his defense is transparent (304). In the last stanza of the poem, Hardy refers to his cat as a "Housemate," which brings his cat to an equal level of inhabitation with himself ("Last").

He also capitalizes the word, edging his cat closer to the human realm with the proper noun designation. By contrast, Hardy did not belong in the community that abuses animals. He was a financial supporter of the League for the Prohibition of Cruel Sports and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Bailey 164).

Focusing now on the aforementioned poem, "The Puzzled Game-Birds" from *Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy* deals with the same literal subject of hunting game-birds. This poem questions the paradox of imposing harm on an "other" when a bond previously existed between the two creatures:

> They are not those who used to feed us
> When we were young—they cannot be—
> These shapes that now bereave and bleed us?
> They are not those who used to feed us,
> For did we then cry, they would heed us.
> —If hearts can house such treachery
> They are not those who used to feed us
> When we were young—they cannot be! ("Puzzled")

Hardy writes from the perspective of a group of game-birds, or pheasants, that are troubled by the seemingly irrational shift of the humans in their lives: a change from life-giver to life-taker. The repetition of lines "They are not those who used to feed us / When we were young—they cannot be" in the triolet suggests the birds' confusion and disbelief at the notion that someone who played caretaker can suddenly resolve to impose harm on them instead ("Puzzled"). Hardy further emphasizes the distance that the birds feel from

their caretakers by describing the hunters as “shapes” that “now bereave and bleed us” instead of recognizing them as human beings (“Puzzled”). When the birds “were young,” their cries garnered the care of their human protectors, explaining, “For did we then cry, they would heed us” (“Puzzled”). Now, however, the birds cry in the pain of their deaths imposed by the same humans that once cared for them; these cries do not prompt the humans to attend to the suffering birds. Unable to grapple with the conflicting notions, the birds resolve that these humans “cannot be” the same as the ones who cared for them because the birds find it impossible to rationalize the possibility of a heart to “house such treachery” (“Puzzled”). The birds’ inability to rationalize the situation, however, does not mean that their perception is flawed. Instead, Hardy’s use of a simple, repetitive poetic form makes it clear that the game-birds are making accurate observations and identifying the paradox of their relationship with humans.

Both the prosaic and the poetic representations rely on the pheasants being situated in the position as an “other” that is ripe for exploitation. The pheasants do not belong in the places where they are raised and hunted for sport, but in the implied confusion Hardy writes into the game-birds’ analysis of their situation, we are compelled to feel sympathy for them. One of the key differences between these representations of this scene is the role of narration. In the novel, Hardy introduces both the narrator and Tess’s dialogue with the birds. Moreover, the birds only have the capacity of sounds of suffering but cannot articulate their pain or confusion in human language. The poem, however, flips this attribution of language: only the birds speak, and their voice is unmediated by a human narrator. In a way, this reversal seems to reattribute the power of

dialogue to the birds while bridging them into the realm of human consciousness. By offering the birds a voice in the poem, Hardy is allowing them to access belonging that is not available to them in the prose. Recognizing Hardy's reworking of this scene—a scene that started in his journal, emerged on the pages of his novel, and then was translated into poetry—encourages a reading of his own repeating remediations of the terms of this kind of belonging. Like the birds that access belonging in the poem, poetry offers Hardy an access point to literary belonging in the latter part of his career.

As I asserted in the introduction, Hardy is writing himself and his own troubled relationship with the terms of belonging into his novels. He argues that novels "express mainly the author, his largeness of heart or otherwise, his culture, his insight, and very little of any other living person" (Hardy and Orel 124). Rather than using this statement to reframe the fictionality of each characters' belonging, we should consider each character as an expression of Hardy's social and cultural perception of his environment. Hardy aims to write truth into the fictional world of Wessex via his descriptions of people living lives that align with the truth of Victorian England even though they do not map to the realities of the physical place and people. Reading his fiction, many contemporary readers took offense to the mirrored image of the faults in their society and opted to, as Hardy describes it, "so twist plain and obvious meanings as to see in an honest picture of human nature an attack on religion, morals, or institutions. Truly it has been observed that 'the eye sees that which it brings with it the means of seeing'" (125). Instead of Hardy's literary mirror enabling his readers to identify the societal flaws they are complacent in perpetuating, he asserts that his readers more often find ways to

recharacterize the honesty of his representations as attacks on their religious, moral, and social structures. Ultimately, however, Hardy's unwillingness to reroute his characters' natural trajectories resulted in the generation of extreme criticism of his later prose work. After struggling to publish *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and then *Jude the Obscure,* Hardy abandoned novel writing, finding that he could not belong in the community of novel writers because of his resistance to the sanitized treatment of human nature that Victorian society required in such works. Having lost his ability to belong in that facet of the literary community, Hardy's poetry made it possible for him to belong as a poet.

In all of his literary work, Hardy seems to be asking us to hold up the mirror to ourselves and question how our own navigation of belonging undermines those we identify as the other. He reminds us in his essay "Candor in English Fiction" (1890) that even in fiction writing, an author is necessarily influenced by the reality of his world. He opens the essay, "[e]ven imagination is the slave of solid circumstance; and the unending flow of inventiveness which finds expression in the literature of Fiction is no exception to the general law. It is conditioned by its surroundings like a river-stream" (Hardy and Orel 125). Hardy is asking the readers and critics of fiction to keep in mind the truth woven into the cloth of the story. The emphasis on the truth of events draws to mind the image of a mirror that Hardy is asking his readers and critics to hold up to themselves when they read his fiction and find themselves affected by his writing. The complex relationship that Hardy's characters have with the navigation of their environmental and gendered belonging gestures to the correlating complexity of the reality of managing one's relationship with these communities of belonging.

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