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“That Blue Narcotic Haze”

Dreams, Dissociation, and Tess of the D’Urbervilles

“I don’t know about ghosts,” she was saying; “but I do know that our souls can be made to go outside our bodies when we are alive . . . A very easy way to feel ‘em go,” continued Tess, “is to lie on the grass at night and look straight up at some big bright star; and, by fixing your mind upon it, you will soon find that you are hundreds and hundreds o’ miles away from your body, which you don’t seem to want at all.”

—Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D’Urbervilles

All major turns of plot in Thomas Hardy’s Tess of the D’Urbervilles occur in some relation to sleep—the death of Prince, Tess’s rape, Angel’s burying of Tess, Tess’s capture at Stonehenge. Sleep rehearses loss before the event, as the loss of conscious awareness. And sleep prepares for loss—of virginity, of love, of life—upon awakening to its real experience. A different movement of consciousness happens in moments of daydreaming in the novel. Tess transfixed wearing flowers; Tess mesmerized as if in another world while working on the threshing machine; Tess dreaming out of a window. These waking dreams set her consciousness in another place that make a space for her to occupy, alone, apart from the world before her, before Alec forces her attention in each instance back on him, her consciousness forced to be defined in relation to him. Significantly, when Tess moves into these states of liminal consciousness, or waking dreams, she goes, as she says “outside her body,” a state she claims she can will. Lying down on the grass as if asleep or even dead and fixing her mind on a big, bright star, Tess says that her mind travels far from her body, that which “you don’t seem to want at all.” Why does Tess not seem to want her body at all, her beautiful body, which everyone else seems to want most of all?
1. A STORY OF “O”

_Tess of the D’Urbervilles_ is a novel of evolutionary metamorphosis—metamorphosis that emerges from the ebb and flow, forward and back, forward and back—circles and circles that plot not just repetition, but evolution. “O” is the fundamental geometry of the novel, perhaps of all Hardy’s novels. The “O-O-O” sound the landlady overhears leaking out from inside the shared apartment of Tess and Alec in Sandborne we see, drawn on the page before our eyes, and etched as the plot’s course over and over again. The “O” holds motion, a circling motion that retraces itself as it widens over increasing space and time. Tess walks or rides from her home in Marlott to the Chase, returns to Marlott and goes to River Var, returns to Marlott and then moves to Flintcomb-Ash, makes her final return home to Marlott to finish drawing the widening circle’s arc with four new places linked together by her movement from one to the next.

Kingsbere/Sandborne/Stonehenge/Wintoncester—these are Tess’s temporary destinations until she is no more and Liza Lu stands there in her stead, hand in hand with Angel. Tess, caught and executed, metamorphoses into Liza Lu, who, with Angel, continues to trace the human march first begun by Eve, caught and punished, who, with Adam, is sent out of Eden. The motion of the “O” is one of return and extension. Taken as a whole, Hardy’s narrative defines a physical universe of “O”: time is a mix of the past that repeats in the present as it changes into the future; space contracts and expands; motion extends and returns. And it is an experiential universe of the “O”: the inescapability of the “no way out” of a limited set of possibilities finds its way out by chance to new possibilities through substitution, replacement, and reconstitution. Like the phases of the moon that trace physical change in relation to what came before, the novel plots experiential change over time, holding onto the same presence as it transforms into difference with chance encounters. The novel evolves from Phase One to Phase Seven, from “The Maiden” to “Fulfilment,” from the stabbing death of Prince to the stabbing rape of Tess to the stabbing murder of Alec, from passion-hearted to hardhearted to tender-hearted Angel, from seducer to preacher to jailer Alec, from Joan Durbeyfield to Tess to Liza Lu—each new position a repeated replacement that marks the same but different.\(^1\)

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1. J. Hillis Miller opened the way to seeing Hardy’s structuring formal repetition, a repetition that for Miller creates “immanent design”: “Taken together, the elements form a system of mutually defining motifs, each of which exists as its relation to the others. The reader must execute a lateral dance of interpretation to explicate any given passage, without ever reaching, in this sideways movement, a passage which is chief, original, or originating, a sovereign principle of explanation. The meaning, rather, is suspended within the interaction among the elements. It is immanent rather than transcendent” (Fiction and Repetition 127). For Miller what is made by the repetitions back and forth
Adaptation, Darwin’s understanding of how life seeks to ensure its survival through successful combinations of repetition, chance, and change, I understand in Hardy’s narrative universe as metamorphosis with a purpose. Both are visions of evolution. The evolution that stands above all others in Tess, ineluctable as time, is not social history. What is man-made, that story of named lineal descent, can be passed on in words, distorted, manipulated, bought and sold, and so made possible in Hardy’s narrative universe to come to nothing—to devolve. The novel teases us to imagine at its opening that this will be a story of historical evolution: “Don’t you really know, Durbeyfield, that you are the direct lineal representative of the ancient and knightly family of the D’Urbervilles, who derive their descent from Sir Pagan D’Urberville, that renowned knight who came from Normandy with William the Conqueror, as appears by Battle Abbey roll?” (7–8). Hardy makes knowing the relation between “Durbeyfield” and “D’Urberville” and “Stoke-D’Urbervilles” the social story of evolution that names the book, Tess of the D’Urbervilles, or words its meaning. But the process of naming is false or at least weak because man-made, as Hardy most coarsely defines the process in the regrafting of the “extinct” family name “D’Urberville” by Mr. Simon Stoke.2 Deeper, far deeper than the social male narrative of patrilineal descent lies THE story of evolutionary metamorphosis of this Bildungsroman that encloses and enfolds them all—the natural female narrative of girl to woman. If “D’Urbervilles” is the name annexed or regrafted, “Tess” is the name that emerges, grows, and holds meaning. Hardy tells this evolutionary metamorphosis as Tess’s story, a metamorphosis that is both natural to her like the phases of the moon and socially “grafted” upon her. Attributing from where or how Tess emerges, grows, and holds meaning, Hardy determines three core evolutionary paths. There is that of Tess born from her mother’s body and nature, not from her father’s lineage: “There

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2. Hardy writes: “Conning for an hour in the British Museum the pages of works devoted to extinct, half-extinct, obscured, and ruined families appertaining to the quarter of England in which [Mr. Simon Stoke] proposed to settle, he considered that D’Urberville looked and sounded as well as any of them; and D’Urberville accordingly was annexed to his own name for himself and his heirs eternally” (39). I read “conning” both as studying and as “swindling.” Given that this is a passage about dead-names and the possibility of their annexation, I read “eternally” as the italicized “eternally.”
still beamed from [Joan Durbeyfield’s] features something of the freshness, and even the prettiness of her youth; rendering it evident that the personal charms which Tess could boast of were in main part her mother’s gift, and therefore unknighthly, unhistorical” (20). Not just Tess’s physical nature, but her tendencies to dream find their way from Joan to Tess: “There was a dreaminess, a preoccupation, an exaltation, in the maternal look which the girl could not understand” (21). Tess holds in her physical and mental forms evolutionary states of times past with the time present that is, like memory, a composite of shifting-sameness, wholly composed of now, and wholly composed of before. But as well there are Tess’s features now at sixteen that Hardy describes in relation to their earlier look, flashes of which come forward in her now: “Phases of her childhood lurked in her aspect still. As she walked along to-day, for all her bouncing 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” (15–16). Like the architectural remains that are strewn throughout Hardy’s novels, buried and uncovered, waiting to be restored, or just standing there like harbingers of the past in the present, Tess embodies time in the phases of evolution traced on her being, an evolution that holds who her mother once was, the girl she still is, and the woman she is becoming. But before this dyad of evolutionary paths that trace the emergence and growth of Tess, Hardy writes this sentence: “Tess Durbeyfield at this time of her life was a mere vessel of emotion untinctured by experience” (15). These are new words, prior words Hardy writes to constitute what “Tess Durbeyfield” holds. The metaphor “vessel of emotion” makes Tess a container of fluid emotion, or a ship floating on or traveling through emotion. “Untinctured by experience” makes the vessel of emotion at once “pure” in that it is not “tinted” or “stained” or “impregnated” with experience—and vulnerable. Between “Tess Durbeyfield” and “vessel of emotion” lies the phrase “at this time of her life,” and its shadowy suggestion that Tess is not yet tinted by experience. Experience is what happens to Tess because she is alive, embodied in the world and in time. It is this third evolutionary path that carries to Tess chance and so, too, variety, difference, and the possibility of adaptation—or its failure. Chance, therefore, brings to the Hardy narrative universe the co-present possibilities of adaptation and of tragedy.

3. Jules Law writes about how history is embodied as the “aestheticized historicization” of Tess’s body in “Sleeping Figures: Hardy, History, and the Gendered Body.”
2. TINCTURE

For Tess to experience, to be vulnerable to time and all that passes with it, there must exist a real outside her mind, a real she must engage in order to be in the world and in time. But what is the real outside her mind? Why engage what “tints” or “stains”? An emerging understanding of the real involves, according to the psychoanalyst Philip Bromberg, “the way in which one’s capacity to see things as others see them develops, stabilizes, and coexists with one’s values, wishes, fantasy life, impulses, and spontaneity; in other words, these assumptions concern the conditions through which subjective experience of reality (including reality about one’s self) is freed to move beyond the limits of egocentrically conceived personal truth” (Standing 4). Bromberg makes experience—the movement from and between one’s personal truth to know and be in the world—not necessarily staining but a fundamental part of what makes possible mental development from child to adult. What is at stake in being beautiful? In being the world’s embodied beautiful of emerging female sexuality? And how is Tess to bring her “vessel of emotion,” her “values, wishes, fantasy life, impulses, and spontaneity” to the world and the world’s reality to her personal truth to trace that path of mental development in relation to her physical development? Hardy’s descriptions of Tess demand not just recognition of her sexual presence as Female, but Male response to them: the “luxuriance of aspect, a fullness of growth, [. . . ] made her appear more of a woman than she really was” (42), even to a man “with the least fire in him” (151). The embodied effect of Tess on that man with the least fire in him, the angel-man Angel, Hardy writes, is that of the real—“real vitality, real warmth, real incarnation” (150). All this aliveness presses on him to experience the real embodiment of Woman through how her presence makes him feel his own real embodiment as Man—“distracted, infatuated, maddened” (151), not as the angel Angel, but as the man Angel.

I read Tess as Hardy’s embodiment of the life force that is Female, as wet and green and milky as the fecund world of the Talbothay Dairy, her real home, that space where her being and her being in the world know contiguity and congruence. Entering the Var Vale, “beautiful Tess” is met by cries east and west, not because the Valley is conscious of her arrival, but to announce milking time (105). Tess’s entrance to the Var Vale is not marked as separate from the scene of milking; rather, Tess enters and begins immediately to get her hand and mouth in, by milking and drinking in the milk. Her hand helps make the milk flow while her mouth opens to the milk’s flow into her—she makes milk and is made of milk—she milks the landscape and is made of the landscape’s milk, this land of milk and
honey. Embodied in space and time, Tess is aware of neither. She is present; she is now—the figure in relation to whom all space exists and through whom all time passes—complete. Listening to the notes of Angel’s harp in the garden, Tess feels the sounds made visible, as she breathes them in—the garden and Tess harmonize to Angel’s music:

Tess was conscious of neither time nor space. The exultation which she had described as being producible at will by gazing at a star, came now without any determination of hers; she undulated upon the thin notes as upon billows, and their harmonies passed like breezes through her, bringing tears into her eyes. The floating pollen seemed to be his notes made visible, and the dampness of the garden the weeping of the garden’s sensibility. (123)

Here in this garden filled with the harp notes of Angel, Tess’s wishes, fantasy life, impulses, and spontaneity coexist with and in the way the world is now. Angel, the outsider, who has come to Talbothay not as a farmer but as a gentleman who seeks to learn farming, sounds in his harp the notes that bring Tess and the garden they share to him. He plays and she and the billows undulate in response. The harmonies as breezes surround and fill Tess, surround and fill the garden’s air with floating pollen—his notes made visible. She weeps and the garden weeps in postorgiastic response. For the Var Vale in heat, Angel, this David with his harp, is the longed-for outsider in response to whom the maddening state of desire emerges and grows. If Angel seeds the garden with his notes, so too do his notes seed Tess. Tess knows in Var Vale what it means to be Var Vale—a galaxy of big bright stars—the Milky Way.

Milking creates a potion all its own—the smell, the touch, the taste of the cradle of life—the sensuous atmosphere of fertility release embodied calls for the touching nearness of union and creation. Eight chapters later of almost continuous milking, Hardy writes of the spell cast by the cows on their milkers in the Var Vale:

Amid the oozing fatness and warm ferments of the Var Vale, at a season when the rush of juices could almost be heard below the hiss of fertilization, it was impossible that the most fanciful love should not grow passionate. The ready bosoms existing there were impregnated by their surroundings . . . The air of the place, so fresh in the spring and early summer, was stagnant and enervating now. Its heavy scents weighed upon them, and at mid-day the landscape seemed lying in a swoon . . . And as Clare was oppressed by the outward heats, so he was burdened inwardly by a waxing fervour of passion for the soft and silent Tess. (149)
Hardy’s prose pants with desire and the oppressive near-but-not-here relief of orgasm. The steady state of milking has drawn, not just from the milkers but from the whole Var Vale—passion—“the hiss of fertilization.” The milkers are impregnated by their surroundings; the landscape lies down in a swoon; Angel waxes with a fervor of passion for the “soft and silent Tess.” Milking its way to a state of continuous sexual longing, the Var Vale is in heat—“Ethiopic scorchings browned the upper slopes of the pastures” (149)—without relief—“The rains having passed the uplands were dry” (149). Hardy’s achingly alive prose never veers from its sensuous vivacity. Whether in heat, in fecundity, or in barrenness, Tess of the D’Urbervilles insists on embodied life bearing down in all its presence and power. Hardy never lets life as a force go away. His imagination cannot let it—his mind feels the pulsations of life happening and his language finds its way to images that pulse life back.

But the aliveness of Tess, her remarkable embodiment, her oneness with space and time and being, cannot hold in Hardy’s universe. The fundamental principle of Darwin’s account of the natural order understands natural selection as the best adaptive strategy to ensure that life lives. Natural selection “uses” Tess, incorporates from her what is most highly adaptive, and discards what remains. Played out as narrative, Tess finds herself time and again chosen for the very aliveness that mirrors Hardy’s writing and depiction of life—both at their most generative—and then punished. How Tess is both the embodiment and victim of the very aliveness that most defines Hardy’s creative force and life’s creative energy stages itself in metonym, as the drama of Tess’s mouth.

3. KISSING

We cannot kiss our own lips. Our mouths can’t know the pleasures of kissing without having other mouths to kiss. In “Plotting for Kisses,” the psychoanalyst Adam Phillips writes about this, “Because the mouth, unlike the body parts it sucks, is acutely alive to its own pleasure, it therefore seeks . . . by that same narcissistic logic its curious reunion through another’s lips” (99). The mouth must seek other mouths—touch them and feel touched by them—to know its own pleasure. And it is acutely alive to its own pleasure because of the amount of the brain’s cerebral cortex devoted to it. 4 Figure

4. The cerebral cortex is home to all the brain’s “higher functions,” which include the generation of movement, the processing of sensation and vision, the construction of the world, thinking, planning, language, spatial relations, attention, decision-making, memory. “Lower functions” happen in the brain stem, which include breathing, eye movement, reflexes, postural adjustments,
Part III: Thomas Hardy and Nonintrospective Consciousness

3, from the study *Epilepsy and the Functional Anatomy of the Human Brain* by neurologists Wilder Penfield and Herbert Jasper, is a representation in cross-section of the cerebral cortex’s sensory strip and reveals through the length of the dark black line attached to body part the amount of sensation the brain devotes to each part. Afferent impulses pass upward from the periphery through the thalamus to the postcentral gyrus. From there, the impulses are returned by a hypothetical tract, indicated by the broken lines, to the centrencephalic system. This would provide for integration with the other sensory streams of impulses derived from both hemispheres.

**FIGURE 3** Original description of figure: Sensory sequence in the Rolandic cortex shown on a cross section of the cerebral hemisphere. Lengths of the black lines in the cortex indicate the approximate extent of the representation of sensation for each part. Afferent impulses pass upward from the periphery through the thalamus to the postcentral gyrus. From there, the impulses are returned by a hypothetical tract, indicated by the broken lines, to the centrencephalic system. This would provide for integration with the other sensory streams of impulses derived from both hemispheres. SOURCE: *Epilepsy and the Functional Anatomy of the Human Brain*, Wilder Penfield and Herbert Jasper (Boston: Little, Brown and Company 1954), 71.

Conceived somewhat differently, Penfield’s “homunculus,” shown in figure 4, represents by size the extent of the cortex’s motor strip occupied by blood pressure, heart regulation, neural-hormonal aspects of being. The thalamus serves intermediate functions between the cerebral cortex and brain stem. The cerebellum acts as a “motor computer” to regulate the accuracy and coordination of motion, and the basal ganglia regulate the smoothness and speed of motion.
each body part and by arrangement the order of the parts of the body as found in the cortical sequence. The massive lips of the homunculus and the large erect tongue underneath represent the large amount of brain devoted to the mouth’s movements, and make even more vivid how important a role the mouth plays in how we experience. To survive and flourish we must want to suck at the breast and put food in our mouths: the human brain has evolved to make the oral experiences of sucking and eating some of our greatest sensory pleasures.

FIGURE 4  Original description of figure: Sensory and motor homunculus. This was prepared as a visualization of the order and comparative size of the parts of the body as they appear from above down upon the Rolandic cortex. There are certain unavoidable inaccuracies in the drawing. It does not show the differences between sensory and motor representation. . . . SOURCE: Epilepsy and the Functional Anatomy of the Human Brain, Wilder Penfield and Herbert Jasper (Boston: Little, Brown and Company 1954), 70.
For Adam Phillips:

Kissing is integral to the individual’s ongoing project of working out what mouths are for. In that craving for other mouths that is central to the experience of adolescence and seems to begin then, the individual resumes with new found appetite and inhibition his oral education, connected now with an emerging capacity for genital sexuality. There is the return of the primary sensuous experience of tasting another person . . . [T]he kiss is the image of reciprocity, not domination—but one that is also unprecedented, since it includes tasting someone else’s mouth . . . When we kiss we devour the object by caressing it; we eat it, in a sense, but sustain its presence. Kissing on the mouth can have a mutuality that blurs the distinction between giving and receiving. (96–97)

In Tess, the plotting figure Alec desires to devour Tess’s mouth, a desire he first suggests in his forced strawberry-feeding of Tess and then makes literal in his relentless forced feedings on Tess. Alec’s “plotting for kisses” is about wanting to eat her alive so as to rid himself of the need to kiss her peony mouth with its “little upward lift in the middle of her red top lip”—her mouth shaped as an embodied kiss moving through space. But not wanting him to touch her with his mouth, Tess cries she wants nobody to kiss her. Here is the drama of their mouths:

“Let me put one little kiss on those holmberry lips, Tess; or even on that warmed cheek, and I’ll stop—on my honour, I will!” . . . “But I don’t want anybody to kiss me, sir!” she implored, a big tear beginning to roll down her face, and the corners of her mouth trembling in her attempts not to cry . . . He was inexorable, and she sat still, and D’Urberville gave her the kiss of mastery. No sooner had he done so than she flushed with shame, took out her handkerchief, and wiped the spot on her cheek that had been touched by his lips . . . She had, in fact, undone the kiss as far as such a thing was physically possible. (55–56)

This is not about seeking the kiss of reciprocity but of domination, even annihilation. Tess keeps his mouth from entering hers: Alec kisses her cheek, a kiss she erases with a wipe of the hand. Alec’s desire to annihilate through the kiss of mastery is met by Tess’s annihilating touch of the erasing hand in return. Theirs is a power struggle about self-defense. For Alec to penetrate Tess by force, by crossing the boundary of her mouth and gaining entrance inside her, means for Tess to experience a loss of self. For Tess to be alive in the world, forcing Alec to feel by her sheer presence a hunger
for her, means for Alec to experience lack. The kiss of mastery, to master
the other through the mouth, is the kiss that seeks to make the other
"mine." Possession is not about wanting the other; rather, it is about not
wanting the other. If he could just kiss himself, Alec might again know
his feeling of self-mastery before he laid eyes on Tess, and again know no
lack, no deficiency, no vulnerability.

Stealing kisses happens for Hardy in spring-carts and spring-wagons. Something about their movement up and down and forward, something
about the proximity of its passengers, something about the word "spring"
itself conveys and is a conveyance of kissing, makes the spring-ride a met-
onym for Hardy of the kiss. From first sitting alone with Alec atop the
horse-driven spring-cart to then finding herself in the same scene but beside
Angel, Tess succumbs freely to Angel’s kiss on her cheek. Hardy writes:

Clare resolved never to kiss her until he had obtained her promise; but
somehow, as Tess stood there in her prettily tucked-up milking-gown, her
hair carelessly heaped upon her head till there should be leisure to arrange
it when skimming and milking were done, he broke his resolve, and brought
his lips to her cheek for one moment. She passed downstairs very quickly,
never looking back at him, or saying another word. (182–83)

Hardy writes nothing of how either experienced the kiss. Instead, he juxta-
poses the careless heap of hair and the leisurely look of Tess to the bring-
ing of Angel’s lips to Tess’s cheek. It is his resolve that is broken, not her
resistance. Later, on yet another spring-wagon ride and incited by Angel’s
words "Do you care for me? I wish you would prove it some way," Tess
kisses Angel. “She clasped his neck, and for the first time Clare learnt what
an impassioned woman’s kisses were like upon the lips of one whom she
loved with all her heart and soul, as Tess loved him” (190). Angel’s child-
like momentary touch of his lips on her cheek becomes Tess’s passionate
kisses on his lips. Tess brings her mouth to his and in the passionate touch
of her kisses makes them lovers. Hardy writes Angel as the maiden and
Tess as the “maiden-no-more”: the most Angel can manage is brushing his
lips onto her cheek; he cannot enter Tess’s mouth. In response to Angel’s
“show me” words of temptation, she must do it for him. The consequence

5. Riding a horse together leads to and acts as the metonym for sex in the novel. However
silent the moment of penetration, the prior horse ride of Alec and Tess is Hardy’s articulation of
Alec’s elided “ride” of the sleeping Tess.
6. Alan Lerner and Frederick Loewe make musical in reverse the woman’s need to invoke the
man’s sexual energies when Eliza Doolittle sings to Freddy Ainsford Hill, “Haven’t your lips longed
for my touch? Don’t say how much—show me!” in My Fair Lady. As surprising as it is to witness this
scene of passionate temptation between Eliza and Freddy on the streets of London is it surprising to
of this has everything to do with how Angel imagines Tess’s mouth, an imagining that keeps him apart from her, still inside himself. I return to Hardy’s words about how Angel experiences the embodied Tess in greater detail—as what “her face was to him”:

How very lovable her face was to him. Yet there was nothing ethereal about it; all was real vitality, real warmth, real incarnation. And it was in her mouth that this culminated. Eyes almost as deep and speaking he had seen before, and cheeks perhaps as fair; brows as arched, a chin and throat almost as shapely; her mouth he had seen nothing to equal on the face of the earth. To a young man with the least fire in him that little upward lift in the middle of her red top lip was distracting, infatuating, maddening. He had never before seen a woman’s lips and teeth which forced upon his mind with such persistent iteration the old Elizabethan simile of roses filled with snow. (Emphasis mine, 150–51)

The realness of Tess’s face in all its aliveness culminates in her mouth. “Her mouth he had seen nothing to equal on the face of the earth”: Tess’s mouth is what makes her face Tess and nowhere else on the face of the earth, for Angel, is there such a mouth. Strangely, it is the very distinctiveness of Tess’s lips that prompts his mind to erase her distinction, her separation from him. Angel does this by making Tess’s mouth an analog of his learning—“the old Elizabethan simile of roses filled with snow.” What sets Tess apart as “other” in the eyes of Angel leads him to experience her as what he already knew in his mind, leads him back to words he had read and memorized before, which now, in the presence of her mouth, are “forced upon his mind with such persistent iteration.” Tess is for Angel an embodiment of his mind’s eye.

For Alec and for Angel, all of Tess, and most of all her mouth, call not just their bodies into being or into knowing their maleness, but call their minds into being as well, meaning how each experiences himself. Tess’s mouth, therefore, acts for Alec and for Angel as the mirror that casts back a reflection of each man’s self—not of her. “Because the mouth, unlike the body parts it sucks, is acutely alive to its own pleasure, it therefore seeks . . . by that same narcissistic logic its curious reunion through another’s lips” (Phillips 99). The words of Adam Phillips define the narcissistic logic of Alec and Angel—Tess’s mouth is the locus for where each man can achieve reunion with himself—kissing her lips, each man can know his

read Angel’s role of passive temptation, and Tess’s role of aggressive passion because of their exchange of accepted-acceptable maiden-man positions in each.
own mouth, from the inside. Alec’s object hunger drives him, obsesses him to the point where he loses all self-mastery. It is a plague that pushes him to possess Tess at all cost, as if his life depends on it. Alec experiences Tess as the reflected embodiment of his own lack—an object in the world that mirrors what he is missing, forces him to experience himself as not whole. His narcissistic grandiosity and rage are the very behaviors that enable him to defend against the haunting feeling of lack they conceal. Angel experiences Tess as the reflected embodiment of his own perfection—an object in the world that mirrors forward his desire for perfectibility, enables him to experience himself as ideal. Heinz Kohut, whose theories on narcissism and “selfobject” transference transformed psychoanalytic thinking and practice post-Freud, writes in “The Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorders—Outline of a Systematic Approach”:

The idealizing transference is the therapeutic revival of the early state in which the psyche saves a part of the lost experience of global narcissistic perfection by assigning it to an archaic (transitional object), the idealized parent imago. Since now all bliss and power reside in the idealized object, the child feels empty and powerless when he is separate from it and attempts, therefore, to maintain a continuous union with it. (88)

While Kohut writes about idealizing transference, or the need for an ideal object, as what gets called up in the therapeutic treatment of narcissistic personality disorder, it is Kohut’s more global recognition of the human need for mirroring—the self’s need for mirroring objects—that helps make sense of Alec’s and Angel’s relation to Tess. Kohut goes on to describe a narcissistic transference particularly suggestive of Alec’s relation to and treatment of Tess:

If the child’s relationship to the idealized object is, however, severely disturbed, e.g., if he suffers a traumatic (intense and sudden, or not phase-appropriate) disappointment in it, the child does not acquire the needed internal structure, but his psyche remains fixated on an archaic object imago, and the personality will later, and throughout life, be dependent on certain objects in what seems to be an intense form of object hunger. The intensity of the search for and of the dependency on these objects is due to the fact they are striven for as a substitute for missing segments of the psychic structure. These objects are not loved for their attributes, and their actions are only dimly recognized; they are needed in order to replace the functions of a segment of the mental apparatus which has not been established in childhood. (Emphasis mine, 89)
It is not the etiology of Alec’s narcissism that concerns Hardy; it is its manifestation: Alec’s “intense form of object hunger” and the mad striving he feels to consume Tess to satiate that hunger and regain his self-mastery. What is that moment of satiation for Alec? Lying before him, wrapped in the thick darkness of fog that holds “the moonlight in suspension,” Tess is for Alec a “pale nebulousness at his feet, which represented the white muslin figure he had left upon the dead leaves. Everything else was blackness alike. D’Urberville stooped and heard a gentle regular breathing. She was sleeping soundly” (73). We understand the satiation to be sexual penetration—the baby Sorrow is its objective reification. But we don’t read the moment. What we read is oral penetration: before her sliding down off the horse, “he had stolen a hearty kiss” (71); and before her lying down in the grass, Alec holds the bottle of alcohol to her mouth “unawares.” “Tess sputtered and coughed, and gasping ‘It will go on my pretty frock!’ swallowed as he poured, to prevent the catastrophe she feared” (72). Hardy leads us to trace a line in our minds from one moment of visualized forced entry to the next—until its invisible end is visible to our imaginations—the rape of Tess. But the pattern Hardy traces is thick with suggestion. The stolen kiss and the bottle poured down her mouth rehearse another satiation Alec will take from the pale nebulousness of Tess—the infant sucking at the breast. As rape turns the creation of life into annihilation, so this scene of sucking turns the sustaining of life into destruction. First reported by the psychoanalyst Isakower in 1938, “Isakower’s phenomenon” refers to a patient’s repeated pre-sleep visionary state in which “the visual sensation of a large, doughy, shadowy mass, usually round” appears. Isakower understood the sensation to be the memory of a crushing breast that “obscures the boundary between self and outside world . . . Often there are feelings [in those who report such a recollection] of floating or loss of equilibrium.”

What I’m suggesting is that the pale nebulous “breast” Tess to the hungry Alec is not nourishing but crushing, not defining of himself but obscuring, not helping him to regain his balance, but causing him to lose it. Alec’s intense object hunger for Tess may be about his longing to feel complete, but his experience of Tess is one of insatiability, or of being crushed by the hunger that feels no end.

I take Alec’s unrelenting need to possess the object as the futile drive toward self-mastery to be a near-relation to Angel’s need to know the object is “pure”—a pure reflection of his own perfection. How else can we make sense of Angel’s abandonment of Tess, when they share confessions of their pasts, when they tell parallel stories of their experience, when “he seemed

7. See Philip Bromberg’s *Standing in the Spaces*, 98.
to be her double” (224)? The shock of the moment, when Angel says, “You were one person and now you are another” (228), is deeper than cultural expectation, deeper than the annihilation of a social ideal. For Angel, “The essence of things had changed” (228); the crisis is ontological. Tess separates her self, her experience, from his, and cries out, “What have I done—what have I done? I have not told of anything that interferes with or belies my love for you. You don’t think I planned it, do you? It is in your own mind what you are angry at, Angel, it is not in me. O, it is not in me” (emphasis mine, 231). Tess has not failed him—she loves him—she has not changed. But Tess as an idealizing selfobject has failed him. And so Angel has changed. The perfection he saw reflected back of his own mind—his perfect mind—has vanished. Here Kohut describes what happens when there is a breach in the idealizing narcissistic transference from patient to analyst, a breach suggestive of that between Angel and Tess:

In the undisturbed transference the patient feels powerful, good, and capable. Anything that deprives him of the idealized analyst creates a disturbance of his self-esteem; he feels powerless and worthless, and if his ego is not assisted by interpretations concerning the loss of the idealized parent imago, the patient may turn to archaic precursors of the idealized parent imago or may abandon it altogether and regress further to reactively mobilized archaic stages of the grandiose self. The retreat to archaic idealizations may manifest itself in the form of vague, impersonal, trancelike religious feelings; the hypercathexis of archaic forms of the grandiose self and the (autoerotic body) self will produce the syndrome of emotional coldness, tendency toward affectation in speech and behavior, shame propensity, and hypochondria. (94)

When in the presence of the ideal selfobject Tess, Angel feels strong, powerful, good. But when ideal Tess becomes real Tess, her own separate self, Angel collapses. All he exhibits to Tess by day is emotional coldness and by night is a trancelike sleepwalking burial of his ideal selfobject in the grave, “‘Dead! dead! dead!’” (246). With the death of his own mirrored perfection, Angel abandons the mirror. Why stay to have to look upon “the shade of his own limitations” (265)?

Adam Phillips’s account of the mouth’s desire to seek reunion with itself—through a mouth not its own but made its own through extension—outgrows Kohut’s understanding of narcissistic disorder in the very woman onto whom the men kiss their self-projections. This strange fact—to experience oneself requires that one experience others as other to oneself, not as extensions of oneself—is missed by everyone except Tess. For the
philosopher Edmund Husserl, we live in states of “reciprocal co-existence,” in which our self-apprehensions are mediated all the time by how we perceive and experience the presence of others and by how others perceive and experience us.\(^8\) About this, Dan Zahavi writes in his essay “Beyond Empathy”:

[S]ubjectivity is not a “motionless identity with itself”; rather, it is essential to subjectivity to open itself to an other and to “go forth from itself.” It is precisely my own experience as such that makes me open for what I am not. Subjectivity is not hermetically sealed up within itself, remote from the world and inaccessible to the other. Rather, it is above all a relation to the world, an openness toward others is secured the moment I define myself and the other as co-existing relations to the world. (Zahavi 163)

According to phenomenology, without knowing in the sense of feeling the incarnate presences “other” and “world” as separate from the self, and as informing, affecting, and co-making of the self, we would have no conscious experience of subjectivity. Descartes’ cogito becomes—in phenomenology’s retelling of the nature of experience—“I am, I exist because I feel my presence in the world as I feel the presence of others in the world as other to me.”

Tess knows this as what it means to love. Perhaps the most poignant moment of the novel happens as the result of Angel’s failure to hear Tess’s imperative: “Love myself as I love yourself in all changes and disgraces” (228). Tess knows what it means to love Angel—for himself, not as her idea of an angel, but as Angel, himself, over time, in the world, through all that will happen without and within him—in all changes and disgraces. But Angel cannot yet imagine this because he has no intersubjective understanding of Tess, as Tess. To love Tess as herself would require that Angel accept that she is not himself, accept that she is not the holder of his perfectibility, and imagine a love beyond narcissism.

Angel’s failure, like Alec’s failure to hear Tess or to honor the meaning of Tess’s words as expressive of the claims of her own subjectivity apart from his, is nothing new. That mouth makes words, tells herself, makes available her subjectivity as more than lips making a kiss in the air. Here’s Tess to Alec: “I don’t want anybody to kiss me, sir!” she implored” (55–56). Or here’s Angel and Tess: “She was no longer the milkmaid, but a visionary essence of woman—a whole sex condensed into one typical form. He called her Artemis, Demeter, and other fanciful names half teasingly, which she did

\(^8\). See Zahavi’s discussion of Husserl, 160.
not like because she did not understand them. ‘Call me Tess,’ she would say askance’ (emphasis mine, 130). Tess’s words are not heard by Alec in that they seem not to inform him of a feeling subjectivity apart from his own, or at least they do nothing to alter the course of his subjectivity—“he was inexorable”—he takes her kiss away. And Angel may come to say the name “Tess,” but means by it his “visionary essence of woman.” He cannot hear Tess call herself “Tess” or hear how she means herself because he is not yet present to Tess as “Tess”—a being apart from himself who names and means her own self. Angel does not yet understand the reciprocal coexistence of subjectivity. From imagining her lips as “roses filled with snow” to naming her “Artemis” or “Demeter,” to defining her as “virtuous as a vestal,” Angel transforms Tess’s lips, name, and being to be his names, his ideas, his vision. Alec fills Tess’s lips with his body and Angel fills Tess’s lips with words: both men respond to Tess’s mouth as a space that demands filling. The “O-O-O” shape of her mouth is too dangerous left open or too inviting to resist projection because its very presence and all that its presence urges questions the very nature of subjectivity as intact or as world-making.

What would it mean to kiss the lips that held such a sound? This question is not possible to ask in the world of Tess of the D’Urbervilles. While Angel may not be able to hear Tess’s words, we cannot imagine her voice—Hardy does not write it. In part, this is because of the insistence of Hardy’s visual imagination: Hardy does not make present the quality of voices in Tess of the D’Urbervilles. Tess’s words fall on deaf ears. If George Eliot predicates the possibility of intersubjective understanding on one’s capacity to hear voice and from it experience a commingling of minds within one’s mind, the failure of Hardy’s men to hear Tess precludes their recognition of her mind, separate from their own. The presence in the world of Tess’s mouth—those distracting, infatuating, maddening lips—is seen but not heard by Alec and Angel. Overwhelmed by the sight of her maddening lips and all that her mouth stirs, neither can hear the voice that her mouth emits and what it holds. Their failure to hear Tess say “Call me Tess,” and to understand whose being she voices, is one not just of intersubjectivity, but of subjectivity.

Tess incites Alec and Angel to feel their sexual power and urgency. Her

9. Ann Patchett’s lyrical novel Bel Canto makes the mouth of a great lyric opera singer the site of intersubjective fantasy when it asks on its opening page in the voice of all the listening present, “What would it mean to kiss the lips that held such a sound?” This is the question of Patchett’s novel. By contrast it is not a question in Tess of the D’Urbervilles.

10. By contrast, The Mayor of Casterbridge does make voice present and a means through which character demonstrates itself and makes itself able to be experienced, for Donald Farfrae most of all.
embodied presence sounds nature’s call in their bodies to procreate—that call they can hear and, in knowing response, vibrate back. This is the highly adaptive “use” of Tess: it is what her aliveness creates in the world; it is how her aliveness is world-creating. But her very aliveness—that which gives the man his feeling of aliveness—simultaneously takes it away. Tess’s presence functions as the narcissistic wound that causes each man to become conscious of his failure to be whole or to be perfect without her—a consciousness that demands the sacrifice of her aliveness by annihilation, abandonment, or replacement.

4. “AN ESCAPE WHEN THERE IS NO ESCAPE”

Before Tess’s “Rally,” before the moment in the Talbothay garden when she and the world are impregnated with the notes of Angel’s harp, have come earlier scenes outdoors, in other gardens and woods, experiences that come to trace not a natural but a “coarse” pattern onto “the beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow” that defines Tess. Although Tess is renamed from “Maiden” to “Maiden No More,” Hardy does not define the change in her as a metamorphosis of development from “maiden to woman.” She is no more who she was. Without a new noun to replace “maiden,” we must wonder not just “who is she?” or “what is she?” but “is she?” What comes before the evolutionary metamorphosis of Phase Three is the wounding and tincturing of Phases One and Two, not the change from “a” to “a + b,” but the change from “a” to “~a” = “wounded or not a.” The shock of “a precipitous disruption to self-continuity” (S. A. Pizer) or “an overwhelming threat to the integrity of the self that is accompanied by annihilation anxiety” (Bromberg) are states that define trauma.11 I understand Tess’s transformation from “Maiden” to “Maiden No More” to trace not just a coarse pattern but a course that undoes pattern, or threatens with its annihilation the intact pattern that defines self-continuity. And yet, later, Tess rallies. We know that she will come to walk away from the forced, traumatic loss of her maidenhood and of her child Sorrow. After the rape, after the death of Sorrow, following “two silent reconstructive years,” still young and alive, Tess recognizes the possibility of a second chance, that there is an escape from being not-Tess:

Yet even now Tess felt the pulse of hopeful life still warm within her; she might be happy in some nook which had no memories. To escape the past

11. For a fuller account of trauma, see Bromberg’s Standing in the Spaces, page 11.
and all that appertained thereto was to annihilate it, and to do that she would have to get away . . . [A]nd some spirit within her rose automatically as the sap in the twigs. It was unexpended youth, surging up anew after its temporary check, and bringing with it hope, and the invincible instinct towards self-delight. (Emphasis mine, 99–100)

To move her body away from what came before is for Tess to “escape the past”—to annihilate it rather than to be annihilated by it. To leave the past is to walk into the future, to have a future. While Tess’s mind leads her to this recognition of how to leave the past—to make it “not”—it is her body, her youth, with its “invincible instinct towards self-delight,” that surges up and carries her forward to live “the pulse of hopeful life still warm within her.”

But what if the past cannot be escaped? What if “life” holds the present captive and annihilates the future? What if there is no walking away? Like Angel who sleepwalks his way from what he knew to what he now knows, when conscious life leaves her no out, Tess sleeps her way to, if not through, her rape and commits murder in a hypnoid trance—finds an escape when there is no escape. In The Dreaming Brain, the dream researcher and neuropsychiatrist J. Allan Hobson writes of the brain activity that makes possible the temporary existences that constitute our fluid, changing states of mind:

Imagine that all twenty billion [brain] cells, each communicating with at least ten thousand others, is also sending messages at that same rate of speed within the system itself. The noise, if possible to describe, [. . . ] would be a deafening roar, more like the “buzzing confusion” of William James’s metaphor for consciousness. But this incessant activity all proceeds silently, with only our relatively peaceful consciousness as its product. The music of these spheres within our head is consciousness. Consciousness is the continuous subjective awareness of the activity of billions of cells firing at many times a second, communicating instantaneously with tens of thousands of their neighbors. And the organization of this symphony of activity is such that it is sometimes externally oriented (during waking), sometimes oblivious to the world (during sleep), and sometimes so remarkably aware of itself (during dreams) that it recreates the world in its own image. (Emphasis mine, 132–33)

What is remarkable is that any discernible, unified mental state ever comes into being—be it oriented to the world during waking, oblivious to the world during sleeping, or recreating the world in its own self-image during
dreaming. The death of Prince, Tess’s rape, Angel’s burying of Tess while sleepwalking, Tess’s capture at Stonehenge—the memorable events of plot represent change, not the slow evolutionary change of continuity, but the abrupt, sudden change of discontinuity. If the living plot of *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* is the story of Tess’s evolutionary metamorphosis from girl to woman, the “unliving” showstopping plot that accompanies that evolutionary metamorphosis is *loss*. Sleep marks the loss of conscious awareness. And, in the world of *Tess*, sleep marks the losses that will follow awakening. But sleep strangely, remarkably, brings to life not just the nightly presence of death in the loss of consciousness, but the reanimation of life in dreams. Hobson’s dreaming-brain research has led him to a psychophysiological theory of how dreams are formed, the “activation–synthesis hypothesis”:

> Specifically, that the form of dreams is related to the form of brain activity in sleep; and that the brain is first turned on (activated) during sleep and then generates and integrates (synthesizes) its own sensory and motor information. The sensory and motor signals that the brain automatically generates are both the driving force and the directional vector of the dream plot, which is synthesized in light of the individual’s past experiences, attitudes, and expectations.

The activation–synthesis hypothesis thus proposes a specific brain mechanism that is both necessary and sufficient for dreaming to occur. This mechanism is both more and less deterministic than previous theories of dreaming have been.

*More deterministic* because the automaticity and the fixed quality and quantity of dreaming that it produces make dreaming an integral part of vegetative life rather than a mere reaction to life’s vicissitudes. Dreaming is seen, by activation synthesis, as an endogenous process with its own genetically determined dynamics. There may be no covert informational meaning to the process; on the contrary, information processing may be just one of the many functions served by dreaming.

*Less deterministic* because the activation–synthesis theory supposes an open system of information processing, which is capable not only of reproduction and distortion of stored information but of the elaboration of novel information. Activation synthesis thus includes creativity among its assumptions. This theory sees the brain as so inexorably bent upon the *quest for meaning* that it attributes and even creates meaning when there is little or none to be found in the data it is asked to process. In this sense, the study of dreaming is the study of the brain-mind as an autocreative mechanism.

In using physiology to understand dreaming, I aim to show that the
most remarkable property of mind—an aspect that is most essentially human, the capacity to imagine, to hope, to create—is physically given and physically based. The brain is neither a closed system with its own set of fixed determinancies nor slave to information received from the outside world. It is a dynamic and self-sustaining organ capable of generating its own information. It is designed to deal with the external world by having ideas about the external world. The brain therefore constantly imposes its own truth upon the external world. (Emphasis mine, 15)

Hobson’s theory defines brain physiology as designed to dream, as an “integral part of vegetative life,” rather than as just a response to that which we cannot tolerate in daily consciousness. Turned on when we sleep and ignited by the generation and integration of sensory and motor information, the dreaming brain continues the experience of physically processing life experiences, even when we are not having them. It’s as if the brain cannot shut down its integration of information collection. Sleep gives the brain a chance to continue the integration and synthesis of material that occurred during the wakeful hours of the day. However, it does more than just process or store like a computer—the dreaming brain generates ideas about its ongoing collection of sensory and motor information in relation to “past experiences, attitudes, and expectations.” For Hobson, this makes dreams a manifestation of our experience as brain-minded beings: dreams synthesize material living with the generation of ideas we have about that living. Hobson concludes that what most distinguishes the human and differentiates one human being from another—“the capacity to imagine, hope, and create—is physically given and physically based.” For Hobson, our abilities to imagine, hope, and create are a part of how the human brain works, not just a response to environmental factors or states that are only reflective of experience.

Tess does not have sleeping dreams; at least she never recalls her dreams or reports them. However, Tess engages in waking forms of creation of the dreaming brain. As much as Tess sleeps, she falls into states undefined by Hobson, hypnoid states oblivious to the world, between being awake and asleep. Often Hardy describes them as half-states: “half-paralysis”; “half-forgotten”; “half-dream”; “half-consciously”; “half-hypnotized.” For Tess, these half-states of dreaming wakefulness define a half-world to which her mind goes, a somewhere between fantasy and labor, the concrete and the abstract, wakefulness and sleep, life and death. Tess falls away from the world by looking down, looking away, turning her attention from what is before her. Such moments create chances for her mind’s departure. Elaine Scarry writes in Dreaming by the Book of the relation of falling to skating to
imagining in a moment of analysis of Seamus Heaney’s “Crossings xxviii” poem: “[F]or skating is like falling through the world . . . As stumbling is the motion of all skating, so skating is the motion of all imagining: ‘A farewell to surefootedness, a pitch / Beyond our usual hold on ourselves’” (212). Tess’s “farewell to surefootedness” is her departure from where she is. But as well, her falls away hint at the deeper falls Tess so often falls prey to—falling down or falling asleep or falling in love or falling from grace or falling from the gallows. Briefly, inadvertently, Tess loses hold of the vigilance of care, lets go of the ongoing effort the world requires of her attention. When Tess allows herself to drift something always happens because the condition of aliveness in Hardy’s narrative universe is change. For the most part, Hardy does not disturb Tess when she goes to her half-world. He marks it by naming it “half-x,” but does not describe her experience there. We gaze upon her when she’s there, tranquil, away from and yet still a part of “the” world, lost in “pondering silence” or “abstraction” or “reverie.” Hardy may move in as close as to observe, “she rode along with an inward and not an outward eye” (44), or he may note, “[s]he thought, without exactly wording the thought” (84)—views that mark Tess’s presence in this half-world but not descriptions of how she lives there. Tess does not word her presence there—and neither does Hardy. Instead, Hardy makes Tess simultaneously present to and observable as a presence in the world and in her half-world, but remains outside Tess’s experience of the between. Therefore, so do we. Tess is somewhere between the boundaries of being.

The closest Hardy comes to naming Tess’s half-world is what he calls the predawn moment of “the marginal minute of the dark” (49). And some time after Tess returns from being “maiden” to being “maiden no more,” Hardy describes a moment when Tess seeks out the evening half-world of *twi-light*:

She knew how to hit to a hair’s-breadth that 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. She had no fear of the shadows; her sole idea seemed to be to shun mankind—or rather that cold accretion called the world, which so terrible in the mass, is so uniformable, even pitiable in its units. (85)

Between light and dark, at the halfway marker of a hair’s breadth, Tess finds an opening and walks through it into the half-world. That evening door
opening into the woods makes possible what Tess seeks—“absolute mental liberty”—free of mankind, free of the “cold accretion called the world,” free of “the plight of being alive”—freedom from embodiment. For Tess, the half-world is some other world of mind freed of body—the absolute mental liberty of being disembodied.

Tess “words the thought” of her half-world, knows how to go there and knows why—once. I return to those words from the chapter’s opening frame:

“I don’t know about ghosts,” she was saying; “but I do know that our souls can be made to go outside our bodies when we are alive . . . A very easy way to feel ‘em go,” continued Tess, “is to lie on the grass at night and look straight up at some big bright star; and, by fixing your mind upon it, you will soon find that you are hundreds and hundreds o’ miles away from your body, which you don’t seem to want at all.” (120)

What Tess describes—this state of splitting mind from body in order to take her mind away from her body to a desired place—is dissociation. Philip Bromberg writes, “[D]issociation is basic to human mental functioning and is central to the stability and growth of personality. It is intrinsically an adaptational talent that represents what we call ‘consciousness’ . . . [T]he psyche does not start as an integrated whole, but is nonunitary in origin—a mental structure that begins and continues as a multiplicity of self-states” (“‘Speak!’” 520–21). Whereas psychoanalysis has understood dissociation to be a normal defense that marks how an intact observing ego chooses to limit its capacity for self-reflection as a form of adaptation to the moment, Bromberg begins with a different understanding of the human mind as not intact, but decentered, shifting, and nonlinear (Standing 7). Tess’s daydreaming states of mind—transfixed wearing flowers, mesmerized while working on the threshing machine, dreaming out a window—are states that at once mark her as nonunitary and as separate from the minds around her, but as distinctive, too. Dissociation limits self-reflection, prevents the mind from forming symbols to represent its current, “live” experience, takes the mind to some other state that is somewhere else than in conscious self-reflection. Bromberg writes:

[D]issociation as a defense, even in a relatively normal personality structure, limits self-reflection to what is secure or needed for survival of selfhood, while in individuals for whom trauma has been severe, self-reflection is extremely curtailed in order that the capacity to reflect back does not break down completely and result in a collapse of selfhood. What we call
annihilation anxiety represents the latter possibility. Thus, paradoxically, the defensive division of the self into unlinked parts preserves identity by establishing more secure boundaries between self and “not-self” through dissociative unlinking of self-states, each with its own boundaries and its own firm experience of not-self. Consequently, dissociative patterns of relating come to define personal boundaries of selfhood in a very powerful way. (Standing 12)

When the boundaries of Tess’s being—that which defines her to have a state of self-continuity—come under attack so that in order to continue to have her self she must split into selves, Tess sleeps, daydreams, and dissociates. Her body does one thing while her mind goes somewhere else. Whereas Austen’s Emma retires from the social world so as to imagine her self-conscious presence into that social world—through association—Hardy’s Tess while present in the world uses her imagination to escape from it—through dissociation. Commanded to be fed strawberries by Alec, after first refusing, Tess parts her lips, takes in the strawberries, and “eats in an abstracted half-hypnotized state whatever D’Urberville offered her.” Gathering rose blossoms, Alec gives them to Tess to put into her bosom. “She obeyed like one in a dream.” He moves back from her and watches her “pretty and unconscious munching through the skeins of smoke that pervaded the tent . . . that blue narcotic haze” that stands between her and “the ‘tragic mischief’ of her drama” (42). Seemingly still inside that blue narcotic haze, Tess boards the van for home and “did not know what the other occupants said to her as she entered, though she answered them; and when they started anew she rode along with an inward and not an outward eye” (44). Called “quite a posy” by one of the passengers, Tess focuses her attention back out and blushes from the recognition of herself as a “spectacle,” marked as in bloom, and then “she fell to reflecting again.” That “fall into reflection” causes Tess to look down and a rose to prick her chin. William James distinguishes between three theories of the hypnotic state: 1) of Animal Magnetism, where direct passage of force from operator to subject causes the subject to become a controlled puppet; 2) of Neurosis, where predisposed patients fall into a peculiar pathological state caused by special physical agents; and 3) of Suggestion, to which we all fall prey of yielding to outward suggestion, affirming what we conceive, and acting in accordance with what we expect. 12 Tess enacts the hypnotic state of animal magnetism, ceding control of her will to the force of Alec and

the forces of nature. Obeying like one in a dream or a trance, Tess allows Alec to enter the boundary of her mouth, as falling into reflection causes the rose to prick her chin, as falling asleep makes it possible for Prince to be stabbed and Tess to be raped. All of these moments of falling away from conscious attention may be read as the openings that make possible the trauma that pursues Tess so relentlessly. Her abandonment of conscious attention makes the boundary between herself and the world porous and undefended. And the world in Tess seeks to penetrate boundaries—most of all through sex, birth, and death—life’s great “breakthrough” moments.

To escape when there is no escape—Tess shifts her attention away from what or who is before her toward her inward self. She forfeits conscious attention to her body—“that which you don’t seem to want at all”—to continue to have her mind, to travel away from the scene of wounding and loss so that even when her body is trapped, like a caged bird, Tess can still call herself “Tess.” Losing Angel for a second time, after each has suffered so much, the retraumatization of her greatest loss, switches Tess not to the “off” position of sleep, but to the “on” position of Lady Macbeth. Her “unspeakable despair” finds its way to speech, as a soliloquy, as a dirge: “O you have torn my life all to pieces . . . made me a victim, a caged bird . . . My own true husband will never, never—O God—I can’t bear this!—I cannot!” (381). What she cannot bear to behold or contain—Hardy’s great tragic idiom of the “too late” demands enactment, demands that her body act. In a hypnoid reversal trance of animal magnetism, Tess turns on her “master”: Tess must annihilate or be annihilated.

5. “A SPLENDID STAR”

As natural and ineluctable as it is for Hardy to write and his characters to experience being embodied in the world, Hardy’s characters also long to travel from embodiment to the immaterial, to a place of disembodied or inner-embodied experience—what Hardy calls “the power of viewing life here from its inner side” (168). For a moment, Hardy makes possible Angel’s view of life from the inner side when he sees inside Tess’s mouth:

She was yawning, and he saw the red interior of her mouth as if it had been a snake’s . . . her face was flushed with sleep, and her eyelids hung heavy over their pupils. The brimfulness of her nature breathed from her.

13. On the idea of “the tragedy of the too late,” see Franco Moretti’s essay “Kindergarten,” in Signs Taken for Wonder.
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)

Tess’s yawn opens the way to viewing her from the inside out, the cavity of the mouth and the tongue. But more than that, her very nature is breathed out into the world. Tess’s “spiritual beauty bespeaks itself flesh” and “sex takes the outside place.” What are hidden—Tess’s nature, spirit, sexuality—reveal themselves for a moment through the opening of her mouth. Tess breathes her immaterial self out through a yawn, and Angel views Tess from her inner side.

Hardy presents Tess’s mouth as a portal through which one can view “a woman’s soul” AND as a presence of “nothing ethereal,” the culmination of the real, through which one can see in reflection the embodiment of one’s own self. For Alec, Hardy writes no moment of viewing Tess from the inner side, her soul breathed out before him. For Angel there are both views. What Angel must continue to work through if he and Tess are to have any chance of having each other is what both views mean. About Tess, Hardy writes, “Beauty to her, as to all who have felt, lay not in the thing, but in what the thing symbolized” (297). If Angel is one who feels, he must go deeper than the view of Tess as a thing of beauty: he must move from her beauty to its inner side to view what her beauty “symbolized.” What Angel must attempt, therefore, is an escape from the “shade of his own limitations”: an escape that requires he be in the company of one with a more expansive, forward-viewing mind, a “cosmopolitan mind” (341). The cosmopolitan mind “viewed the matter [of Tess, her past, and Angel] in quite a different light from Angel; that what Tess had been was of no importance beside what she would be” (emphasis mine, 341). “Beauty or ugliness of character,” Angel comes to see, is not just determined by past “achievements,” but also by “aims,” “impulses,” and “things willed” (340)—by the nature of future-directed feelings. Angel’s heart, a prisoner of history, metamorphoses from harshness to tenderness when he views Tess from the inner side of “what she would be.” He can now call her by the right name: “‘I did not think rightly of you—I did not see you as you were! . . . I do now, dearest Tessy, mine’” (378). “Tenderness was absolutely dominant in Clare at last” (385). Angel has made his own escape from the inescapable “what was” to the freedom of “what will be” by viewing Tess forward from the inner side of tenderness.
Why does Beauty sleep? Tess sleeps and daydreams her way to and sometimes through the most oppressive moments of her life—as if she can stop or at least forestall their occurrence through her mind’s escape. “All is trouble outside there; inside here content,” Tess tells Angel (390). Now Angel, too, can lie down “inside here” with Beauty. The “O” of Tess’s open lips—the portal of her sleeping mouth “like a half-opened flower”—parts toward Angel’s tender sleeping cheek. Now they can fall into a shared sleep together of five days and nights “wrapped in profound slumber” under “stars in serene dissociation from the two wisps of life.”

“Which do we live on—a splendid one or a blighted one?” Abraham asks his sister Tess to judge the universe they inhabit. “A blighted one,” Tess responds. If in the book of Genesis, Abraham’s son Isaac is not sacrificed by the hand of his father, in the book of Tess—a narrative universe of the blighted star—Prince is sacrificed by Tess’s sleeping body and Tess is sacrificed when her body sleeps. But for a little while, when wrapped in profound slumber with her Angel, or traveling to her half-world of dreams away from the beautiful body which she does not seem to want at all, Tess finds her way to a splendid star.