

Music in Hardy's Novel *Far from the Madding Crowd* and Its Latest Film Adaptation by Thomas Vinterberg

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Abstract: This article discusses the use of musical elements in Thomas Hardy's novel *Far from the Madding Crowd* and its 2015 Thomas Vinterberg adaptation of the same title. First of all, the author discusses the use of music in the novel, both in its linguistic composition and actual music playing. The idea is to present not only Hardy's knowledge of and deep sensitivity towards various kinds of music, but also to show the complexity and symbolism of music in the novel. The second part of this article is devoted to an analysis of the musical elements in the latest film adaptation. Here, the author's main goal is to present the choice of music and to prove by comparison with the novel that the filmmakers recognised the richness and potential of the music within Hardy's work and applied that musical knowledge in the film without impoverishing its symbolic value.

Key words: music, film adaptation, Thomas Hardy, Thomas Vinterberg, *Far from the Madding Crowd*

Music was always an inseparable part of Thomas Hardy's life. From early childhood until his later years he was not only an ardent listener but also a keen performer of music. Hardy grew up in a family of skilled musicians who, although amateurs, were well remembered in the musical history of their neighbourhood. His inborn passion for music and the family tradition of music playing found its reflection in Hardy's poems, short stories and novels. *Far from the Madding Crowd*, the first of Hardy's renowned literary achievements, owes much of its success to the skilful use of musical elements, ably entwined in the plot; it is music that helps create the pastoral mood of the novel which so appealed to the 19th century readers.

21st century viewers have had the opportunity not only to familiarise themselves with Hardy's novel but also to compare it to its on-screen equivalents.

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Far from the Madding Crowd has been filmed three times so far.¹ The foremost goal of the latest 2015 adaptation, as stated by its director Thomas Vinterberg, was to bring back and maintain the atmosphere of 19th century Wessex. The indisputable box-office success of Thomas Vinterberg's adaptation proves that the British still fancy pastoral stories praising the beauty of rural England: its landscape and rhythm of nature according to which life turned its circles again and again. To achieve this goal, music was of help. Therefore, this article aims at analysing the musical elements such as songs, dances and the sounds of nature found in Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* and Thomas Vinterberg's latest film adaptation by the same title.

In the novel Hardy draws heavily on his own musical experience. Many of the scenes with characters singing and dancing are based on real events in which the future author participated with his father. However, Hardy's penchant for music was most likely inherited from his grandfather Thomas Hardy I, an irreplaceable amateur musician who played congregational songs for the parish of Stinsford. The Hardys also eagerly played at all house parties and social gatherings where dancing was involved, priding themselves on playing string instruments like the cello, the violin and the viola. Yet they never accepted anything for their performances. In *The Life of Thomas Hardy* (p. 24), the author recalls a time from his early childhood when he was rebuked by his mother Jemima for accepting five pennies for his violin performance. He later explains that the temptation to buy *The Boys Own Book*, mostly about games, outweighed obedience to his mother. The book remained in Hardy's library until the end of his life.

However, Hardy's first memories of music playing were connected with his father playing all sorts of melodies at home. When young Thomas turned four, he was taught to play the accordion; and by the time he was five, he could also play tunes from his father and grandfather's tune books as well as some of his mother's ballads. Jemima was an inexhaustible source of folk songs and ballads, which she could retrieve from memory whenever she wanted to sing to her children. When Thomas reached his teens he became a fluent fiddler (Grew 1940, 140) and could also tune a piano. After some time later he admitted that once in a while he regretted not pursuing a career of an organist.

¹ The first film adaptation of *Far from the Madding Crowd* appeared in 1916 gaining rather limited appreciation from the critics. Half a century later, in 1967 the director John Schlesinger filmed the novel once more. This time the adaptation proved successful.

Moreover, Hardy could pride himself on having an almost prodigious memory for old tunes. Once he had heard a melody, he could store it in his mind for a long time and play it flawlessly after many years. Enraptured as a young boy by various tunes, he later became a collector of countless old Dorset folk songs, ballads, jigs and airs² and made every effort to preserve the traditional "orally transmitted ditties of centuries" (F. Hardy 2007, 20).

Also, during his apprenticeship in London Hardy never neglected his musical interest. On the contrary, he made the most of the opportunities offered by the capital. He attended the opera at Covent Garden to hear the famous Romantic Italian operas of Rossini, Donizetti, Meyerbeer, Bellini and his favourite Verdi. Nevertheless, it was for hymns that Hardy had a special appreciation and fondness. Even at the advanced age of 81, he would attend church only to hear a particular hymn (Seymour 2009, 224).

Rich personal experience had to find its reflection in Hardy's literary output. Next to *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *Far from the Madding Crowd* is one of Hardy's most musically-packed novels. According to Elna Sherman, Hardy's susceptibility to music, his unique sense of the rhythm of life, derive not only from his fondness for sounds: those in nature, human voices and instruments, but also from their meaning, what they symbolise and the impact they have on people's everyday lives (Sherman 1940, 434).

First and foremost, however, Hardy's genuine love of nature and his susceptibility towards music helped him create the "melodious" world of Wessex, where the music of the Earth fuses and mingles with human voices, amplifying the emotional and sensory experience (Seymour 2009, 225). Sound-filled Wessex possesses inherent charm; it becomes a distant world that allures the reader with its enduring beauty. Music is one of the elemental features in building such an impression as well as in introducing the pastoral atmosphere of the novel. Although in the mind of some experts³ *Far from the Madding*

² The archives of the Dorset County Museum in Dorchester store the tune books of Hardy's grandfather and father, each of them packed with more than three hundred tunes. In the museum it is also possible to see Hardy's violin standing next to his father's in the corner of the study which has been completely reconstructed from Hardy's study at Max Gate.

³ In the article *Far From the Madding Crowd as modified pastoral*, Michael Squires claims that Thomas Hardy's novel is a pastoral tale in two respects. First of all, Hardy uses a traditional pastoral theme – the shepherd's life – and depicts rural life stressing its beauty rather than its coarseness. On the other hand, however, the novel lacks the usual artificiality common to pastoral tales. Instead, its opening part contains many aspects of harshness of rural life in which animals die and shepherds have to persevere through many hardships of fate; numerous misfortunes happen to other characters as well, especially in the second half of the novel.

Crowd breaks with the stereotype of what a pastoral tale is in its basic sense, the novel is nostalgic enough to be warmly received by its 19th century audience. Half of the novel's success lies in Hardy's ability to constantly stimulate readers' imagination by describing the melody of the earth. The natural sounds emphasise the beauty of the rural countryside. Hardy's description of natural phenomena like the sound of the wind, sometimes "rattling", "wheezy" or "snarling", and the sounds of Wessex fauna: the "crack-voiced" sound of pheasants (*FFMC*, 190) or the "course-throated chatter of a sparrow" (*FFMC*, 373) deserve much appreciation. Hardy's Wessex breathes with the melody of ripples and larks, and "the low bleating of the flock mingles with both" (*FFMC*, 246). Hardy's description of the storm unleashed during Bathsheba and Troy's wedding reception is a fascinating example demonstrating not only the grandeur of nature but also the danger lurking in its unpredictability. The silence before "a disastrous rain" is broken by thunder, the growing intensity of which the poet of Wessex translates into: a "noisy peal", "rumbles" and "rattles", the "shout of a fiend", and "a stupefying blast, harsh and pitiless" (*FFMC* 336-37).

According to Eva Mary Grew, the use of natural sounds and the musical effect they have on the reader are Hardy's unique form of expression. There are passages in the novel where "the arts of poetry and music meet" (Grew 1940, 138). In one of the early chapters of the novel one may encounter the poetic description of Norcombe Hill, where the story of Gabriel Oak has its beginning:

The thin grasses, more or less coating the hill, were touched by the wind in breezes of differing powers, and almost of differing natures - one rubbing the blades heavily, another raking them piercingly, another brushing them like a soft broom. The instinctive act of human-kind was to stand and listen, and learn how the trees on the right and the trees on the left wailed and chanted to each other in the regular antiphonies of a cathedral choir; how hedges and other shapes to leeward them caught the note, lowering it to the tenderest sob; and how the hurrying gust then plunged into the south, to be heard no more. (*FFMC*, 167)

Hardy's descriptive form of poetic expression includes the frequent use of onomatopoeic words like: "snorting", "gurgling", "grumping", "pitapat"

or “whizzing” and music-related metaphors. The spectacular storm is compared to “a perfect dance of death” (*FFMC*, 336). In some other place when Troy demonstrates his artistry in using a sword in front of Bathsheba, his motions are compared to a “twanged harpspring” (*FFMC*, 290). Bathsheba’s words when she appears at the corn market sounded like: “a romance after sermons, (...) like a breeze among furnaces” (*FFMC*, 223). As the only woman at the market she puzzles and impresses the farmers. Her appearance introduces novelty into the world chiefly reserved for men.

The sounds of nature mix with the sounds of music playing. The fondness for music in the characters of *Far from the Madding Crowd* seems to be a distinctive feature of Hardy’s novel. The sounds of fiddles and violins, flutes, tambourines and even the piano fill the air. Some of the characters are defined by musical instruments. Bathsheba owns a piano, which she buys for herself after inheriting Weatherbury Farm; and although she never plays it, the instrument symbolises her status as a wealthy woman. Furthermore, Gabriel Oak, besides being a shepherd, is also a skilled flutist whose manner of playing is “nowhere to be found in nature”. The “Arcadian sweetness” of the flute, that quintessentially pastoral instrument, accompanies Oak when he loses his flock and in his times of joy when he finds work at Weatherbury Farm. In both cases people admire his playing “Jockey to the Fair”⁴. Oak’s skill in performing this “sparkling melody” is then confirmed by one of the guests of Warren Malthouse: “He can blow the flute very well – that a’can” (*FFMC*, 78). To the pleasure of Malthouse guests, Oak also plays a chorus part of the play “Dame Durden”⁵ – a joyous melody about an eponymous housewife.

Playing the flute proves not to be Oak’s ultimate musical talent. Towards the end of the novel the reader finds out that Oak decides to join the choir to sing the bass parts of church hymns. Although Hardy does not allow the reader to admire Gabriel’s vocal talents, he entwines verses of the hymn “Lead Kindly Light”⁶ Oak and Bathsheba overhear. The lyrics which follow:

⁴ The songs and melodies used by Hardy in the drama *The Dynasts*, the novels: *A Laodicean*, *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Woodlanders* and *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* and the short story “A Few Crusted Characters” were recorded in 2009 by The Mellstock Band, a musical group specialising in English folk music.

⁵ “Dame Durden” is a folk song which enjoyed popularity in the South of England. It was usually performed at harvest or other village festivals.

⁶ “Lead, Kindly Light” was composed in 1833 by an Anglican vicar named John Henry Newman before he decided to convert to Catholicism. Newman was travelling in the Mediterranean and fell

Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
 Lead Thou me on.
 I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears
 Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.
 (...)

Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile (*FFMC*, 435)

may have special poignancy for Bathsheba, especially in view of the tragic circumstances surrounding Troy's death. On hearing the hymn, she starts to cry "for she hardly knew what" wishing she was like "those children (...) unconcerned about the meaning of their words" (*FFMC*, 434). For Bathsheba and Oak the words of the hymn suggest that both of them should come to terms with their lives and learn to forgive, forget all their misfortunes, their mistakes and "the encircling gloom" that has befallen them and let "the kindly light" lead them to a more promising future.

The evocation of faith for the two main characters in this particular moment is also used by Hardy as an excuse to include pieces of church high-art music, which serve as a balance to the rich spectrum of folk songs the author includes.

However, Bathsheba's earlier performance during the shearing supper is the crowning moment of the pastoral in nature, one of *Far from the Maddening Crowd's* scenes. The sense of togetherness after the work's done predisposes people to be more emotional. Therefore, Jon Coggan, a Weatherbury Farm worker, encouraged by the mood of the moment intones a sentimental song entitled "I've lost my lover and I care not". Soon he is followed by Joseph Poorgrass, who performs another love song - "I sowed the seeds of love". The central performance, however, is Bathsheba and Boldwood singing together. The "dulcet piping of Gabriel's flute" accompanies their duet of the ballad entitled "The Banks of Allan Water," which follows:

For his bride a soldier sought her,
 And a winning tongue had he:
 On the banks of Allan Water
 None was gay as she! (*FFMC*, 270)

The events that ensued ensured that not only the ballad's verses but also the lyrics of the previous two songs were remembered for years by all

sick. The song was composed during his three-week recovery period and turned into a hymn in 1845. The poignant lyrics talk about the author's loneliness and longing for his beloved county (Christiansen, 2016).

the people gathered at the feast. The first two tunes performed by Coggan and Poorgrass become comedic as the exaggerated seriousness of the performers and the withheld laughter of the audience contradict the songs' emotional tone.

Yet, in line with the amusement caused, there also comes an affinity between the texts of the songs and the fate of the main characters. The ballads herald the future of Troy, with whom Bathsheba becomes entangled that very night, and the futures of Oak and Boldwood. The verses of Coggan's song correspond clearly with the events in Sergeant Troy's life:

I've lost my love, and I care not,
 I've lost my love, and I care not;
 I shall soon have another
 That's better than t'other;
 I've lost my love, and I care not. (*FFMC*, 268)

The lyrics refer directly to Troy's relationship with two women: the first, his "lost (...) love" – Fanny Robin, and the other – Bathsheba Everdene. The realisation that he made a mistake in abandoning Fanny comes too late for Troy. His marriage to Bathsheba buries Gabriel's hopes for his happiness with the young lady. However, the verses of the ballad relate to the feelings of two other suitors for Miss Everdene's hand: Oak and Boldwood. In this sense Bathsheba is also Oak's love.

I sow'-ed th'-e
 I sow'-ed
 I sow'-ed th'-e seeds' of' love',
 I-it was' all' i'-in the'-e' spring',
 I-in A'-pril, Ma'-ay, a'-nd sun'-ny June',
 When sma'-ll b'-irds they' do' sing. (*FFMC*, 268)

The lyrics refer to Gabriel's hopes and expectations of winning the affection of the owner of Weatherbury.

However, the final two stanzas of Poorgrass's ballad introduce some confusion into the correlation between the song's meaning and the novel's characters the verses refer to. This is due to the fact that the symbolism of the willow tree varies from author to author. In mythology the willow is associated with life, power and the regenerative forces of nature. Contrary to that, in Shakespeare, the tree symbolises impermanence. Even in the Bible,

the symbolism of the willow varies. Sometimes it is associated with loss, other times it symbolises revival.⁷

Oh, the wi'-il-lo'-ow tree' will' twist',
And the wil'-low tre'-ee wi'-ll twine' (*FFMC*, 269)

Despite his sincere affection towards Bathsheba, Oak is forced to wait through all the 'twists' and 'twines' of fate to finally be able to gather the harvest of love that has grown out of the 'seeds' he once 'sowed'. Boldwood's advances towards Bathsheba end tragically. In a fit of fury, despair, jealousy and disappointment over Bathsheba's unreciprocated love, he kills Troy. His affection towards her symbolises loss; he himself resembles a willow tree that grows in cemeteries and its slanted shape is reminiscent of a person grieving.

In contrast to the shearing supper, Troy's joint celebrations of the harvest feast and wedding reception taking place at the same time, differ considerably as far as the mood of the scene is concerned. The harvest feast coincides with the oncoming storm. The "sinister aspect" of the night, the silence and stillness of the heated air which precede booms of thunders and flashes of lightning parallel the chaos within the walls of the barn. The acoustic impression of the six peals of thunder described in the novel with the added support of visual effects such as "like an ink stroke on burnished tin" suggests the metaphor of hellish powers and "the perfect dance of death" (*FFMC*, 336). When Oak enters the building:

the sound of violins and tambourine, and the regular jiggling of many feet, grew more distinct. (...) Here sat three fiddlers, and beside them stood a frantic man with hair on end, perspiration streaming down his cheeks, and a tambourine quivering in his hands. (*FFMC*, 329)

⁷ In mythology, the Greek goddess of witchcraft Hecate used willows for wands, and Orpheus used willow wood as a talisman against evil as he travelled to the underworld. Therefore, the willow symbolises not only protection but also sound, as the harp given to Orpheus by Apollo was originally of willow wood. In the Bible, willow trees are mentioned in Psalm 137, in which the Jews being in Babylonian captivity weep while remembering their homeland: "There on the willow trees, we hung up our harps." Here, the willow tree symbolises loss. In another Biblical passage (Ezekiel 17:5), however, the willow stands for revival as the prophet plants the fruitful seed and "sets it like a willow tree". Finally, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Ophelia dies after she falls out of a willow tree and drowns in a brook. In Shakespeare, willows symbolise women deserted by their lovers.

Troy's military discipline gives place to excessive and limitless drunkenness and ignorance of the coming storm. According to the fiddler, the intoned song – "The Soldier's Joy"⁸, possesses "an additional charm, in being so admirably adapted to the tambourine aforesaid – no mean instrument in the hands of a performer who understands the proper convulsions, spasms, St. Vitus's dances, and fearful frenzies" (*FFMC*, 329).

The richness of Thomas Hardy's musical experience must have been taken into account by the director of the latest 2015 film adaptation of *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Contrary to the common belief that film music is not meant to be heard, in its basic sense music reinforces the emotional and psychological content of a film. This evocation of certain emotions like fear, love, and amusement among others indicates the way in which a film should be perceived. Most importantly, however, music serves to create the so called "colour" of a production. The "colour", so immensely important in the case of heritage productions, is associative and easily recognisable to various audience types. For example, flute or oboe playing is immediately associated with a pastoral mood (Prendergast 1992, 214). Therefore, film music is there to provide a convincing atmosphere of time and place as well as to underline the psychology of each character. It becomes a transcript of the unspoken thoughts of characters and the unseen overtone of certain situations.

Thomas Vinterberg's adaptation of Hardy's novel is particularly appealing to the senses. Both he and the music composer of the film soundtrack, Craig Armstrong,⁹ were aware of the role of music in constructing the atmosphere of the film. The appreciative reviews of Armstrong's music from the critics were particularly directed towards the delicacy of the sound and his understanding of the epoch. The soundtrack is immersed in English folk music tradition as well as the classical music of the era.¹⁰

Generally speaking, the soundtrack is based on and dominated by the exquisite solo violin, which integrates the whole soundtrack and becomes

⁸ "Soldier's Joy" is a catchy melody destined to be played on the violin. It can be classified as a reel or a country dance. The melody originates in old Irish and Scottish fiddle playing tradition. It was also used by Robert Burns for his song "The Jolly Beggars". Most frequently however, the text of the songs refers to Civil War soldiers, who were known to overuse alcohol and morphine as painkillers.

⁹ Craig Armstrong (1959) is a Scottish composer, a graduate of The Royal Academy of Music and the author of soundtracks for such blockbusters as *Romeo + Juliet*, *Moulin Rouge*, *Ray*, *Elisabeth: The Golden Age* and *The Great Gatsby*. Armstrong has also won a BAFTA Award, Golden Globe Award and Grammy Award for his achievements in film music.

¹⁰ <http://moviemusicuk.us/2015/04/25/far-from-the-madding-crowd-craig-armstrong/>

its soul. The violin is used to add a pastoral touch to the film as well. For instance, Gabriel Oak's country life in all its simplicity is conveyed through some orchestral passages where the romantic violin based motif mixes with slightly more rhythmical and dashing tunes that were probably inspired by traditional Irish fiddle playing.¹¹ The sheep watering scene illustrates this point well. The voices and laughter of the farm workers, the splashing of water, the bleating of sheep blends with the lively orchestral music join together in a cheerful melody. The music used in the scene of Oak's decision to depart from Weatherbury farm is similar in tone, but somewhat slower-paced.

Time and again, however, the composer changes the mood of the film from pastoral to more romantic by mixing the violin with delicate piano and flute cords. One of the most impressive scenes proving this point is Bathsheba's meeting with Troy in the woods. The piece entitled "Hollow in the Ferns" is a poignant violin-reliant piece of music, the tempo of which seems to be adjusted to the heroine's emotional state. Evocative of Bathsheba's heart beating and her insecurity about Troy, the music suddenly stops to be resumed in a slower tempo towards the climax of the scene, the crowning moment of which is the pair kissing.

The efforts to romanticise the film though music met with criticism from some experts. Armstrong's attempt to highlight the romantic thread of the plot was considered an easy way to attract a less demanding audience. What is undoubtedly achieved, however, is a sensual impression. The effect is reinforced by the sounds of nature. The awareness of Hardy's poetic artistry in describing Wessex induced the filmmakers to use pictures and sounds which would, in a way, replace Hardy's descriptions of Wessex. Therefore, not only does the adaptation abound with the sounds of nature always heard in the background of the ongoing events, but there are also short scenes exposing nothing more than the melody of Wessex. One of the examples of this artistic measure is the picture preceding the sheep watering scene; it suggestively brings back the idyllic image of rural England where the chirruping of birds as well as the buzzing of crickets is heard over a meadow of blooming flowers, and a lively stream of crystal clear water hums quietly while ears of wheat sway from side to side.

It seems, however, that the most frequently repeated sound of nature is that of the wind. Either mixed with the sounds of the sea or present in the rustling

¹¹ <http://moviemusicuk.us/2015/04/25/far-from-the-madding-crowd-craig-armstrong/>

of trees, the wind is the acoustic element that brings change into the lives of the characters, an example being the sinister growling of the sea at night, which seems to devour Gabriel's flock when the sheep fall from the cliff one after another. Also, the wind blowing right into Oak's face obviously prophesies difficulties. In the consecutive scene, the wind from the sea foretells the improvement of Bathsheba's status. She receives a letter informing her of the inheritance of Weatherbury Farm. While Oak is forced to start from scratch, she becomes an owner of a flourishing property. Later, however, the quiet mesmerising whisper of fern leaves entices Bathsheba to walk into the woods to be caught by Sergeant Troy. In a different place in the novel when, following Troy's advice, Fanny Robin is heading towards Budmouth shelter, the wind blowing from the side seems to push her off the road she decided to follow. Therefore, all these examples show that the wind, apart from its acoustic value, also possesses symbolic power of giving things to the characters and depriving the protagonists of them. To some it brings fortune, to others misfortune; but, it is unpredictable in its choices.

Armstrong's soundtrack is also filled with actual music playing, dancing and singing. The use of original songs and dances is one of the ways that musical colour can be introduced into a film. Although a composer may encounter potential problems with integrating these pieces into his original soundtrack, he usually decides to arrange them anew so that they fit the rest of the music picture (Prendergast 1992, 214).

In addition to Armstrong's score, the *Far from the Madding Crowd* soundtrack also includes some traditional hymns performed by The Dorset Singers and the Yeovil Chamber Choir and several lively dances and reels. In contrast to the novel, parts of a church hymn appear at a different moment in the film. "O come, o come Emmanuel" is the only hymn used in the film; it appears twice. Firstly, it is the background to Bathsheba and Liddy's quiet conversation, which takes place during a church service, about marriage and Boldwood as a perfect candidate for a husband. It is used again towards the end of the film in the scene preceding Boldwood's Christmas party, where Bathsheba realises she is obliged to give Boldwood her final decision concerning her marriage to the farmer. Therefore, the words of the hymn express her wish and prayer for the situation to be resolved:

O come, o come Emmanuel,
To free your captive Israel.

In the ensuing scene, the reader sees that her prayers are answered. Troy's death at the hands of Boldwood frees Bathsheba from the two relationships she entangled herself in. Boldwood's Christmas party in the film is a rich scene in terms of music. Unlike in the novel, where the reader is forced to imagine what the party looks based on Boldwood's meticulous preparations and some snippets of dancing and music playing which he sees and hears from behind the door, in the movie the viewer is at the centre of the party and watches people dancing to jolly violin tunes. It is also the moment when an element of romance is added as the viewer sees Bathsheba and Oak dancing together. Their dancing is slow and rather stiff, showing the tension between them and the emotion they share.

Contrary to the novel, however, Oak's musical abilities are reduced. Gabriel does not play the flute. As a result, the dynamics of the sheering supper scene differ from those in the book. In the film, Oak becomes an observer of Bathsheba and Boldwood's duet. Instead of the ballad "The Banks of Allan Water", Armstrong decided to use the song "Let No Man Steal Your Thyme"¹² – a traditional English and Irish tune that cautions young girls to guard their chastity:

Come all you fair and tender maids
That flourish in your prime.
Beware, beware keep your garden fair.
Let no man steal your thyme;
Let no man steal your thyme.

For when your thyme is past and gone,
He'll care no more for you,
And every place where your thyme was waste
Will all spread o're with rue,
Will all spread o're with rue. (...)

The gardener's son was standing by;
Three flowers he gave to me
The pink, the blue, and the violet, too,
And the red, red rosy tree,
The red, red, rosy tree.

¹² <http://www.metrolyrics.com/let-no-man-steal-your-thyme-lyrics-craig-armstrong.html>

Apart from the symbolism of herbs, the lyrics of the aforesaid ballad do not carry hidden meanings; instead, they straightforwardly refer to the main heroine. She becomes the focus of attention as the independent and self-aware young woman. In the song, thyme is being used as a euphemism for a girl's purity and her hopes for the future. The loss of virginity equals the lost chance at future happiness. Therefore, rue in the ballad relates to sorrow or repentance. As the film adaptation is directed toward a wide audience and the film falls into the category of mainstream cinema, the message of the song understood in this particular context has to be clear and transparent. Therefore, the ballads used in the film clarify the meaning of this particular context.

Unlike in the above-mentioned scene, where the simplification of the choice of music was unnecessary, the songs in Troy's harvest scene are rather meaningful. In the novel and the film alike, two simultaneous acts of violence are taking place: the oncoming storm and Troy's incipient drunkenness among chaotically dancing people; the tempo of the dancing reflects the increasing violence of the coming storm. The sequence of Troy's rowdy behaviour is interrupted by short scenes of Gabriel watching the sky before the oncoming storm. In the barn, one of the men starts to sing a lively but crude song entitled "The Knife In the Window"/ "Pretty Polly", whose verses tell the story of the seduction of a young girl, who later gives birth to a child:

Pretty Polly, pretty Polly, it's I've come a woin'
 Pretty Polly, pretty Polly, it's I've come a woin'
 She says, "Creep up through the window then and let's get doin'
 And lay your leg over me, over me, do.
 (...)
 Oh, my britches is tight and I cannot undo 'em,
 My britches is tight and I cannot undo 'em."
 There's a knife on the window sill, love, take it to 'em,
 And lay your leg over me, over me, do.

As the audience discovers in one of the following scenes, the lyrics may refer directly to Fanny Robin seduced by Troy. As a balance to Oak's limited musical skills in the film, the filmmakers decide to include samples of Troy's singing abilities when he joins the crowd of drunk men singing the lewd "Pretty Polly" song. The filmmakers decided to show Troy's carelessness towards his newly acquired duties as a farm owner.

All things considered, the musical elements in the novel comprise a coherent entity, extremely bountiful in meaning. What the filmmakers try

to achieve is to show at least a fraction of the enormous talent Hardy evinced with the publication of *Far from the Madding Crowd*. The musical elements in the novel are used not only to manifest the beauty of the English countryside but also to demonstrate its richness. Various country dances and songs are perpetuated on the pages of the novel as precious relics of English folklore. Furthermore, the songs and melodies used in the context of the ongoing events cast a new, deeper light on the lives of the characters. The language of those songs reveals a simple truth about human life in general. It proves that a sort of repetitiveness is inscribed in human fate. Whatever happens to the particular characters has happened before to somebody else. What is left is the emotion that music helps to recall.

The filmmakers of the latest adaptation must have been aware of the complexity of Hardy's novel. However, they wanted to produce a film that would be understandable to as wide an audience as possible, also embracing those who have never read Hardy. Therefore, as music is one of the most important components of a film, they had to decide on some simplifications as far as the choice of music was concerned. Sometimes they opted to use different pieces of music, the universality of which is understandable to a wide audience. It seems that the musical elements in Vinterberg's adaptation are as important as they are in Hardy's novel. The filmmakers fully recognise the diversity of the music used by Hardy and make a successful attempt to use that knowledge in the film. What they have achieved is a modern version, a fresh look at the 19th century novel, which seems to be a nod towards Hardy in recognition of his unusual susceptibility to music and nature. What the audience receives is a coherent picture, the foreground of which comprises visual and auditory viewing pleasure.

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