The sounds and silences of time in Thomas Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874): novel and film

Costa de Beauregard Raphaëlle

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Raphaëlle Costa de Beauregard

Raphaëlle COSTA DE BEAUREGARD *est Professeur Emérite, Université de Toulouse II, Fellow de Clare Hall (Cambridge), fondatrice en 1993 de la SERCIA (Société d'Etudes et de Recherche sur le Cinéma anglophone). Elle a dirigé en 2009 Cinéma et Couleur – Film and Colour (Paris : Michel Houdiard), et publié plusieurs articles sur la couleur au cinéma. Recherche en cours : ouvrage sur le temps au cinéma.*

Dès le premier chapitre du roman, la description détaillée de montres diverses prend en charge le portrait des personnages. Mais le temps est aussi un ressort dramatique dans le roman, tout comme dans le film : agent silencieux et universel, il est rendu visible par les choix de paysages empruntés à des peintres du dix-septième siècle ainsi qu'à ceux de l'école préraphaélite. Il serait mal venu de se contenter comme David Lodge de dire que Hardy est un cinéaste avant l'heure, car les procédés qu'il utilise se trouvent dans la peinture, en ce qui concerne les échelles de plan, et dans le roman du dix-huitième siècle, pour ce qui est du montage, et non d'un cinéma dont les techniques ne se sont affirmées comme telles que dans la deuxième décennie du vingtième siècle. La fonction de Gabriel dans l'adaptation filmique par Renton étudiée dans cet article est la prise en charge par un regard omniscient des fonctions du narrateur et de l'ange gardien. Le film s'adresse toutefois à un public de 1998 et donne de ce fait au rôle de Fanny la part qui lui revient alors que le roman se contente de l'esquisser.

Hardy's early novel *Far From the Madding Crowd* displays a remarkable wealth of metaphors of time addressing our imagination by the mise-en-scène of watches: however these prove to be mostly un-cinematographic and have been transposed into sounds and silences in the 1998 TV production directed by Nicholas Renton (There are two adaptations of the novel for the screen: John Schlesinger's 1967 feature film, and Nicholas Renton's 1998 TV production. Only this film will be referred to here). This paper will mostly concentrate on the transpositions which address the topic of the conference, i.e. silence in Thomas Hardy's fiction and poetry.

From the opening chapter of the novel, detailed descriptions of various watches contribute to the portrait of the main characters. Instead of his grotesquely unreliable watch, which is described at length, Oak relies upon an accurate measuring of space, mainly the movement of the planets at night, which he reads as he would a silent cosmic clock. On the contrary, Bathsheba uses her watch as a chronometer to measure Oak's sheep shearing performance, which might stand for a grotesque parody of the automatization of the worker in factories. In the film this is transposed into the scrutinizing eye of the mistress of the farm as she overlooks the farm hands shearing her sheep, and a condescending and humiliating compliment to Oak. As for Troy, his watch characterizes him in the novel as an inveterate womanizer.

Philomena McDonagh's screenplay for Renton's 1998 TV adaptation only retains this use of a watch: it becomes an alluring jewel, and is only very slightly related to time. Besides, the film adds a scene to the novel in which the watch is used in a moment of intimacy, as Troy shows Bathsheba, now his wife, its hidden spring and its motto: "*Cedit amor rebus*—'Love yields to circumstance'" (138). The

addition of this morning bed scene between husband and wife displaces the first significance of the golden watch from a love token to a clue about Troy's noble descent, an heirloom which, to him, means he is a bastard, a sort of errant knight: this feature makes him a victim of destiny rather than an ambitious fortune-hunter. It gives him a romantic aura in this added sequence which addresses a youthful TV audience, while the novel casts him more in the role of a rake. Later, Troy's watch is used in the novel and the film to betray his attachment to Fanny by the lock of fair hair he has enclosed with the love motto.

But what the film omits is the novel's simile of the clock automaton in the church: the quarter-jack is an indirect portrait of Troy's rigid pride as he marches in and out of the church (91-92). The grotesque automatic sound of the quarter-jack, which is mimed in the text by onomatopoeia, underscores Troy's inability to adapt to reality, and human weakness. In the film, his cruel dismissal of poor Fanny is visualised by grotesque ornaments on the church pillars and the merciless closing of the church's iron gate upon her.

But time is also a silent dramatic agent in the novel which uses the eloquence of various pictorial styles to situate the time of action in a distant past. For instance one reads about "Hardy's interest in and use of painting – both painterly techniques and direct references to specific painters or paintings embedded in the narration" (Webster, 20).

Interestingly, the film uses a similarly silent visual eloquence when the camerawork inserts pictorial quotations to various effects, summed up as a means of creating a 'Hardyan feel': "these film versions generally present a safe, familiar version of Hardy's fiction accentuating the pastoral or striving for an authenticity which is validated by a sense of the painterly" (Webster, 21). This might indeed be appropriate in a discussion of Renton's version of *Far From the Madding Crowd*. Frontal head and shoulders portraits of the main villagers and farm hands during the two scenes at the Malthouse are strikingly reminiscent of 17th c. Dutch popular portraits of similar types, as in Franz Hals. Interior lighting for a scene with Bathsheba and her maids Maryann and Liddy dusting and scrubbing is unquestionably borrowed from 17th c. Vermeer interior scenes: the source of light is to the left and made to appear as if it were natural light on a cloudy day from a 'Wessex' window; the clothes worn by the women, their white bonnets and aprons, connote a by-gone time which reminds us that this is a period film. Actually, the time of action in the novel is situated in a distant past for the Victorian readers of the 1870s; the film therefore cannot depict Victorian women but must situate the action in some remote period more or less out of time, as if being a part of the fictive world of Wessex implied unchanging customs extending over centuries. This characteristic of the world of the 'Wessex novel' is equally connoted by quotations from paintings in the TV production. Farmer Oak's clothes connote customs in a region of England which has not yet been touched by the industrial revolution:

> He wore a low-crowned felt hat, spread out at the base by tight jamming upon the head for security in high winds, a coat like Dr. Johnson's; his lower extremities being encased in ordinary leather leggings and boots emphatically large, affording to each foot a roomy apartment so constructed that any wearer might stand in a river all day long and know nothing of damp […]. (7)

Moreover, to add to such a Brueghel like appearance which the film faithfully transcribes in the first introduction of the character, the text uses the Pre-Raphaelites' own imaginary reconstruction of the Tudor period in Bathsheba Everdene's own first appearance:

> Oak saw […] an ornamental spring waggon, painted yellow and gaily marked, drawn by two horses […] the girl on the summit of the load sat motionless, surrounded by tables and chairs with their legs upwards, backed by an oak settle, and ornamented in front by pots of geraniums, myrtles, and cactuses, together with a caged canary […] there was also a cat […] the sun lighted up to a scarlet glow the crimson jacket she wore, and painted a soft lustre upon her bright face and dark hair. The myrtles, geraniums, and cactuses packed around her were fresh and green. (9)

The details of the scene suggest a Pre-Raphaelite bucolic scene like William Maw Egely's *The Talking Oak* (1857) or William Holman Hunt's *Strayed Sheep (Our English Coasts)* (1852) (Wood, 67, 81): primary colours, bright yellow, red and vivid green, and other iconic emblems of her nature such as the plants which are twice signalled as belonging to her windows all suggest a John Everett Millais frontal portrait, a painterly reference which is underscored by "sat motionless" (Wood, 2). The emblematic "caged canary" is given the symbolic significance of caged birds in Victorian portraits of women, with a possibly grotesque deconstruction of the motif by the addition of "a cat".

The film carefully expatiates on this double time reference, both a distant past symbolized by a Tudor-like architecture and the fact that this past is being revisited by the Pre-Raphaelites in the novel. The second scene which introduces Bathsheba astride on her horse is rendered in the film by the colours: white horse, black hair and green under-wood enhance her warm carnation, with the additional detail of her bare feet (not in the novel). She is heard singing a ballad and performs a gymnastics of self-satisfaction which recalls Waterhouse's *Ophelia* (on internet www.Google-Image), and conveniently introduces the genre of the nostalgia film as a superficial but widespread reading of the Wessex novel. The painterly references to portraits are silent but eloquent metaphors of times past.

As to the landscape, again painterly references have been used in the novel, such as, for example, the description of Fanny along the river bank in a snow landscape. We are given the overall impression of the landscape: "dreariness', "darkness" for the prospect, "sorrow" and these are perceptible by "impressible persons" (69). As in a sketch, a second brushwork is added, drawing the outline of the scene: "a public path, bordered on the left hand by a river, behind which rose a high wall". As Webster (24) notes, Hardy actually quotes a visual similar motif from Hobbema and Boldini:

> The method of Boldini, the painter of 'The Morning Walk' in the French Gallery two or three years ago (a young lady beside an ugly blank wall on an ugly highway) – of Hobbema, in his view of a road with formal lopped trees and flat tame scenery – is that of infusing emotion into the baldest external objects either by the presence of a human figure among them, or by mark of some human connection with them […] the beauty of association is entirely superior to the beauty of aspect. (*Life* 120, quoted by Webster 24)

The Claudian shepherd in the landscape garden of the 18th century is now indifferent to the beauty of the scenery, and the viewer alone can see a connection between human form and nature. While our emotion in front of the landscape is thus unmediated by an observer within the frame, the figure's presence appears oddly unreal. The painterly device is transposed into the literary text, in which no focalizer is introduced, and this instance of external focalisation is confirmed by the use of antonomasia to insert the figure in the scenery: "forms without features", (69) in which "a form moved by the brink of the river" (70); "the shape went slowly along", "the little shape", "the figure", and finally "'O, Frank—don't you know me?' said the spot. 'Your wife, Fanny Robin.'" (71). The literary transposition of the painterly effect has been analysed as:

> Often before our eyes, landscape moves from being the picture to becoming the frame for a figure […] the entrance of the character into a scene brings about disruption in the narrative, while it is often present in other ways as well, for example, in multiple and contradictory narrative voices, and in the polarisation of a voice and a vision. (Berger, 63)

The use of simultaneous and interrupted speech in the film refers to the modernist technique which is apparent in the text. While the dialogue is mostly accurate in Renton's film, apart from added scenes there remains the question of the adaptation from a text which is intensely visual, as has been seen, as well as auricular:

> suddenly an unexpected series of sounds began to be heard in this place up against the sky. They had the clearness which was to be found nowhere in the wind, and a sequence which was to be found nowhere in nature. They were the notes of Farmer Oak's flute. (12)

David Lodge presented Hardy as a "cinematic novelist" who "deliberately renounces some of the freedom of representation and report afforded by the verbal medium, who imagines and presents his materials in primarily visual terms, and whose visualisation correspond in some significant respect to the visual effects characteristic of film […] Hardy's fiction can be readily analysed in cinematic terms: long-shot, close-up, wide angle, telephoto, zoom" According to David Lodge's theory "it is difficult for film adaptation to do justice to Hardy's novels because effects that are unusual in written description are commonplace in film" (Lodge quoted by Wright).

However such a shortcut to an analysis of Hardy's narrative technique, if brilliant, is mostly confusing because anachronistic. Actually, the terms for cinematographic scales of shot which Lodge quotes to justify his intuition were unfortunately only created much later, once the various experiments had proved the stability of such figures. One cannot be content with saying Hardy's style is cinematic, because there was no cinema in 1874.

As for editing, it is now well established that Meliès among others was the discoverer of the stop-motion trick which enabled him to interrupt the shooting and change the set before starting the camera again. As to splicing two scenes alternatively, the earlier model is found in films such as robber-cop chases (see E. Porter's or early Griffith's shorts). In this respect one chapter of *Far From the Madding Crowd* is interesting, in which we are misled with Gabriel and Jan on a false track, literally speaking since they first follow sounds of a familiar horse's trot, then its stiff gallop by examining the tracks, and then a flashback to Bathsheba's own proceedings as she runs away (ch. 23). Even more interesting in that respect is the narrative structure of chapter 52 (274-281) which falls into seven subparts telling us of the simultaneous actions of separate plots: Lower Weatherbury Farm preparations, Bathsheba dressing, Boldwood dressing while talking to Oak, Troy in a tavern in Casterbridge, Bathsheba looking at herself in the mirror, Boldwood offering Oak a share in his stocks, Troy dressing up. The three characters then meet and the plots all converge in the following chapter: Boldwood's intention of making Bathsheba wear an engagement ring, Troy's plan of sneaking incognito into Boldwood's house, Bathsheba's hope to control Boldwood with a false promise, towards the fatal issue of Troy's murder (289). Such is indeed a literary structure which could not fail to be imitated by early cinema when showing simultaneous actions, as in Griffith's films, a technique which was later called parallel editing.

More remarkable is the use of the term 'bird's-eye view' for the high angle point of view enjoyed by Gabriel as he peers, or even peeps, into the hole of the ramshackle roof. This term which comes from topographical views in aerial perspective is transposed in a periphrasis later:

> The sheep-washing pool was a perfectly circular basin…To birds on the wing its glassy surface, reflecting the light sky, must have been visible for miles around as a glistening Cyclops' eye in a green face. (99)

As to other pictorial codes, such as the magic-lantern scene of Troy meeting Bathsheba, they are found in the film when they are not obtrusive: chiaroscuro has a long tradition in early cinema and the term was introduced by Cecil B. DeMille referring to David Belasco's use of the pictorial device in his Broadway productions in the 1910s.

The question is even further complicated by the difference between silent cinema and sound cinema, while as the quotes above show Hardy does not dissociate visual from aural effects, quite the contrary, and, in this, his art would be far more appropriately compared to the romantic opera which was in such fully fledged formal definition in his days. In the opera sound and visuals are combined, as the deeply upsetting example of the young shepherd's flute heard as the sun rises on the hero's ultimate minutes of life in Puccini's *Tosca* (1900) clearly demonstrate; in the novel, a similar effect is found as Bathsheba overhears a young boy in the morning air after the call of birds (232-3).

Besides the watch/clock imagery in the novel, a more fascinating representation of time remains to be examined, that which is introduced in by the cosmic imagery (ch. 2), what Hardy calls "abstract imaginings" (Webster 25):

> To persons standing alone on a hill during a clear midnight such as this, the roll of the world eastward is almost a palpable movement. The sensation may be caused by the panoramic glide of the stars past earthly objects […] the poetry of motion is a phrase much in use, and to enjoy the epic form of that gratification it is necessary to […] long and quietly watch your stately progress through the stars. (12)

The novel hints at what has been termed "the ironic contrast between man's aspirations and his performance, between his will and his compulsive emotions, between the illusions of his pride and the realities of his self-ignorance" (Drew, 144). It seems to me that what is happening here is the re-appropriation of the Renaissance definition of Time as Fortune, i.e. opportunity and the individual 'self-fashioning' and a redefining of the relation of the individual with time as unconscious, voiceless and viewless (Berger, 60).

In Renton's film, there being perforce no omniscient narrator, Gabriel's ubiquitous presence in the frame, mostly to one side, or even on the top of the frame – as in the cut from the awakening farmhands after a night's excessive drinking to Gabriel on top of the now thatched rick looking down on them much like a heavenly divinity – expresses the sense of a constant 'cosmic' 'poetry of motion'. Due to the editing and despite the time gaps and ellipses it involves, he has the function of the all-knowing, ever-present, character: he always knows more than other characters, due to the fact that we see them, Boldwood or Bathsheba mostly, entrusting him with a secret knowledge, and the film is careful to underscore this enlightened position by making us share it. Once Boldwood has asked him to identify the handwriting on Bathsheba's valentine card, he knows more than she does, which

enables him to scold and even humiliate her. Again, the knowledge he has of Fanny's intended marriage to Troy is recalled in an additional sequence in the screenplay by remarks that Troy does not act as if he were married, but having promised to keep Fanny's departure secret he remains silent.

His superior knowledge of the situation is also baffled by unexpected revelations such as Cainy's about Bathsheba in Bath with Troy and he is taken aback by Troy's triumphant appearance at Bathsheba's window in the film. He is not on the scene when Boldwood shoots Troy, and comes too late. And yet he erases the chalk handwriting of 'and child' on Fanny's coffin, thus recovering his role as omniscient protector.

The parallel between his role as a nearly omniscient character whose foreknowledge we share and his diegetic role as he moves from watching the sheep to overseeing the sheep-shearing, then the haymaking and finally the two Weatherbury farms, transforms his natural ability at observing nature's portents (storm sequence) into a far ranging symbolical significance. His relation to time, indicated by his reading the stars instead of his unreliable watch, thus pervades the other strata of the multi-layered narrative and makes him embody, by both his accurate reading of time and seasonal changes and his errors (shutting the slide of his hut, allowing an untrained dog to spend the night with his sheep, doubting Bathsheba's marriage to Troy) alike, the ambiguous relation of mankind to mute cosmic time and the 'poetry of movement'. He is contrasted with other characters whose utter inability to deal with time causes their tragedy: Fanny's mistakes, Bathsheba's and Boldwood's, or Troy's own inability to marry Fanny as he wishes. Ironically, in several scenes it is on the contrary Oak's lack of wakefulness which is emphasized, which indicates the partial unreliability of the character (Morgan, 30-57).

Unlike these doomed characters, actually, Oak entertains a double relation to time both in his submission to its law as constant change and movement, and in his capacity to watch for an opportunity to achieve his purpose. This adaptability allows him to be always on the move, and avoid the pitfalls of jealousy, retaliation and intentionality generally which mar the other characters reactions to circumstances. His lack of resentment echoes the views of time as an interior energy, called by Hardy 'The Immanent Will' (Berger, 63), which is neither good not evil, and is comparable to Newtonian physics of gravitation. As the narrative voice comments upon his being faced with the sheep's destruction, the dog's madness and his own inattention : "Oak was an intensely humane man: indeed, his humanity often tore in pieces any politic intentions of his which bordered on strategy, and carried him on as by gravitation" (ch. V, 33). That it is the terms 'humane' and 'humanity' which define his capacity to adapt to circumstances is particularly significant since this quality also defines him in the maltster's house when he is ritually accepted by the other workers whose life he must share. "Don't ye chaw quite close, shepherd, for I let the bacon fall in the road outsides as I was bringing it along, and may be 'tis rather gritty. There, 'tis clane dirt […]" (47). This oxymoron comes as a conclusion to a first ritual, that of sharing a collective mug, a scene which is duly emphasized in its TV screening. One reads a detailed description of the mug which introduces a conversation about time, in a key which is replete with mute pre-historical and archaeological connotations:

> the God-forgive-me, which was a two-handled tall mug standing in the ashes, cracked and charred with heat: it was rather furred with extraneous matter about the outside, especially in the crevices of the hands, the innermost curves of which may not have seen daylight for several years by reason of its encrustation thereon—formed of ashes accidentally wetted with cider and baked hard […]. (46-7)

The mug bears the marks of the mute physical 'Newtonian' forces which have shaped it: heat, ashes, darkness, and accident in its present shape are all criteria of the Darwinian reading of archaeology. It shares, symbolically if not literally, the characteristics of a fossil: having remained in darkness for long, having been submitted to fire, and more than anything, being the fruit of accident as far as its survival can be accounted for. And also like a fossil, it is a Darwinian metaphor of the destiny of the characters, some of whom are broken and reduced to dust by the accidents of their destinies, mainly caused by the unforeseeable clash between the orbs of their travel through cosmic time (as in ch. 52 and 53). Oak's declaration: "I never fuss about dirt in its pure state, and when I know what it is" (47) underscores the pre-historical connotation of the symbol.

With the detail about the drinking, "recovering from the stoppage of breath which is occasioned by pulls at large mugs" one is reminded of a similar tug and pull of mute hidden forces in an earlier passage: "touched by the wind in breezes of differing powers […] rubbing […] raking […] brushing" (12).

Moreover, the violence and strength of Oak's entrance endow the character with a mythological dimension as if he achieved the status of a mute telluric or even chthonian divinity.

> The door was flung back till it kicked the wall and trembled from top to bottom with the blow. Mr Oak appeared in the entry with a streaming face, haybands wound about his ankles to keep out the snow, a leather strap round his waist outside the smock-frock, and looking altogether an epitome of the world's health and vigour. Four lambs hung […] over his shoulders. (85)

His name is of course symbolic of such natural hidden forces, and it connotes ageless life-time and resistance to change as well as the a-historical existence of his earliest ancestors which is asserted by the equally ageless voice of the Merlin-looking maltster: "knowed yer grandfather for years and years" (46).

The cast of Nathaniel Parker for Gabriel Oak appropriately embodies the continuous and imperceptible flow of time: his appearance slowly, nearly imperceptibly, changes in the film, while the increasing growth of his authority in the social group is marked by low angles on him and by attributes such as horse-riding and impeccable clothes when he insists on being addressed "as befits any 'ooman begging a favour" (110) before healing the dying sheep. Later when Bathsheba, now in widow's weeds, begs his advice, the camera frames Oak as he looks down on her from his horse before giving his advice.

However the film departs from the novel in a significant manner as far as Fanny is concerned. Just as Troy's romantic aura addresses youthful TV audiences, Fanny addresses two major feminist claims: women's invisibility, and women's silence, in Victorian mores. To start with, none of the few scenes devoted to her as a secondary character in the novel are omitted in the film: her meeting with Oak, her arrival at the barracks, her disastrous wedding date, her meeting with Troy on Casterbridge road, her walk in the night, and the three sinister scenes in which her coffin is forgotten in the rain, is shockingly unsealed in Bathsheba's house, and drowned with pelting rain the next day despite the tombstone Troy orders for her, all these scenes are carefully delineated in the film. Moreover, we also see her in additional scenes: at Mr Everdene's death-bed, meeting her lover before the wedding in a passionate embrace, being missed by Troy who relents and comes to her lodgings only to find she has left, and twice in sequences showing her performing excruciatingly hard physical work. Besides, two short sequences are devoted to an incident which is barely alluded to in the novel, i.e. Boldwood ordering that the pond should be dragged and then proceeding to the search; these sequences inter-cut with two sequences showing Bathsheba in her new role, answering her maid Liddy in a two shot on their profiles facing the Vermeer-lit window, and then proceeding to pay her employees and being introduced to them. The ellipsis in the novel is thus re-written by a series of additional short sequences which constantly remind us of her as if she were forever present but invisibly so. In addition, several allusions to her name are inserted in the fabric of the dialogue: in the novel and the film, her letter to Oak and Boldwood telling of her oncoming marriage to Troy. But in the film, we also hear her name being uttered a great many times: as dying Mr Everdene's maid, in many references to her disappearance, and later during haymaking. With Troy's arrival, Liddy is heard asking about Fanny and her sweetheart, Troy's light-hearted replies sound all the more cynical for us who are in the know. Added remarks are given to Oak and Liddy as they walk back from the field. In addition, still in the film, her name is heard in people's talk during meals, as for example during the sheep shearing dinner when Mary-Ann recalls her presence the year before.

Thus Fanny's presence in the background of the narrative, whose main character, Bathsheba, draws all our attention, is much more important in the TV film and addresses the more educated feminist members of family audiences. The ellipsis of her presence which in the novel provides us – and Troy – with the shocking surprise of her encounter on the road to the Casterbridge workhouse, is underscored in the film by a series of ellipses which are signalled by short sequences which are literally obliterated by longer ones on Bathsheba, as if she were only visible from time to time and doomed to remain invisible otherwise. Invisibility is indeed a major issue in feminist debates and this narrative structure expresses such a concept: it is her very invisibility which is thus screened, suggesting that the film is far more critical than the novel is about the representation of women in Victorian society.

The essential difference in angle between the novel and the film which the theme of invisibility underscores is a matter of ideology and is closely related to the representation of mute time in both works. Both in the novel and in the film, chronological time is a full year, which the reference to her presence in the previous year's sheep shearing brings to our mind in the film. Within this diegetic time span, we begin with scenes of birth: the calf in winter, the lambs in early spring, and end (or nearly so, since the action then reaches another Christmas feast and later still with Gabriel and Bathsheba's

wedding) with the birth and death of Fanny and Troy's child in the following autumn. Thus does Fanny's destiny actually encompass much of the diegetic time in the narrative. Her existence dramatically epitomizes the narrator's remark: "To be least plainly seen was to be most prettily remembered" (98) as a Victorian motto. With the tragic difference however that she is not remembered until it is too late. Her constant existence is also marked by the generic value of her name Fanny, which like the Bettys of novels or comedies, signifies her availability, instead of her individuality as a person. Again the narrator's voice is used to convey in a parody of Victorian speech this characteristic of a secondary character whose role is nevertheless essential: "Silence has sometimes a remarkable power of showing itself as the disembodied soul of feeling wandering without a carcase […]" (100).

In the two scenes of the Renton's film showing her working for a living, it is not shown that she found work as a seamstress for several months until she was dismissed without any explanation: we understand by Victorian standards that her condition, her pregnancy, had become too visible for her employer to keep her any longer. Instead, we see her being hired for five shillings a week to work from six in the morning to ten at night in a dimly lit workshop threshing grains with a flail, in thick clouds of dust, and a hell-like din of female workers coughing and groaning with pain; later her work is to keep endlessly scrubbing a hard piece of stone in a scullery. The brutalizing of women is explicitly fore-grounded in such scenes, along with other details such as the fact she has no money (so Troy is told by her landlady in the film), and no education to escape her entrapment in the cogs of labour which are equated with hard labour.

Such references to the historical background give the film a different dimension in which Hardy's own times are recalled as opposed to the rural customs which the novel attempts to exhume from the past. Time in the film is true to the novel insofar as it depicts a fast disappearing rural world, but the cosmic dimension of time which characterizes the novel by the symbolic role of Gabriel Oak, even though the character himself is unreliable as far as understanding women is concerned, is displaced on the role of Fanny which is given important symbolic significance. In addition to the shocking necessity of improving the material living conditions of women, the film addresses the view that women are subjected to the feminine condition and cannot escape male domination. While the novel ultimately shows Bathsheba's downfall and failure as a businesswoman due to a dominant patriarchal society, Fanny is shown even more clearly as a victim of such patriarchal despotism in scenes destined to highlight male cruelty: not only does Frank's deeply hurt ego cause him to crush Fanny ruthlessly, but the church warden closing the iron gate on her visualizes the heartless brutality of the establishment. In the novel, a dog which helped her is stoned away; in the film, the cruelty of society is expressed by the visuals and by the sound of the gate, in a manner recalling David Lean's transposition of Dickens's *Oliver Twist* by the addition of an opening scene devoted to his mother in the storm.

By making Fanny rather than Bathsheba bear the symbolic role of women's condition in Victorian society, the film also gives her more than a historical significance. If we are to understand that the construction of diegetic time in the novel is subjected to numerous ruptures by discursive time, the time of reading, essentially, then ellipses and their treatment in the film are worth discussing. Chapter 52 epitomizes the free use of ellipses in the story-telling as missing fragments such as the life of Bathsheba during the months of her first widowhood is commented upon by her complaint to Boldwood: "It is difficult for a woman to define her feelings in language which is chiefly made by men to express theirs" (270), a major claim of feminist discourse. The characteristic of Fanny is indeed her silence and incapacity to make herself heard whether by Frank Troy who will not listen to her mistake, by the village people whom she will hide her disappearance from – she makes Oak promise silence, but also remains anonymous in this scene – by the emphasis in the film on the pond and the possibility of her being drowned, i.e. silenced for ever, and finally her silent return at night to Casterbridge work-house (201), the erasing of her name ("What is her name? How should I know her name?" says Troy, 202), the erasing of her child's existence by the well-wishing but uncomprehending Gabriel, and the final recognition by Bathsheba of her identity in the gruesome opening of the coffin; her hair is all the trace that remains of her in Troy's watch, and the tomb-stone alone acknowledges her existence. The erasing of her identity during the Troy-Bathsheba love story makes her all the more present in the reader's mind, a device that the film clearly enlarges upon.

From the point of view of diegetic time, Fanny is out-of-time: either in the wrong place at the wrong moment, or obliterated from Troy's conscience, or Poorgrass's own one, and her grave is in a part of the graveyard where she remains unseen; the gargoyle's downpour becomes a metaphor for

such insistence on erasing all signs of her. Very far from Bathsheba, her rival in love, whose ambition is to run her farm herself ("I shall be up before you are awake […]" 68), and partly manages to do so until the sheep's poisoning and her husband's negligence make her dependent upon Oak's good will and know-how, Fanny is deprived of power altogether. Again the film addresses the feminist issue of equality of power between the sexes by enhancing Fanny's utter powerlessness.

But contrary to Oak as a symbol of cosmic time, which is only partly satisfactory, because of his short-sighted and prejudiced understanding of women, Fanny embodies the very 'poetry of movement' of the cosmic clock, the universal and impersonal essence of cosmic time and the awareness by diminutive but conscious human beings, that such is the only true definition of the human condition. In the novel she is shown dividing the distance she must cover by dividing space into time units, and the film retains this while showing her climbing as well as moving forward. In the novel (205) she makes crutches which divide the distance into steps: "the pat of her feet, and the tap of her sticks upon the highway, were all the sounds that came from the traveller now" (204); later she divides the distance into a time unit which she uses as a screen to obliterate the real distance: "I'll pass five more by believing my longed-for spot is at the next fifth" she says not unlike Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. By the end of her voyage, she has become a mere "panting heap of clothes" (207). But from the point of view of cosmic time, she has defeated her doom and reached her destination before dying on the road.

The film shows her victory over the time of childbirth which has come, superimposing a modern, if gruesome, image of Nativity – i.e. the high angle coffin portrait of her face and body and her naked baby – upon the burlesque neo-gothic image which is introduced at the beginning of the novel and suppressed in the film. In this sense she alone among the characters in the novel as well as in the film is shown mastering her destiny; after her death, life collapses for Bathsheba, and Troy symbolically vanishes; by the time they meet again, their total inability to understand the impersonal clockwork mechanism of time causes them to meet to their destruction. But Fanny remains, and the earlier descried generic reference of her very name now signifies the fully deserved status of Woman.

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