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Far From the Madding Crowd

THOMAS HARDY

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FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

Thomas Hardy

WORDSWORTH CLASSICS

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FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Wordsworth Classics are inexpensive editions designed to appeal to the general reader and students. We commissioned teachers and specialists to write wide ranging, jargon-free introductions and to provide notes that would assist the understanding of our readers rather than interpret the stories for them. In the same spirit, because the pleasures of reading are inseparable from the surprises, secrets and revelations that all narratives contain, we strongly advise you to enjoy this book before turning to the Introduction.

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INTRODUCTION

Far from the Madding Crowd appeared in 1874, the year of Hardy's marriage to Emma Gifford. It was his first important success, critically and financially. He was thirty-four, but until this point his main income had come from his professional work as an architect. Despite his extra financial responsibilities as a married man he was now able to abandon architecture for full-time writing. As he later recalled, *Far from the Madding Crowd* was also his first novel to use the term 'Wessex', a partly fictionalised region of southwest England centred on his own county of Dorset which acquired greater geographical precision and consistency in subsequent novels and in later revisions of this one. Weatherbury in the novel corresponds to the actual village of Puddletown, Casterbridge to Dorchester, Roy-Town to Troy Town, and Lulwind Cove to Lulworth Cove. The novel first appeared in twelve monthly instalments in the

popular *Cornhill Magazine*, from January to December 1874, and was published in book-form on 23 November 1874.[1]

Hardy had already written four novels and published three (*Desperate Remedies*, 1871, a sensation-novel, the rural comedy *Under the Greenwood Tree*, 1872, and the unhappy love-story *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, 1873), but this was artistically and thematically a more ambitious venture. *Under the Greenwood Tree* had prompted the invitation to write for the *Cornhill* which came from the editor, Leslie Stephen (1832–1904),[2] a distinguished critic and biographer though now best remembered as the father of Virginia Woolf. Stephen's father-in-law, the novelist W. M. Thackeray, had been the first editor of the *Cornhill* when it was founded in 1860. The magazine paid well, attracting leading writers of the day as contributors. Previous serials had included new work by Mrs Gaskell and Anthony Trollope. In such company Hardy was a newcomer, an outsider from a remote and backward rural area, well informed but largely self-taught. Anxious to make the best of his opportunity and prove himself 'a good hand at a serial',[3] Hardy was almost too eager to deploy his hard-won knowledge and sophistication alongside more intimately known rural scenes and customs remembered from childhood. In order to secure his position in the literary world he was prepared to work closely with Stephen, accepting editorial advice and correction.

Critics disagree as to whether on balance this collaboration helped or hindered and frustrated Hardy's work. Stephen made Hardy cut some lively descriptive passages, such as an extended account of sheep-shearing. He worried a little as to whether Fanny Robin's illegitimate baby was strictly necessary, though Hardy stood firm on that point, and got him to tone down direct references to sexuality which might alienate the respectable (and largely female) middle-class readership on which the *Cornhill* depended. For this he has been condemned as a prude, blaming the reading-public for his own squeamishness. In a letter to Hardy, Stephen freely confessed to 'an excessive prudery of which I am ashamed; but one is forced to be absurdly particular'.[4] Some of the alterations do now seem absurd, such as substituting 'backs' for the buttocks of sheep. But Stephen was a shrewd editor with a sound critical instinct for

1 For details of manuscript, serial publication and early editions, see Purdy, pp.14–20. For full details of this and other references, turn to the Bibliography at the end of this Introduction.

2 Millgate, pp. 147–8

3 Hardy to Stephen (18 February 1874), *Collected Letters*, I, 28

4 Stephen to Hardy (12 March 1874) quoted in Millgate, p. 160

proportion and literary effect: most of the changes he suggested arguably improved the narrative more than Hardy's libertarian critics have acknowledged, for understatement, indirection and significant silences in the treatment of sexual matters may actually provide greater imaginative stimulus and emotional intensity. Negotiating and discreetly containing eroticism in the novel in the face of innocence or ignorance is not just a censor's requirement but a powerful theme, an anticipation of the increasingly despairing engagement with socio-sexual problems in the later novels. Farmer Boldwood's growing sexual obsession is all the more frightening because it is largely self-contained, unspoken and repressed. The extent to which both Hardy and his hero Gabriel Oak discreetly, even prudishly, try to play down the existence of Fanny Robin's baby for as long as possible enhances the sudden emotional crisis which it provokes in the heroine Bathsheba when all is known.

The literary context of the novel is complex, as early reviewers noticed. The *Saturday Review*, recalling his earlier work, murmered blandly that 'Mr Hardy still lingers in the pleasant byways of pastoral and agricultural life', and the *Guardian* described the book as 'a purely pastoral idyll'.[5] But, as the *Guardian* reviewer also noticed, Hardy had subversive designs on literary pastoral. His title comes from Thomas Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' (1751), which reflects that the peaceful lives of humble villagers far from the public arena contrast with, yet might well have been like, those of the famous in different circumstances: 'some mute inglorious Milton', 'some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood'. But there is less peace in Hardy's world. Bloodshed and obsessional madness leading to Boldwood's murder of Troy constitute part of Hardy's ironic strategy in a novel purporting to be about rural tranquillity. Gray's country peace distinguished from the clamour of the great world is characteristic of pastoral poetry, ostensibly about shepherds and simple country pleasures but in fact from early times a mode of protest against the contrasting complexity and corruption of court and city.[6]

The pastorals (or 'Idylls') of the poets of ancient Greece such as Theocritus, subsequently imitated by the Roman poet Virgil, had inaugurated a tradition which was enriched by the Bible and more specifically Christian pastoral, emphasising religious pastors and flocks and Christ as the good shepherd. Both traditions come together in some of Milton's shorter poems, such as *Lycidas* (1637), which Hardy quotes on p. 107, and both are present in the novel. Rural English simplicity is

5 Quoted at length in Lerner and Holmstrom, pp. 36–8, 39–40
6 Discussed in Williams (R.), particularly pp. 61–71

approached through biblical as well as classical allusiveness. The shepherd Gabriel Oak, named after a biblical messenger angel (Luke 1:19) and an English tree, plays a flute like the improbably musical shepherds of classical pastoral with their reed-pipes. Like his biblical namesake, though with a few slightly comic-grotesque touches such as his manner in love and his mode of dress, he stands for integrity and resilient goodness (the name may mean 'God is powerful' or 'fortitude of God' in Hebrew), but for much of the action he has a dramatically and socially subordinate role, faithfully and selflessly attending on his beloved Bathsheba as Gabriel attended as a mere messenger on the virgin Mary. This is effectively brought out in Helen Paterson's *Cornhill* illustration which shows him standing attentively in his white shepherd's smock beside and below the mounted Bathsheba who is dressed contrastingly in richer and darker clothes.[7] The Old Testament recorded the early history of the Jews, essentially a pastoral people measuring wealth in flocks and herds, so it is natural that the novel, concerned with a traditional, church-going, Bible-reading community, makes constant allusions to Old Testament scenes and to characters such as King David, once a shepherd-boy. The story of David supplies the name of the heroine Bathsheba, for David lusted after Bathsheba, wife of one of his generals, when he saw her bathing, and arranged for her husband to be killed in battle so he could marry her (2 Samuel 11). Hardy seems to collude with the masculinist tradition of biblical interpretation which emphasised Bathsheba as *femme fatale* without paying much attention to the very questionable role of David, a role which has no direct counterpart in the novel. But there is irony and sophistication in his treatment of the stereotype in that Bathsheba tries to resist it: she identifies with the virgin goddess Diana and at one level seeks to deny her sexuality altogether. The feeble Joseph Poorgrass, the most vociferous member of the chorus of rustics who comment on the main action, has a tendency to bungle his biblical quotations, which perhaps suggests that the Old Testament world Hardy and he constantly invoke may not altogether fit the realities and random misfortunes of contemporary rural life.

English pastoral such as Edmund Spenser's *Shepheardes Calendar* (1579), followed much later by the more realistic *Shepherd's Calendar* of John Clare (1827), had reviewed country life all the year round. Hardy took advantage of the twelve monthly instalments required by the *Cornhill* to make his novel a new, uncomfortable kind of Shepherd's

7 Reproduced in Jackson, Plate 5

Calendar, structured by lambing and shearing, church festivals and country fairs. The first ten installments (up to and including Chapter 47) were published between January and October and describe events in the farming year over roughly the same period as background to the story. There is an approximate month-by-month correspondence, in that the novel begins in late December and soon moves into January, there is a reference to February in the February instalment and an allusion to April in the April one. The final episode, published in December, includes the climax of Boldwood's murder of Sergeant Troy which took place on Christmas Eve.

This grimly unidealised version of pastoral, a kind of anti-pastoral, was anticipated by the Suffolk poet George Crabbe (1755–1832), whose work Hardy had always greatly admired. In old age he agreed that Crabbe had been one of the influences upon his own attempts at realist writing, observing tartly, 'The knowing English reviewers asserted that all English realism came from Zola, but it existed in Crabbe fifty years before Zola's time.'[8] Crabbe's poetry of rural poverty self-consciously distanced itself from the literary artifice of classical pastoral with its obligatory reed-pipes in the interests of rural realism:

> They boast their peasants' pipes; but peasants now
> Resign their pipes and plod behind the plough;
> And few, amid the rural tribe, have time
> To number syllables and play with rhyme.
>
> (*The Village*, 1783, Book I)

Hardy's more immediate realist predecessor was George Eliot, whose earlier fiction such as *Adam Bede* (1859) had pursued serious moral themes in non-idyllic country settings, and R. H. Hutton in *The Spectator*, responding appreciatively to the first number of the originally anonymous serial version of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, observed, 'If [it] is not written by George Eliot, then there is a new light among novelists.'[9] Henry James, still an apprentice novelist himself, was fastidiously uneasy about Hardy's literary craftsmanship, conceding a little patronisingly that 'the author has evidently read to good purpose the low-life chapters in George Eliot's novels; he has caught very happily her trick of seeming to humour benignantly her queer

8 Letter of 6 February 1919, *Collected Letters*, V, 294; see also Millgate, p. 439

9 R. H. Hutton in *The Spectator*, 3 January 1874, quoted in Lerner and Holmstrom, p. 23

people.'[10] While George Eliot undoubtedly helped to create the market for Hardy's novels it was Hardy's friend the Dorset dialect poet and philologist William Barnes (1801–86) who provided literary encouragement to use the unfamiliar idiom and geography of his own still largely unvisited region. Both the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1888–1928) and Joseph Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary* (1898–1905) were deeply indebted to Hardy's novels, particularly *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, for evidence of Dorset dialect forms which were already rapidly disappearing as the modern world gradually caught up with rural England.

The novel seems – but only seems – to resist this process. There is a complicated irony in the grumpy complaint of the old maltser on p. 84: ' "Dear, dear – how the face of nations alter, and what we live to see nowadays!" ' The comment is comically disproportionate: he is talking about a few small changes on an old farm, such as an iron pump replacing a well. But in a sense the maltser is right: these modest symptoms of modernisation hint at the far-reaching social and economic developments which were transforming the nations of Europe. The Wessex of the novel is not immune from the process of change, though the process itself is sometimes arrested by particular well-visualised scenes which achieve a kind of timeless, frozen clarity, perhaps through reference to paintings such as Benjamin Haydon's 'Napoleon Buonaparte on the Island of St Helena' (p. 29).

The text abounds in precise visual detail from an increasingly unfamiliar world, some of it sketched out by Hardy the architectural draughtsman to ensure absolute clarity in the writing and to guide the illustrator. This goes beyond details of traditional rural costume or local custom. When Oak and Coggan follow the tracks of Bathsheba's mare Dainty (pp. 166–7) the changing patterns of hoof-prints indicate variations in the horse's speed, and Hardy sent Stephen his drawings of the hoof-prints though they were not actually included among the *Cornhill* illustrations. Such meticulous care could easily have led to acrimonious disputes with his illustrator who might well have seen things differently, but Hardy seems to have been remarkably fortunate and highly satisfied with Helen Paterson's drawings, one for each of the twelve *Cornhill* episodes. While some of her characters lack individuality, as Arlene M. Jackson has noticed,[11] she skilfully brings out the strong dramatic

10 Henry James in *The Nation* (New York), 24 December 1874, in Lerner and Holmstrom, p. 30

11 Jackson, p. 79; see also Dalziel

moments on which the novel depends, notably Troy's sword-exercise performed before Bathsheba, dangerous and exciting, an erotically charged courtship ritual.

The American Civil War in the 1860s, or the Crimean War before that, had multiplied pictures of soldiers in battle in the illustrated papers, but these recent battles had featured massed troops rather than individual combat, the smoke and confusion of artillery and musketry rather than the brilliant clarity and simplicity of swordplay. The modern soldier with drawn sword in the *Cornhill* illustration[12] was particularly romantic and appealing, if a little theatrical, exactly how Troy presented himself to Bathsheba. Henry James's complaint that Troy is 'an elaborate stage-figure'[13] rather misses the point: he is represented as acting a part from the moment of his first appearance, assuming the roles of ironic moralist or romantic lover or gentleman farmer or circus performer as occasion serves.

Consciously or unconsciously, Hardy is able to suggest archetypal situations to which his illustrator responds. When Bathsheba tries to revive the suffocating Gabriel, solicitously bending over him, the illustration universalises the situation by recalling paintings of Mary, mother of Jesus, with her crucified son laid across her knees.[14] The effect is discreetly to associate the trials and sorrows of Gabriel with those of the Man of Sorrows, Christ Himself, confirming the hinted association of Gabriel the faithful shepherd with Christ the Good Shepherd.

The narrative as a whole has a timeless, elemental quality. As Timothy Hands has noted,[15] Gabriel is associated with light in darkness, his goodness revealed to Bathsheba as lightning illuminates the night 'black as a cave in Hinnom' (p. 198). This gives an interestingly secular twist to the hymn 'Lead Kindly Light' rehearsed by the choir towards the end of the story (p. 308) when Gabriel has been faithful in good times and in bad. Hardy makes a point of observing that Gabriel saves Bathsheba from disaster both by fire and flood, and the many waters which cannot quench the fire of love are invoked in biblical phrase when they finally marry. There are no national newspaper headlines or great events reported from the outside world. Sergeant Troy, the novel's only outsider, is a dangerous and disruptive presence, an imprudent and inattentive farmer who cannot or will not read the signs of the weather like Gabriel Oak. By dwelling on unhappy love, seduction and betrayal in the manner of the

12 Reproduced in Jackson, Plate 26
13 Lerner and Holstrom, p. 33
14 Reproduced in Jackson, Plate 3; see also Garson, p. 40
15 Hands, p. 64

old ballads invoked in the text, and by presenting the apparently unchanging rhythms of rural life, in which passing time is registered not by Gabriel's faulty watch but by the seasons and the stars in their courses, the novel seems to float free of any immediate historical context.

Historians might well agree. Though literary critics have tended to praise Hardy as a faithful chronicler of rural life, at least one social historian has taken Hardy severely to task for misrepresenting actual social instability and class bitterness and replacing them with a 'romanticising and pastoral gloss'.[16] But Robert Langbaum exaggerates a little when he claims the novel, 'steeped in pastoralism', simply 'ignores social problems, portraying a timeless rural existence'.[17] This is a common, if slightly inattentive, reading of the novel, and it has a long history. An early reviewer suggested that Hardy's country folk had never heard of strikes, poverty or Joseph Arch, leader of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union.

But Hardy had heard all about such matters. In February 1873, already at work on the novel, he had heard Arch speak at an open-air meeting at Fordington Green, denouncing low wages for farm labourers and the inadequacy of the seasonal hiring system upon which the ruined Gabriel has to depend.[18] Hardy was in fact keenly aware of economic conditions and social and historical change. A man of two worlds, he knew about slowly changing rural Dorset where he had grown up but he was also familiar with progressive London where he had worked as an architect and had encountered new books and paintings. Apparent timelessness in rural life is exaggerated for rhetorical purposes, deliberately constructed not out of pastoral sentimentality but as an exercise in anti-pastoral, a way of foregrounding a delusion which needs to be challenged. Catastrophic change and decay in Gabriel's circumstances give the lie to the myth of timelessness sanctioned by pastoral tradition. In this novel Hardy has depicted a backward rural community on the brink of modernity, not yet fully aware of links with a wider world.

This is reflected in the style, in a clash of idioms, veering rapidly from mops to pure mathematics (p. 58), from potatoes to parliamentary candidates (p. 63). This brought complaints from the *Saturday Review* which noted 'clumsy and inelegant metaphors . . . mannerism and affectation'.[19] The criticism is not undeserved. Hardy as narrator deals with rural matters but addresses a modern metropolitan readership in a

16 Snell, pp. 379, 392
17 Langbaum, p. 79
18 Millgate, p. 148
19 Lerner and Holmstrom, p. 37

sometimes elaborately allusive style with a broad range of cultural reference incorporating painting, modern and classical literature and technical knowledge ranging from astronomy to medicine. The effect can be stiff and cumbersome. The flash of Troy's sword is not very helpfully described as 'the luminous streams of this *aurora militaris*' (p. 145). When Gabriel passes from unrequited love to jealousy few readers are much the wiser for being told this paralleled 'the oft-quoted observation of Hippocrates concerning physical pains'. (p. 148)

But at times this can be very effective. Bathsheba is a farmer, not a monarch, and the womanising sergeant Troy is no saint and not perhaps much of a Christian. But Hardy lets the theatrical Troy play the part of stern moralist in his flirtatious teasing of Bathsheba and compares him unexpectedly to the disapproving John Knox before Mary Queen of Scots (p. 136). Troy as John Knox is meant to raise a smile. But the far-fetched analogy links Bathsheba not unsympathetically with a popular Victorian painting, which probably suggested it, and with a romantic tradition of risk and danger and doomed love. The misery of the lonely, obsessive farmer Boldwood is generalised and given a kind of epic dignity when associated with the 'Mournful Fields' (p. 244) which represent Dryden's translation of Virgil's description of the part of the classical underworld inhabited by all who have been unhappy in love.[20] The well-born and well-educated outsider Sergeant Troy alludes once to a book he has read, in fact a work by the French writer Madame de Staël (p. 204), who is as much an intruder in Wessex as he is.

The intention is to suggest that rural simplicities can be seen in a broader context. Hardy alludes to everything under the sun. His locals, on the other hand, allude mainly to local tradition and the Old Testament. The contrast is important: it makes the reader particularly conscious of cultural difference and cultural change. Incipient or encroaching modernity is reflected in carefully understated references to matters of contemporary significance or concern. The choir learn a new hymn (p. 308), probably from the important new hymn book *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (1868). The harsh conditions and insecurity of agricultural labour which leave Gabriel at the mercy of the hiring fair and short-term employment had already provoked Joseph Arch to organise a farm-workers' trade union, a national organisation founded in February 1872 which had already attracted an enormous membership.[21] If farm servants were impoverished, farmers themselves were increasingly able

20 Discussed in Vance, p. 147

21 See Williams (R.), pp. 231–2

to aspire to a gentrified lifestyle, perhaps like Bathsheba installing one of the new upright pianos which had recently come on the market at relatively affordable prices.[22] This widening social gulf makes Gabriel's position as Bathsheba's lover and employee all the more hopeless.

Bathsheba is at the heart of the novel's engagements with incipient social change. Modern feminist interest in Bathsheba and Hardy's other women characters represents a continuation and development of late-nineteenth-century social, cultural and political debate in which Hardy himself played an important part as a novelist. Feminist art historians and literary critics have alerted us to the sexual politics of pictorial representation of women and the implied male viewer, the 'alignment of gazing with male power'.[23] T. R. Wright observes that Gabriel sees Bathsheba in consciously pictorial terms.[24] Bathsheba as object of the male gaze, which is how she first appears to us, through Gabriel's eyes, seems calculated to raise feminist hackles, as does a plot which in some sense denies her autonomy by making her a victim of male desire and then marrying her off. Rosemarie Morgan indignantly observes that '[Hardy's] vibrant, self-delighting, energetic heroine whose resourcefulness and strength sustain a family property, a labour force and a farming community, blossoms into womanhood, ventures into business, into marriage, into the world of men, and is nullified. And Hardy is the lone mourner.'[25]

This may be true, but it is not the whole truth. The novel offers much more to modern feminists than a simple case-study of patriarchal oppression. There are different voices and perspectives within the text, Bathsheba's as well as Oak's and the narrator's, articulating a range of positions, ranging from proto-feminist to old-fashioned conservative, which are never fully resolved into unified statement. Hardy criticism neatly illustrates the recent history of feminist criticism, as Patricia Ingham has shown.[26] It is no longer possible simply to condemn Hardy and his fiction for reflecting and so in a sense perpetuating the patriarchal subjection of women or for ultimately colluding in their victimisation by failing to provide a role-model of achieved female autonomy for modern readers. With the help of linguistics, feminist critics such as Penny Boumelha have side-stepped doctrinal debate about what woman should do and be, whether there is an essential

22 See Ehrlich, pp. 92–8
23 Shires, p. 54
24 Wright, p. 50
25 Morgan (1988), p. 57
26 Ingham, pp. 1–8

femaleness and how literature should respond to this, and have focused on gender as difference and woman as a sign to which different significances can be attached in different verbal and cultural contexts.

It is now recognised that Hardy is unusually sensitive to the ways in which particular forms of language coerce and constrict mental freedom in sexual as in other matters. Male manipulation of language leaves Bathsheba without genuine choice, with no space or words for dignified rejection or indifference, when she is asked 'Do you like me, or do you respect me?' There is something strikingly modern in her stance as, badgered by the unwelcome devotion of Boldwood, she refuses the terms of his oppressively masculine discourse, protesting: 'It is difficult for a woman to define her feelings in language which is chiefly made by men to express theirs' (p. 278). While farms run by women were not unprecedented in rural life, the vigorously modern independence of Bathsheba in tension with the expectations within a traditional society that young women must necessarily expect to marry, and Sergeant Troy's extravagance with his wife's money, would have reminded readers of the new safeguards for women in the recent Married Women's Property Act (1870) and the epoch-making feminist essay on *The Subjection of Women* (1869) by John Stuart Mill, a writer much admired by progressives such as Hardy and his editor Leslie Stephen.

Stephen's recent *Essays on Free Thinking* (1873), following on Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), draw attention to the crumbling of traditional religious belief at this period, in particular a growing scepticism about any benign divine providence at work in the world. The sudden undeserved disaster which ruins Gabriel's career as an independent farmer seems to confirm this bleak post-Christian perspective. By linking the episode visually with Haydon's 'Napoleon Buonaparte on the Island of St Helena' (p. 29), Hardy rather clumsily hints that the same callously indifferent universe also permits military and political disaster on a European scale. While Gabriel is a churchgoer he is not a very attentive one and his sterling qualities have very little to do with the church. Parson Thirdly's rambling sermons have nothing to say to the problems of harsh misfortune, sexual fascination and obsession and female self-realisation which Hardy explores. The indifference of both nature and the church to the life and death of poor Fanny Robin whose grave is almost washed away by the rainwater gushing from the church gargoyle, and the oppressiveness of Bathsheba's church-sanctioned marriage to Troy, suggest a muted dissatisfaction not just with the traditional idea of divine providence but with social convention upheld by the church. This was to develop as a major and controversial theme in Hardy's later fiction.

The thematic concern with the uneasy stirrings of the modern is mirrored in the uneasy form of the narrative itself. In tension with the disciplined reduction of the narrative to the events of the twelve months of the farming year there is a certain diffuseness in analytical narrative commentary, allusions to the concerns of more urban living, and descriptive passages. Detailed description of country customs, conditions and characters, which Henry James felt had made the novel far too long and shapeless,[27] used to be the domain not of novelists but of agriculturalists, travel-writers and journalists such as Arthur Young or William Cobbett, author of *Rural Rides* (1830). Pastoral and anti-pastoral and mainly unhappy narratives of rural life used to be the stuff of poetry and ballads. But in this updated and fictionalised Shepherd's Calendar, Hardy follows George Eliot in helping the novel to come of age as a serious mode of social and moral exploration, simultaneously showing country life as a site of modern problems of insecurity, love and money and embodying a critique of more idealised and artificial forms of literary representation.

Far from the Madding Crowd is simultaneously an account and a symptom of the problems and the post-religious awareness of incipient modernity as it begins to impinge on traditional rural society. The title is not a statement so much as a question: is Wessex really remote from the ignoble strife of the metropolitan world and beyond? Is pastoral tranquillity a fact of country life or a consoling literary myth? At the end of the novel the 'true and original Weatherbury band' and the blood-stained but historic European victories of the Duke of Marlborough appear in the same sentence (p. 318). Milton moved from the pastoral elegy of *Lycidas* to the cosmic themes of *Paradise Lost* and the novel quotes from both poems. Virgil moved from pastoral poetry to the grand but tragic themes of Roman destiny, time and eternity, from the *Eclogues* to the *Aeneid*, and again the novel quotes from both works. Hardy is able to encompass the same range within a single text, for he too moves between pastoral simplicity and epic desolation. Country life would never be the same again.

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27 Lerner and Holstrom, pp. 30–31

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