

M: Mourning

noun

1. the act of someone who mourns; sorrowing or lamentation.
2. the conventional manifestation of sorrow for a person's death, especially by the wearing of black, the hanging of flags at half-mast, etc.

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Speaker's commentary

“My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep” (Book of Job, 30:31). Here the harp, usually associated with rejoicing, is used to symbolise grief. Benjamin Britten and Jeff Buckley’s versions of the traditional Corpus Christi carol are perfect examples of mourning. To give grief a musical voice, important is the role of repetition. Continual restatements or repetitions enable the inner depths of grief to slowly surface as if they are being massaged. The carol uses a simple repeating four part phrase, over and over again. Its symmetry provides the containment for inner grief. How does one add to this? One doesn’t. The version here of mourning repurposes aspects of the traditional carol by changing the sense of falling as heard with the descending scales with the harp being the main advocate. While it alludes to Britten and Buckley’s laments, it provides another spin on grief’s eternal ability to speak in new ways. The song finishes with a quasi-lullaby of comfort with the use of a melody that now ascends. From mourning’s descent we move to healing’s ascent.

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