
Felix Wörner, Ullrich Scheideler and Philip Rupprecht (eds), *Tonality 1900–1950: Concept and Practice* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012). £34.80. 276 pp. ISBN 978-3-515-10160-8

This book contributes to a respectable and ever-enlarging body of studies of twentieth-century tonality. Emerging from a conference of the same name at Duke University in 2010, the dates in its title seem both to invite and to discourage the expectation that the book will provide some kind of historical overview. The introduction repeatedly refers to 'the 1900–1950 period', but it is not immediately obvious what constitutes this as a period in musical or general historical terms. Had the dates been 1908–45, then we might suppose that the period between Schoenberg's Second String Quartet and Britten's *Peter Grimes* could be considered a moment of first contact between centuries-old tonality and its most viable modern alternatives. As it happens, the music – the 'practice' – examined in the book ranges from 1913 (Vaughan Williams's *London Symphony*) to 1959 (Barber's *Nocturne*), and the theory – the 'concept' – from Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre* (1911) to Hindemith's late thoughts in the 1960s.¹ Although it does not offer a historical conspectus, then, the book presents a sequence of fifteen case studies covering the development of both theory and composition in the first half or so of the twentieth century, written by scholars from four countries (mostly the United States and Germany, but with Belgium and Switzerland also represented).

The editors open with the observation that tonality 'achieved crisp theoretical definition in the early twentieth century, even as the musical avant-garde pronounced it obsolete' (p. 11). They have in mind Schoenberg, Kurth, Riemann and Schenker, although the last is given much less attention than the rest. I shall return to these theories in due course, for now simply noting that although each of those theorists had their own idiosyncratic, even mutually incompatible, view of what tonality 'was', for each tonality was singular. The same is not necessarily true for composers, and many of the chapters in this book focus on what the editors insist is a 'plurality' of tonalities, or even 'a prismatic formation' (*ibid.*) which became not 'a quasi-natural foundation of music' but simply one technique among others (p. 17). These available techniques are treated in a number of chapters, each considering the music of a different country in isolation. Although there are three chapters on British and German music, it is the cases of France and the United States that questions of nation are the most striking.

Marianne Wheeldon notes, in her chapter on Milhaud and Koechlin's defence of tonality, that

some French musicians found atonality in general (Poulenc) or *Pierrot lunaire* in particular (Milhaud), to be ‘shit’ – thereby prefiguring the considered reflections of some of my undergraduates by almost a century (pp. 145–6). But what they actually meant by this (and in this they join hands with some modernism-phobic Anglophone musicologists today) was that it was German. It was specifically to rescue polytonality from being labelled *style boche* that Milhaud stressed its French origins (pp. 147–8). There is much more of interest concerning polytonality in this collection, and I shall return to it later. Remaining for the moment with nationalism and aesthetics, however, it is interesting that views of atonality in the United States were no less colourful than in France. But the US picture was complicated by the fact that the country provided a home both to emigré German theorists (and composers) and to a number of home-grown tonal composers, so that the question of cultural cross-fertilisation manifested less as a suspicion of a neighbour and more as openness (or hostility) to immigration. Broad questions of transatlantic relations therefore provide an important background to Wolfgang Rathert and Beth E. Levy’s chapters on music in the United States.

Rathert’s narrative echoes mid-century constructions of the myth of American exceptionalism in that country’s broader discourse. He describes Charles Seeger’s ‘dissonant counterpoint’, for instance, as ‘an American equivalent of Schoenberg’s twelve-tone method, a breakthrough to a musical language divested of any inkling of tonality’ (p. 68), while reminding us that Roger Sessions is sometimes labelled ‘the “American Brahms”’ (p. 70), whose critique of Krenek’s thoughts on new music ‘anticipates the position adopted in [Adorno’s] *Philosophie der neuen Musik*’ (p. 72; Rathert does not explain the details of that anticipation). While Milhaud was openly nationalistic, what we find here is different, and more characteristic of mid-century American history writers such as Daniel Boorstin:² the implication that everything of significance to modernity – in this case both twelve-tone composition and post-dodecaphonic tonality, in the compositional arena, and Adornian theories of modernism in the critical one – was invented independently in the United States, without the need of foreign intervention.

Quotations from composers and other scholars in Levy’s chapter clarify this perceived difference between Old and New World attitudes, which is essentially a binary of nature (the United States) versus manufacture (Europe). For instance, Roy Harris implied (pp. 247–9) that European developments were driven by *parti pris* commitment to whatever a composer deemed to be the relevant ‘ism’, with the principal question being whether to be pro or contra atonality, while implying that in the United States, by contrast, compositional decisions were made by instinct. This spirit infects scholarship too: Levy cites Larry Starr, who has ‘astutely’ written that the music of American composers like Gershwin and Copland was ‘*incidentally* “tonal” by virtue of the character of its basic material [...] rather than as a consequence of adherence to any preordained philosophical tenets’ (p. 247). That assertion sits comfortably with American myths of naturalness, honesty, democratic openness and a resistance to the ‘isms’ of Old

Europe, but it is pure make-believe. Aesthetics, like politics, is always value-laden, and never neutral; in fact, the only thing more political than writing a manifesto is not writing a manifesto. Harris's frequent appeals to nature and opposition to artifice, which are illuminatingly documented by Levy, are therefore as disingenuous as the claim, from a bigot, that 'I don't go in for politics at all, and I'm not getting involved in any anti-feminist arguments or anything, but I just think that women naturally belong in the home.' The bigot may honestly think that he is not being political, but he is, and unless Gershwin and Copland had absolutely no idea what art music had been written since 1908, they too, like Harris, were 'guilty' of making an aesthetic choice.

Attitudes towards tonality and its relationship to atonality are therefore revealed, generally without explicit signposting by the volume's authors, to be fascinatingly bound up with the early twentieth century's ideological configurations. The specifically nationalist questions ultimately recede into the background, but the more general and less easily historicised matter of ideology does not.

The main line I will pursue is that tonality in the twentieth century was a dialectical formation, and that a dialectical analytical method (which is not the same as a varied analytical method, since the requirements are more precise) will ultimately prove to be the best way of understanding it. For the most part, the music in this volume concerns itself with the dialectical relation between handed-down tonal practices and currently available methods of non-diatonic or entirely non-tonal composition; but in one chapter, it operates between handed-down forms and twentieth-century technology.

For Joseph Auner, technology figures more as a metaphor than as a deeply theorised problematic in modernity.³ Thus, although Walter Benjamin's famous essay on music in the age of mechanical reproduction is cited,⁴ neither it nor any other critical theory of the relation between humanity and technology is brought to bear. Auner conceives of technology more or less naively as a neutral feature of modern existence, and one which for his purposes has three principal influences on composers' attitudes to musical materials: by encouraging 'weighing', 'measuring' and 'embalming', each of which receives a section so headed in the chapter. An example of 'weighing' is the modernist attitude towards pitch organisation, so that 'what for Bach and Mozart were passing "accidents" – the result of surface contrapuntal elaborations firmly tied to an unmistakably inferable triad background – have become for Schoenberg absolute entities warranting theoretical investigation and explanation in their own right' (p. 33). In other words, to weigh a dissonance is to emancipate it. 'Measuring' relates variously to manipulation of note rows and to consequences of 'measuring time through recording technology', including Cage's experiments with silence. 'Embalming' is the process by which recording enables possibilities for literal sampling and the writing of collages, on the one hand, or recording-influenced compositional ideas such as Satie's 'static loops that threaten to go on forever, as in the 840 repetitions of *Vexations*' (p. 42), on the other.

The connections are interesting, but despite Auner's insistence that he does not 'mean to imply a narrow technologically deterministic model linking the introduction of specific devices to changes in musical style' (p. 28), there is a slight whiff of the parlour game here. The fundamental intellectual shift that Auner connects to twentieth-century technology is that 'instead of categorizing sounds in terms of their manifold sources (voices, instruments, natural events, etc.), a focus on the transductive properties of the membrane allowed all acoustic phenomena to be understood as vibration' (p. 31). But at least two important difficulties must be addressed. First, the observed switch from *sources*, which in most cases means real and embodied historical humans, to *vibration* is not the kind of change that should pass without further remark. It is an extraordinary and historically particular abstraction of the essence of music, reflecting an already well-established pattern in the historical development of capitalism, in which relations between people (listening and performing *subjects*: humans) are concealed by relations between things (listening and performing *objects*: machines). The confrontation between music and technology is not neutral in any way, but the field of sound studies – of which this article is the sole representative in this volume – either does not care about the radical circumscription of music as 'sound' which recording technology encourages, or else delights in it. In some situations – the sale of musical commodities and the use of music in torture – sound is important, but in others, not. One does not have to be a Marxist to raise an eyebrow at sound studies' reduction of music to sound, when it is ontologically much more complex than that, and capable of being composed, thought about, discussed, written about, analysed, remembered, imagined, banned or wielded as a totem of emancipation without sound getting the slightest look-in.⁵ Auner presents his topic as a shift in ways of conceiving sound, but he is wrong because he is already presupposing a capitalist conception of music *as sound* in the first place. He seems unaware of the ideological commitment he makes in his starting point. What is at stake is the radical impoverishment of the multiple being of music into the singular being of mere sound. Intellectually as well as morally and politically, the technological and economic switch to the focus on sound is something which requires the most serious investigation.

Secondly, technology can be used in more significantly different ways than Auner suggests. All of his examples are more or less direct metaphorical transpositions from technology to music, which is to say that for him a technological possibility results in an analogous musical invention. The idea that humans might engage with, even challenge technology rather than naively use it on terms dictated by that technology is not really interrogated. Yet it is clear that a relatively technologically controlled, abstract musical object such as Stockhausen's *Gesang der Jünglinge* is radically different from the human-centred, technologically interactive musical subject of Boulez's *Répons*. Makers of objects which are abstracted from human and historical contexts (i.e. reified) are quite evidently working with technology in ways that are importantly different from people for whom technology is a contemporary, present,

onstage interaction between humans and machines. But Auner neither offers examples which tend more towards a critical engagement with technology nor seems to entertain them as possibilities.

Consequently, his chapter does not consider what the implications might be of transforming tonality from something that works between humans into something abstracted from human historical context and made 'natural' as vibration. There is the beginning of an investigation here, but it is a severely limited one.

So much for the dialectic of 'nature' and technology; the dialectic of 'nature' and history receives more extensive treatment in the volume. The imperative to confront the ideological effects of this dialectic might, as we have seen, have been lost on Harris, but it was not lost on Schoenberg, who in a sense made it the heart of his music theory. In 'Concepts of Tonality in Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre*', Markus Böttgermann cites a passage from that treatise in which Schoenberg theorises the necessity of the self-destruction of the tonal system.

It is remarkable: the vagrant chords [in an example of Mozartian cadential patterns] do not appear directly by way of nature [...] . Actually they arise only out of the logical development of our tonal system, of its implications. They are the issue of inbreeding, inbreeding among the laws of that system. And that precisely these logical consequences of the system are the very undoing of the system itself, that the end of the system is brought about with such inescapable cruelty by its own functions, brings to mind the thought that death is the consequence of life. (p. 107)

This seems more precise than a general post-Hegelian view of historical process. Substitute 'crises' for 'vagrant chords' and 'ideology' for 'inbreeding' in this paragraph, and this might be Marx arguing for the inevitable collapse of capitalism under the weight of its own internal contradictions. But what Schoenberg and Marx failed to foresee was the resilient capacity of tonality (or capitalism) to fold its contradictions back into itself as a source of strength, to use the emancipation of dissonance (or the collapse of a financial system) as a means of generating an inexhaustible range of more complex and appealing tonal novelties (or the re-enrichment of the capitalist class).⁶ While this productive digestion of contradictions is one of the strong themes of this collection, it is not always as well realised by some of the authors as it might be. Too often the assumption that a contradiction means self-destruction goes unexamined, as I shall show later. But before leaving Schoenberg, it is worth noting a remark by Stephen Hinton, in his account of *Harmonielehre*, concerning its second chapter. I suggest that it points to a significant obstacle for analysts of twentieth-century tonality, specifically concerning the need for a dialectical approach to analysis – a challenge which is only partly met in this book.

In some ways, in the passage that Hinton cites, Schoenberg makes a very small point – but it ramifies. Schoenberg argues that the instrumentation and voicing in bar 382 of his *Erwartung* will encourage listeners to hear this eleven-note chord (only D<natural> is missing from the chromatic aggregate) as one that ought to resolve to a diminished seventh. Its failure to provide that resolution will

strike people as doing ‘no more damage here than when the resolution is omitted in simple harmonies’ (p. 116). That is, Schoenberg suggests that listeners will hear this as a dissonance which ‘ought’ to resolve but does not, and will not hear it as in any sense emancipated (that being an idea he had yet to formulate). In his own *Harmonielehre*, Schenker would not have been so sanguine about the effects of this chord, but one could certainly imagine him, even without yet having the fully developed machinery of the *Ursatz* to hand, struggling to interpret the chord in relation to a horribly failed tonicisation.⁷ In this sense, and irrespective of its metaphysical or ideological burden, the core of Schenkerian theory is as alert as Schoenberg (or, later, Adorno) to the inheritance of historic subjectivity in the contemporary listener, which is still conditioned by nursery rhymes, hymns, pop songs, and so on.⁸ Hinton observes that Schoenberg’s (and, I would add, Schenker’s) analytical attitude ‘is a far cry, indeed, from [...] set-theory nomenclature, which proceeds from the assumption of “atonality”’ (p. 117). When there are at least two plausible ways of analysing a chord or a progression – one appealing, as Schoenberg and Schenker do, to traditional tonal harmony, another to pitch-class set theory – there seems to be no a priori reason to favour one over the other. I suggest, however, that there are good reasons to presume a firm tonal basis and only entertain the possibility of an alternative when all tonal explanations have utterly failed.

If the historical subjectivity of listeners is such that they will be enculturated to hearing tonally (and for the last few centuries, that has been the case), then music will have to veer a considerable distance away from tonality before those listeners give up any hope of bringing their experience of the music back into tonal order. Locked into a dialectical mediation of ‘nature’ and ‘history’ in this way, tonality is therefore just as much an ideological construction as attitudes to gender or race.⁹ Tonality is extremely resilient to challenge and will tend to draw strength from its own contradictions – although, like all ideological fields, it is possible for it ultimately to be replaced by another. The reason Adorno initially supported atonality and serialism (and later denounced serialism as a new form of aesthetic totalitarianism) was that he consistently argued for musical composition to resist ideology,¹⁰ and tended to favour the form of musical material which he felt best fitted the present historical needs of that struggle. No aesthetic or moral value judgement is implicit in the observation that tonal music in the twentieth century is positioned differently in respect of that musical-ideological field than post-tonal music is, or to observe that the gravitational pull of the tonal ideology is even stronger on tonal than on non-tonal music (i.e. *Erwartung* has a fairly easy ride, but even it is potentially tugged at tenaciously by tonality). Therefore, while analysis of twentieth-century tonality should not simply seek to reduce individual musical processes to an orthodox Schenkerian background, it would be equally – or actually more – false to proclaim too quickly the success of strategies of resistance to tonality. If hexatonic and other symmetrical conceptions of chromatic space could truly imperil tonality, then possibly by Schubert and definitely by Wagner tonality would have been quite dead. That it was not even plausible to suggest

that it might be in danger until the emancipation of dissonance is a hugely significant ideological fact in the history of music. Thus, the essence of the dialectical method for analysing twentieth-century tonality is the need to move continually between irreconcilable poles, each mediating the other: on the one hand, the orthodox, diatonic prolongation of the tonic triad, and on the other hand, constructions of musical space which tend to cut against diatonic prolongation. To slightly refine the opposition set up by Dahlhaus, it is to establish an analytical dialectic of 'centrifugal' forces (generally speaking, a harmonic palette derived from any kind of symmetrical division of the octave, which hexatonic and pitch-class set theory are well placed to describe) and 'centripetal' forces (generally speaking, diatonic harmony, whose structuring principles are most comprehensively described by Schenker).¹¹ Favouring either pole over the other will simply tend to exaggerate the reading of a piece's tonality in one way or another, allowing the historically constructed listener's response too little or too much influence on the analytical reading.

I shall turn back now to the various forms of tonality examined in this book, whose effects on listeners I claim that analysts must somehow examine with both historical and ideological sensitivity. In the case of the amateur music following the Neue Musik Berlin festival of 1930, which is the subject of Scheideler's contribution, it is a designedly bland and archaic tonality; and in the case of Bruno Stürmer, who was published by Schott, it was 'specifically the modality of the seventeenth-century homophonic four-part chorale (*Kantionalsatz*)' (p. 210). In this case, a dialectical reading may appear to be unnecessary, since 'non-tonal' elements seem unimportant, but reflection on what we might call 'the state of the dialectic' in music like this can enable a historical, critical or even ideological interpretation to emerge from the analysis. For instance, in Levy's chapter, Harris's constant appeals to nature reveal an ideological commitment which belies his (and some of his interpreters') attempt to plead innocence of any such thing. He argued, for instance, that symmetrical subdivisions of the octave were unnatural, 'symptoms of man-made artificiality that ran counter to organic unfolding' (p. 253). This is typical of people who consider themselves impervious to ideology: having (rightly) identified the manufactured nature of whole-tone, octatonic, hexatonic and serial thinking, Harris simply declines to interrogate the manufactured basis of his own practice. His favouring of one side of the dialectic – the diatonic, centripetal pole – is an explicit rejection of any possibility of non-tonal structuring, which marks him out very significantly from composers who are willing to reach some kind of accommodation between opposing systems. Which is another way of saying that there is conservatism and conservatism. When confronted with the radical challenge of communism, some propose social democracy as a means of reconciling the call for public ownership with the existing structures of capitalist society. That is a 'conservative' response, but it is worlds away from a refusal to countenance the call for reconfiguration at all, and to seek to follow the neoliberal logic of total privatisation. If we are sensitive to the dialectic of twentieth-century tonality, fine distinctions between 'conservative' responses to new musical realities

become possible.¹²

Some uses of tonality, however, are significantly more adventurous than the Stürmer and Harris examples, and the chapters by Mark Delaere on polytonality and Daniel Harrison on Barber's 'tonal serialism' trace two intriguing forms of them. Harrison's is particularly successful at outlining the dialectical tension between the two organisational principles, tonal and serial, in Barber's *Nocturne*. The first note row of the piece, which Barber uses as the melody above a non-serially organised left-hand nocturne accompaniment, is composed of three [0127] tetrachords, motivically presented, with very clear accents, so that the melody sounds like an augmented triad which has been filled in with filigree chromatic decoration between each 'node' (pp. 264–5). The tension between the serial design of the theme, which is 'heard' as a row by a listener who has been tipped off that it is one, and the tonal space in which the theme and its accompaniment move is illustrated by a voice-leading graph which shows a bass arpeggiation of a tonic triad, A<flat>–C–E<flat>, in the A section, decoration of the bass E<flat> in the B section and a resolution to A<flat> in the modified repeat of the A section (p. 263).

Delaere frames his chapter with a joke, saying that in writing about Milhaud's polytonality, he 'can assure the guardians of public morals and decency that [he] will not make a plea for polymorphous perversity' (p. 157, cf. the reference to the same in the closing sentence on p. 171). Delaere is referring here to Wilfred Mellers, who in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1989 described Milhaud's use of the technique as 'a tribute to Nature's polymorphous perversity' (cited p. 157). It is not clear that Delaere spots the reference, but this is simply Freud's term for the infant stage of sexual development, a period before erotic pleasure has been particularised to the genitals and where it is therefore experienced in all parts of the body.¹³ As a description of polytonality, Mellers presumably meant to indicate that it was music which gives pleasure without having a single focal point, and as such the description could be perfectly apt.

Delaere provides an informative summary of French theories of polytonality, beginning with Milhaud,¹⁴ in which he requires that polytonal voices be exclusively diatonic, admitting of modulations only on condition that they should be 'straightforward and unambiguous so as not to disturb the diatonic quality of the music' (cited p. 159). Developing these thoughts, Charles Koechlin prizes polytonality for 'its potential to produce a plethora of sensual and emotional impressions' (which should perhaps already put us in mind of polymorphous perversity), and interestingly he recommends 'the use of one unambiguous tonality at the beginning of a polytonal composition', which suggests a clear dialectical positioning between centripetal and centrifugal poles (cited p. 161).¹⁵

One is tempted to ask whether, as conceived in 1920s France, polytonality is really, so to speak, a refracted chromaticism, a verticalisation of a chromatic variety within a tonal hegemony that is, in other styles, presented horizontally. Being of limited chromatic interest, the individual tonalities are in fact quite underdeveloped: tonality is a more capacious concept than the individual strands are willing (or

able) to explore. Perhaps it overstates matters to claim that because the different keys only gain full and interesting tonal development when considered as a whole, their vertical separation amounts to a kind of pseudo-individuation. On the other hand, the simplicity of the different key areas does suggest a childlike aesthetic, and the Freudian implications of polymorphous perversity are therefore substantiated by Delaere's clear delineation of its theorisation (particularly in a six-point set of criteria given on p. 163). So, in short: if the tonality of each contrapuntal strand is no more developed or more curious in its explorations than a piece by the seven-year-old Mozart, we might indeed call its component parts childish, giving pleasure from a number of areas, not yet fixing on one in particular, and thus fitting Freud's view. This is a matter which analysis could examine by considering the tension between a Schenkerian reading of any global tonal structuring (bearing in mind Koechlin's recommendation for unambiguous tonic framing) and its mediation by the centrifugal forces of its polytonal contrapuntal strands. Delaere's use of Mellers's words in the context of his rich chapter therefore makes me feel that it would have been even more fruitful for him to have taken the joke seriously.

Richard Cohn's remarks on listener perception of hexatonic transformations, familiar from his earlier writings,¹⁶ are particularly interesting in this psychological context, not least because he actually invokes Freud in support of his theory. Having observed that tonality does not inhere in the notes but is a communal construction on the part of a community of listeners (p. 47), Cohn claims that for this community of listeners (he does not define it precisely, but I think it is safe to assume that he means early twenty-first-century students of Western classical music), 'hexatonic poles destabilize the consonant status of one or both constituent triads' (p. 51). By 'hexatonic pole' he means, for instance, the shift from E major to C minor, a parsimonious chromatic movement between chords which have no pitches in common. He observes that, in the case of this particular motion,

the interval comprising the perfect fifth, here E to B, is [...] heard to grow by two diatonic degrees. What is notated as the consonant E<flat> to C is perceived as D<sharp> to C. But that is a dissonant interval; and so the second chord must be a dissonant chord. The ear is caught between the desire to hear the chord as a consonant triad or as a species of diminished seventh. The progression thus erodes a cardinal musical binary, between consonance and dissonance. Such leaks in boundaries that one had thought secure are a mark of the uncanny [which he links directly to the Freudian notion of the *unheimlich*]. (*Ibid.*)

Although by the end of this exposition Cohn is careful to say that 'the ear is caught between' two interpretations, I am not sure on what basis he states more baldly that the C minor chord *is* heard as containing a D<sharp>. I have tried this example on half a dozen of my own students, and although the sample size is too small to draw any definite conclusions, the fact that not one of them 'heard' anything other than two triads is enough to focus the mind. If we turn Cohn's observations on the community of listeners back onto his own analysis here, we might conclude that the only such community which might

be assured of hearing the motion is a community which has been conditioned (or, to use Schoenberg's term, 'inbred') by hexatonic theory to listen in that way. It is ironic that only a page earlier Cohn had criticised theorists who 'make' hexatonic progressions fit into a diatonic tonal frame, yet here makes something which could very easily be read simply as diatonic into something that is 'uncanny'. Both he and his straw man may be letting their theory run away with them. What I mean here is more or less captured by Dilthey's distinction, cited in Felix Wörner's chapter on Ernst Kurth, between *verstehen* (understanding), which is the interpretative work of history, and *erklären* (explaining), which is the descriptive work of science (p. 128). Hexatonic analysis, like pitch-class set analysis, does an excellent job of explaining how the music comes to have the pitches it does in a technical sense, but understanding requires further steps.¹⁷

This assumption that the hexatonic is privileged relative to the diatonic guides the rest of his chapter, which presents an otherwise very interesting analysis of Prokofiev's use of tonality in *Peter and the Wolf*. In two *Tonnetz* figures Cohn swiftly establishes that in the opening presentation of Peter's theme, the harmonic action mostly takes place outside the 'walled garden' of diatonic tonality. The garden is Cohn's metaphor for Peter's bourgeois existence in a big house with a surrounding wall; it is also his metaphor for diatonic tonality, and one I should like to examine. As the *Tonnetz* diagram reproduced in Fig. 1 illustrates, Peter's theme tends to wander up and down two 'hexatonic alleys', C major to A <flat> major/minor to E <flat> major to B minor, and so on (there are three alleys, one each for tonic, dominant and subdominant, which are bound by thick lines and run diagonally from top right to bottom left). The harmony spends less time in the 'comfortable bourgeois home' (p. 53) than in 'the chromatic forest' (p. 55), and Cohn concludes of the piece as a whole that 'the more perilous or fantastic the circumstance, [...] the more indeterminate the consonant status of the local triad, and the more insecure its relation to the global C-major tonic' (p. 61). The argument has a certain basic appeal, and it is certainly true that there is a lot of hexatonic activity in this piece. But if we exchange Cohn's metaphor for another, we might decide on a different appraisal of the nature of tonality – not just in this piece, but more generally.

<INSERT FIGS 1 AND 2 NEAR HERE>

Fig. 2 offers what Cohn does not: an elementary Schenkerian analysis of bars 1–9, the same ones written into Cohn's *Tonnetz*. Just as definitively as Cohn's analysis shows diatonicism being troubled by hexatonicism, a Schenkerian reading shows hexatonicism submitting to diatonic order. The opening nine bars establish a *Kopfton* G which is prolonged by motion to and from a lower-neighbour F <sharp> in bar 7. A skip to a covering C in bar 3 enables a chromatic decoration as the bass arpeggiates to <flat> III in bar 5, en route to the dominant in bar 8. A chromatic passing note in an inner-voice third descent, from E (bar 2) to E <flat> (bar 4) to D (bar 7) to C (bar 9), lends a hint of tonicisation to the modally mixed arpeggiation, but otherwise the piece begins in a strongly – and quite conventionally – defined diatonic

space. Rather than leaving home, we could instead suggest that the boundaries of what constitutes home have simply expanded. Substituting an imperial metaphor for Cohn's bourgeois-garden one, we might note the interesting coincidence in the nineteenth century of a development in European tonal harmony (the embrace of new chromatic possibilities for symmetrical division of the octave) and European politics (the rapid growth of empire). Both tonal and political empires grew in this period to become more various, less monoglot, more flavoured by spice from the colonies. Musical pieces continued to start and end in the tonic and to have subdominant and dominant functions, but chords I, IV and V (Great Britain, France and Germany, in terms of the political metaphor) may have their own hexatonic colonies (Cohn's 'alleys'). The imperial centre of tonality could therefore always assure total control over these spaces at the same time that it allowed music to move quite freely through them all.

Viewing *Peter and the Wolf* by the light of this alternative metaphor, in which 'home' is not fixed but an expanding imperial centre, we might instead conclude that there is no sense of the *unheimlich* here, or at least no more of an *unheimlich* feeling than the British upper class ever felt in Delhi. Instead of conceiving of this kind of tonality as leaving the security of home for the wilds of the forest, we might instead decide either that the chromatic colonisation does not threaten the diatonic imperial centre, or even that any attempt to escape from the tonal symbolic order would require rather more extreme measures (such as outright rejection of every tonal impulse whatever). In the first scenario, it would seem that the process of chromatic colonisation merely disguises the hegemonic diatonic order, beguiling the incautious observer into thinking that centrifugal forces have genuinely replaced centripetal ones, with the effect of destabilising or even overturning the structural order. But if instead hexatonicism is considered not a hegemonic challenge to tonality, but simply a pursuit of colourful novelty, it would seem additionally to create another historic and cultural parallel with capitalism's configuration of public and aesthetic space in terms of commodified novelties. The question of twentieth-century tonality's place in the Adornian struggle between the culture industry and modernism would therefore reopen in interesting ways.

Cohn's *unheimlich* hexatonic 'poles' are, I suggest, ultimately 'problems' which can be comfortably accommodated within tonal structures. Both Cohn's *Tonnetz* (and more generally his hexatonic reading) and my Schenkerian graph are distortions of the opening of *Peter and the Wolf* which fail to properly acknowledge the dialectical tension in the music – and specifically a *negative dialectics* in Adorno's sense, since these two positions mediate each other forever, refusing to form a synthesis. It is the nature of modernist tonal music to move perpetually between the poles of integration and disintegration and to settle in each case on an individual accommodation which is more or less 'conservative' or 'radical'. Cohn's hexatonic theory, along with other non-diatonic theories, should therefore be a vital part of the analyst's tool kit when examining twentieth-century tonal music; but I suggest that it should always be used in

conjunction with Schenkerian analysis.

The chapter which comes closest to the kind of dialectical method that I find most persuasive for *understanding* rather than simply *describing* twentieth-century tonality is Philip Rupprecht's analysis of Britten's 'triadic modernism'. He pays particular attention to Britten's *Sextet*, written by the sixteen-year-old composer as 'a Schoenbergian experiment, a path not taken' (p. 231), and songs from *Les Illuminations* (1939), in which Mahler and Shostakovich have replaced Schoenberg as influences. The earlier work establishes important patterns for understanding the later, specifically in Britten's presentation of triads. Rupprecht writes that 'even in [the *Sextet*'s] strikingly chromatic milieu, Britten continues to define tonal arrivals at pivotal moments of the form, though major-minor resources – actual triads – play very little role as local harmonies' (p. 230). If my argument (and Schoenberg's, and Schenker's) is right, and tonality has an ideological force, then even sparse use of triads will be sufficient to maintain the hegemony – in just the same way that an election every four or five years is enough to sustain modern parliamentary democracy. Citizens do not need to cast votes every week (the equivalent of a perfect cadence every eight bars in a piece of music, say) in order to maintain order: democracy is such a strong ideology that it can survive on the very merest food, and any doubt that citizens live in a properly democratic society is swiftly dismissed by the blithe reassurance that they get to step into the voting booth around a dozen times in their adult lives. Just how many triads are necessary to sustain tonality? (Krenek would probably answer 'one'.)

Rupprecht's analysis of 'Villes' is particularly sophisticated, and the figure reproduced as Fig. 3 summarises some of its central claims. The song is saturated with two tonal gestures that Rupprecht calls 'GLITTER' – a shift from major to minor, or vice versa, and back: 'a consecutive, self-reversing instance of Cohn's P (Parallel) function' (p. 235) – and 'SHIMMER' – a linear variant of GLITTER, which unfolds a major/minor shift with a string of chromatic passing notes. Both are shown in Fig. 3, in simple form at (c) and as part of the progression of bars 1–14 at (a). Rupprecht's graph combines elements of centrifugal and centripetal motion, expressed in a very loose Schenkerian form with considerable non-diatonic complications (he calls it 'a proto-Schenkerian attempt to distinguish dependencies from more structural pitches', p. 235). But in the Cohn manner he also presents a tabulation of motions in hexatonic space (his Fig. 1 on p. 236), with arrows pointing, for instance, G major \leftarrow B major \leftrightarrow B minor (for GLITTER), and so on (this corresponds to what in Fig. 3 is shown between bars 1 and 5). This reads more like an inventory, with chords ticked off as being present and connected, than an analysis: it is not clear from this kind of representation whether there is any sense of centring, or whether there is simply an assumption that there *is not* one. The 'proto-Schenkerian' reading, however, problematises this assumption. Rupprecht argues that across bars 1–14 Britten presents, in a very light-touch manner, a progression from I to V, admitting as he does so that many theorists would be resistant to the functional implications of these

ostensibly rather isolated chords. But if tonality inheres in music with the force of an ideology, it is legitimate to ask, with Rupprecht, whether these two chords are sufficient to ground the song tonally. Ultimately he does not favour an integrative or disintegrative reading, which seems to me to be a highly sensitive response to the music of the song.

<INSERT FIG. 3 NEAR HERE>

In other chapters, the ‘meanings’ that hexatonic motions are supposed to carry (of which Cohn’s *Unheimlichkeit* is the one most usually invoked) tend to be assumed more than interrogated. In analysing Ravel, for instance, Volker Helbling refers liberally to tetrachords and trichords, which in their very language – redolent of the analysis of free atonal music – presupposes a post-tonal interpretation which is not checked by any thoroughgoing investigation of tonal implications. Similarly, while Alain Frogley remarks that we find in Vaughan Williams’s style after the 1920s a ‘finely balanced dialectic between diatonic tonality and various anti-tonal elements typical of mid-century modernism’ (p. 188), his analysis omits the Schenkerian methodological pole, and thus a genuine dialectics is not possible. In its place we have alternatives, with no way of judging the nature or ultimate outcome of their interaction, and with the presumption, as with other contributors, in favour of a too easy decentring of tonality and the certainty of the by now familiar Cohnian *unheimlich* (‘a twilit second movement, in which hexatonic elements evoke well-established associations with the uncanny’, p. 199).

One of the principal strengths of this frequently fascinating collection is its focusing of the question of how tonality could participate in early twentieth-century modernism. Even where I am frustrated by the methodological oversimplification of several chapters, I find much to stimulate thought in virtually all of the contributions. Albeit tentatively, I suggest that the book enables us to dare some possible answers to questions of meaning in the tonal music of 1900–1950: the first decades in history when composers could choose whether or not to write music which had a conception of consonance and dissonance. However different their responses to this challenge were, all the composers whose music is examined in this volume decided to stick with the consonance/dissonance binary and to reject the full revolutionary force of a new music which could declare both consonance and dissonance invalid as concepts. Yet even the most contrary composers, such as Harris, were conditioned by that revolution, compelled to respond to it, however strenuously they might have denied any conscious decision at all. If we are to glimpse whatever meaning may emerge from this music, it is vital that the state of the dialectic of tonal and non-tonal elements be grasped both analytically and hermeneutically.

By way of conclusion, I would suggest that one useful way of parsing the language of twentieth-century art music is by reference to linguistic mood. From this perspective, the music that we mostly call ‘modernist’ (a set whose members include Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Berio, Nono, Ligeti, Lachenmann,

Boulez, Birtwistle, Ferneyhough, and so on) is mostly in the *imperative*, and music which is more or less tonal (broadly, the music which provides a focus for this book) is in the *subjunctive*. There is an immediate problem here. In some languages, including English, those two moods can be distinguished from each other only by reference to context. So, for instance, the words 'be radical' could be either in the imperative – if they constitute the entire utterance – or in the subjunctive – if the full utterance is 'it is important that you be radical'. The first sentence carries the force of a command, while the second carries a burden of doubt or uncertainty. Similarly, in twentieth-century music, an ordered succession of twelve notes will carry the force of the imperative if it is used in a symphony by Webern, but should be understood in the subjunctive, with an expression of doubt as to its ontological reality, where it is placed in a tonal context, for instance in the Barber *Nocturne* that Harrison examines. The words alone do not communicate their meaning; their signification drifts unmoored. Only when the shifting signifiers are brought into contact with others can a meaning be 'quilted', in Lacan's sense, and retrospectively created for the utterance. And, once again, in music it is not necessarily the notes or chords but their context alongside others which fixes their signification in a range of 'purely musical', historical, psychological and hermeneutic senses. Any study of tonality in twentieth-century art music which aims to assess that system of musical organisation in a way that clarifies questions of history, aesthetics, or the effects on (or of) a listener must therefore keep that complexity – the fact that the notes alone will not aid in the parsing of an utterance – at the forefront of the investigation. And that is why, ultimately, mere description, *Erklärung*, will not do: for an understanding, *Verstehen*, we urgently need to turn our attention away from detail and on to context, and then to move incessantly between the two, judging the dialectical interaction of both mutually mediating poles.

I cannot decide whether it would please him or not, but I feel certain that if we are to properly understand either the organisation or the meaning of post-Schoenbergian tonality, we need to return, rigorously, to Schenker.

J. P. E. HARPER-SCOTT

NOTES

1. Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, trans. Roy E. Carter, 2nd edn (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010; originally published as *Harmonielehre*, 1911), and Paul Hindemith, 'Sterbende Gewässer', in *Aufsätze, Vorträge, Reden*, ed. Giseler Schbert (Zürich: Atlantis, 1994; first published 1963), pp. 314–36.
2. See Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: the Colonial Experience* (New York: Random House, 1958), *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York: Random House, 1965) and *The Americans: The Democratic Experience* (New York: Random House, 1973).
3. As so often, the assumption that 'technology' is a twentieth-century, gadget-centred phenomenon goes unquestioned. Music has been mediated by technology at least since the dawn of notation.
4. Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in Hannah Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zorn (New York: Schocken, 1969; first published 1936), pp. 217–51.
5. For an introduction to sound studies, see Jonathan Sterne (ed.), *The Sound Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2012).
6. Thomas Piketty demonstrates beyond reasonable doubt that what seemed like the *Götterdämmerung* of the elites and the democratisation of wealth in the early twentieth century was just a blip: in the long run, capitalism simply reconfigured itself and by the start of the twenty-first century has restored the status quo ante of the belle époque (*Capital in the Twenty-first Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014). The strong return of tonal tendencies in the work of highly preferred composers today such as Thomas Adès, Julian Anderson, George Benjamin, Nico Muhly and others can appear to make the history of tonality take on, from this perspective, a similar cyclical form.
7. Heinrich Schenker, *Harmony*, ed. Oswald Jones, trans. Elisabeth Mann Borgese (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954; originally published as *Harmonielehre*, 1906).
8. Scheideler invokes Adorno to make a similar argument, in his case in defence of Hindemith's tonal practice (p. 220).
9. This is something I argue at much greater length in *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism: Revolution, Reaction, and William Walton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), especially in Ch. 5.
10. Theodor Adorno, *Dissonanzen. Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, 2nd edn, *Gesammelte Schriften* 14 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1980), pp. 143–67.
11. On centripetal and centrifugal forces, see Carl Dahlhaus, *Between Romanticism and Modernism:*

Four Studies in the Music of the Later Nineteenth Century, trans. Mary Whittall (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1980), where he suggests that the *Tristan* Prelude is centrifugal and Brahms's First Piano Concerto is centripetal (p. 74).

12. My dissatisfaction with the term 'conservative,' which is often used to describe tonal music in the twentieth century, is perhaps sufficiently indicated by the scare quotes. For an elaboration of the model I present here for distinguishing between different dialectical forms of musical material, see again Harper-Scott, *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism*, Ch. 5, in which Alain Badiou's theory of the Event, and the 'faithful,' 'reactive' and 'obscure' responses to it, is applied to music since 1900.
13. Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1962; originally published as *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, 1905).
14. Darius Milhaud, 'Polytonalité et Atonalité,' *La Revue musicale*, 4/iv (1923), pp. 29–44.
15. Charles Koechlin, 'Évolution de l'harmonie: Période contemporaine, depuis Bizet et César Franck jusqu'à nos jours,' in Albert Lavignac and Lionel de la Laurencie (eds), *Encyclopédie de la musique et Dictionnaire du Conservatoire*, 2 ptie., *Technique – Esthétique – Pédagogie* (Paris: Delagrave, 1925), pp. 591–760.
16. Cohn cites his own 'Uncanny Resemblances' as an important source. 'Uncanny Resemblances: Tonal Signification in the Freudian Age,' *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 57 (2004), pp. 285–323.
17. The practice I urge here is not entirely at odds with what Wörner describes as the Kurthian "intuitive" approach, which, by 'avoiding categorization in favor of an often-metaphorical elucidation, shows how tonality works when conceived as a flexible, context-dependent, and psychologically-influenced feature' (p. 136).

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTOR

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[CAPTIONS]

Fig. 1 Prokofiev, *Peter and the Wolf*: Peter's theme on the *Tonnetz*, with hexatonic alleys (Cohn's Ex. 3, from p. 55). Reproduced by kind permission of Franz Steiner Verlag.

Fig. 2 Prokofiev, *Peter and the Wolf*: foreground graph of Peter's theme

Fig. 3 Britten, 'Villes' (*Les Illuminations*, 1939): motive and harmonies at the opening (Rupprecht's Ex. 2, from p. 234). Reproduced by kind permission of Franz Steiner Verlag.