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## **BRITISH MUSICAL MODERNISM DEFENDED AGAINST ITS DEVOTEES**

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### Declaration of Authorship

I, Annika Forkert, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:

Date: 16 December 2014

## Abstract

This thesis forges a strong connection between British music of the early to mid-twentieth century and the concept of modernism. In one important tradition of criticism, modernism has increasingly been regarded as a tendentious concept, or even as a dangerous ideological disguise for what is simply the exclusion of much art from the so called peripheries of Europe and non-Western cultures. An expansion of the concept in literature and music studies has, however, resulted in the indiscriminate application of modernism and in consequence has led it to lose whatever rigour it had formerly – however problematically – enjoyed. The thesis suggests that parts of modernist exclusivity and rigorous definition can be saved, while at the same time the canon of modernist music can be expanded with a solid methodological foundation it has not possessed so far. To this end, this study articulates a new theory based on a model proposed in philosopher Alain Badiou’s recent work, which relates a concentrated, high-modernist core to ‘marginal’ music of the twentieth century. By ‘logicalizing’ this model, the thesis achieves the goal of offering a new engagement with modernism without surrendering to new ideological premises. The theory is put into practice in three case studies of music by British composers with a claim to reconsideration as modernists: Gustav Holst’s orchestral *Egdon Heath* (1927), Elisabeth Lutyens’s cantata for soprano, mandolin, guitar, harp, and string orchestra *O saisons, ô châteaux!* (1946), and William Walton’s cycle for reciter and instrumental ensemble, *Façade* (1921–79).

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## Acknowledgements

The roots of this thesis lie in Berlin Cathedral, where I heard my first piece of twentieth-century British music – Ralph Vaughan Williams’s *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* – in an advent concert dedicated to English music with my parents. The fascination of this tonal, yet somehow modern, music challenged me to write my Magistra Artium dissertation under Hermann Danuser at Humboldt-University Berlin about the ‘Englishness’ of Vaughan Williams’s Fourth Symphony. It was during this time that I was in danger of getting lost in the apparently inevitable loneliness engulfing the student of British music in my native Germany. When I sent an emergency beacon out of the blue to J. P. E. Harper-Scott at Royal Holloway, University of London, he responded, and has since continued to respond in his role as my PhD supervisor, with his characteristic intellectual generosity and encouragement that is given so freely that one is in danger of taking it for granted. In fact, the effort necessary to bring a German student of musicology up to speed on the operational principles, topics, and methodologies of Anglo–American musicology can not only not be taken for granted, but can hardly be repaid.

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Despite all the generous help I received, all errors remain mine.

The thesis is dedicated to my family, who protected me as long as they could.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

*To each age its art*<sup>1</sup>

Modernism. If some music and art historians are tired of the word turning up like a bad penny in the discourse of twentieth-century arts, literature, and music history, they can hardly be blamed. Such weariness may stem from the frequency with which modernism has asserted itself in academic book titles as well as in the titles of major exhibitions about twentieth-century art and culture in the Western world.<sup>2</sup> Museums have recently been falling over each other to demonstrate the relevance of what is, in this context, best perceived as a *movement* of modernism in design and architecture, dance and music, as well as painting, to the interested public. In London alone, authoritative exhibitions like the V&A's *Modernism. Designing a New World, 1914–1939* in 2006, *Diaghilev and the Golden Age of the Ballets Russes, 1909–1929* of 2010/11, and the National Gallery's *Facing the Modern: the Portrait in Vienna 1900* of 2013/14 confirm, if not the interest of the public in this country *per se*, then the belief of curators that modernism is a word

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<sup>1</sup> This is the translation of the first half of the Vienna Secession's mighty claim, written on the dome of their building in the Innere Stadt. Although this study must certainly lack the beauty of the ball of golden leaves directly above this inscription on the building, the sentence may serve as a reminder of the paradoxical mixture of ornament, newness, tradition, modernity, and nationality which manifested itself in what has been called modernism, and which is examined in the chapters of this thesis.

<sup>2</sup> To attempt to list even a fraction of the titles about modernism in literature, the arts, and music would be vain. This thesis owes a great debt to (and hence criticizes) particular thoughts and theories, however. Among transdisciplinary books these can be found in: Daniel Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts* (Chicago, London: UoCP, 2000); Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde. Foreword by Jochen Schulte-Sasse*, tr. Michael Shaw (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984); Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music, and Painting in Europe, 1900–1916* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Walter Frisch, *German Modernism: Music and the Arts* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: UoCP, 2005); and Peter Gay, *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy. From Baudelaire to Beckett and Beyond* (London: William Heinemann, 2007). Among collections on music and modernism, the following have a great share in having sparked my interest in the topic initially: Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, tr. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006, c1949); Carl Dahlhaus, *Between Romanticism and Modernism: Four Studies in the Music of the Later Nineteenth Century*, tr. Mary Whittall (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: UoCP, 1980); Hermann Danuser, *Die Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts (Neues Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft vol. 7, Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1984)*; Jennifer Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922–1936: Shaping a Nation's Tastes* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999); Paul Griffiths, *A Concise History of Western Music* (Cambridge et al.: CUP, 2006); Joseph N. Straus, *Remaking the Past: Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition* (Cambridge, MA, London: Harvard University Press, 1990); Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music: The Early Twentieth Century* (henceforth *OHWM 4*) (vol. 4, Oxford: OUP, 2005); Arnold Whittall, *Music Since the First World War* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1977), idem, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Rev. ed., Oxford: OUP, 1999).

which will draw that public.<sup>3</sup> In the light of this continuing development it seems only fair to sound a warning right at the outset that this thesis examines the canonical as well as the most recent discussions about modernism in music in detail to emerge with something that might seem at odds with modernism itself – that is, a compromise.

To claim anything else than that in the face of over one century of fights about modernism, Moderne, modernity, Neue Musik, the ultra-modern, and avant-gardes would be difficult to uphold and, more importantly, unhelpful to the discussion itself. It seems to be in the nature of modernism to invite the idea that in order to examine something as seminal and forbidding as modernism, seminal and forbidding theories have to be piled up against each other, only to melt together into the large amount of postmodernist conceptual history that music students find themselves confronted with today.<sup>4</sup> It is my claim, however, that what is needed in the current climate is not another self-declared salutary system but the best possible compromise. If the discipline wants to keep modernism in its historiographical toolbox, then it will need to find a workable strategy of defining and applying modernism that can be based on what theory is available and that can fulfil the growing demands of a part of musicology which continues to challenge its basis – a basis which, especially in the field of early twentieth-century modernism, could be perceived as overly Teutonic in some of its key figures (first and foremost, Adorno) and their particular reliance on a narrow canon of Austro-German music, which still holds a tight grip over musicology as a whole.<sup>5</sup> This is, in intention, what this thesis provides.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/microsites/1331\\_modernism/](http://www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/microsites/1331_modernism/),  
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/d/diaghilev-and-the-ballets-russes/>,  
<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/Vienna> (all 19/11/2013).

<sup>4</sup> As a tutorial assistant on the course 'Introduction to Historical Musicology' at Royal Holloway, University of London, I found myself confronted by the deeply postmodernist view of an undergraduate student that Guillaume de Machaut was the first modernist. I found this claim much harder to counter than I had thought on a first glance.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Adorno, *Philosophy*. Adorno goes on to play an important part in the thought of Hermann Danuser, Gianmario Borio, Max Paddison, and Richard Taruskin, among many others, as this thesis will argue. This tradition has been challenged in the work of, for example, Nicholas Cook and Anthony Pople (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), particularly in its structure and intention; Dejan Despić and Melita Milin (eds.), *Rethinking Musical Modernism* (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2008); Robert P. Morgan (ed.), *Modern Times: From World War I to the Present* (Basingstoke, London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1993); among many others, in particular the authors of the following footnote.

In order to test the theory of modernism developed here and to demonstrate and evaluate its ways of functioning, I have chosen to concentrate the argument on the relationship between modernism and British music. On a first glance, this may seem to limit the potential of this study, which might also turn to music in Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, or Russia to examine recent music-historiographical re-evaluations of modernism. Considering the sheer amount of thought on modernism, however, it became clear early on that the thesis would have to be grounded in one 'field' of responses to the challenge that modernism provides, in order to follow the lines of thought and of scholarship within a manageable space. British music's relation to modernism is particularly rewarding in that it has been developed very recently within a growing group of titles which seek solutions for a constricted canon of works by British composers in the early twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> These titles represent a variety of solutions, but they are connected by their common confrontation of a modernism based on an Adornian Germanic thought construct and by the urgency of their claims. Additionally, the position of British

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<sup>6</sup> In 2008, *The Musical Quarterly* devoted one entire issue to the topic 'British Modernism' (Byron Adams, 'Foreword', *The Musical Quarterly*, 91/1-2 [2008], 1-7; Anthony Barone, 'Modernist Rifts in a Pastoral Landscape. Observations on the Manuscripts of Ralph Vaughan Williams's Fourth Symphony', *ibid.*, 60-88; Jenny Doctor, 'The Parataxis of "British Musical Modernism"', *ibid.*, 89-115; Daniel M. Grimley, 'Music, Ice, and the "Geometry of Fear". The Landscapes of Vaughan Williams's *Sinfonia Antartica*', *ibid.*, 116-50; Charles Edward McGuire, 'Edward Elgar. "Modern" or "Modernist"? Construction of an Aesthetic Identity on the British Music Press 1895-1934', *ibid.*, 8-38; Eric Saylor, '"It's Not Lambkins Frisking At All". English Pastoral Music and the Great War', *ibid.*, 39-59). This was followed by Matthew Riley (ed.), *British Music and Modernism. 1895-1960* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010) and its contributions by Tim Barringer, 'Façades for *Façade*. William Walton, Visual Culture and English Modernism in the Sitwell Circle', in *ibid.*, 125-45; Stephen Downes, 'Modern Maritime Pastoral. Wave Deformations in the Music of Frank Bridge', in *ibid.*, 93-107; Christopher Dromey, 'Benjamin Britten's "Pierrot" Ensembles', in *ibid.*, 221-48; Daniel Grimley, 'Landscape and Distance. Vaughan Williams, Modernism and the Symphonic Pastoral', in *ibid.*, 147-74; J. P. E. Harper-Scott, 'Vaughan Williams's Antic Symphony', in *ibid.*, 175-96; Deborah Heckert, 'Schoenberg, Roger Fry and the Emergence of a Critical Language for the Reception of Musical Modernism in Britain, 1912-1914', in *ibid.*, 49-66; Meirion Hughes, '"A Thoroughgoing Modern". Elgar Reception in the *Manchester Guardian*, 1896-1908', in *ibid.*, 31-48; Thomas Irvine, 'Hindemith's Disciple in London. Walter Leigh on Modern Music 1932-40', in *ibid.*, 197-219; Laurel Parsons, 'Early Music and the Ambivalent Origins of Elisabeth Lutyens's Modernism', in *ibid.*, 269-92; Matthew Riley, 'Liberal Critics and Modern Music in the Post-Victorian Age', in *ibid.*, 13-30; Christopher M. Scheer, '"A Direct and Intimate Realization". Holst and Formalism in the 1920s', in *ibid.*, 109-24; Gareth Thomas, 'Modernism, Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes in London', in *ibid.*, 67-92. Furthermore, see Christopher Chowrimootoo, 'The Timely Traditions of *Albert Herring*', *The Opera Quarterly*, 27/4 (2012), 379-419; Doctor, *Ultra-Modern Music*; J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006); *idem*, '"Our True North". Walton's First Symphony, Sibelianism, and the Nationalization of Modernism in England', *Music & Letters*, 89/4 (2008), 562-89; Björn Heile, 'Darmstadt as Other. British and American Responses to Musical Modernism', *Twentieth-Century Music*, 1/2 (2004), 161-78; Suzanne Robinson, 'Smyth the Anarchist. Fin-de-siècle Radicalism in *The Wreckers*', *OPR*, 20/02 (2008), 149-80; Philip Rupprecht, '"Something Slightly Indecent". British Composers, the European Avant-Garde, and National Stereotypes in the 1950s', *The Musical Quarterly*, 91/3-4 (2008), 275-326; *idem*, 'Among the Ruined Languages: Britten's Triadic Modernism, 1930-1940', in Felix Wörner, Ullrich Scheideler, and *idem* (eds.), *Tonality 1900-1950: Concept and Practice* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012), 223-45.

composition holds its own particular dialectic: is British music part of a wider European culture or must it be understood as a separate development? As chapter 2 of this thesis finds, even the aforementioned champions of a British musical modernism hold differing opinions about this question, which, in essence, is also a political one. When my study argues that British music can indeed be as modernist as any Schoenberg piece, it therefore also makes a timely political statement in a currently highly charged debate in the context of reawakening nationalism and separatism within Europe, and even within the European Union. Here, just as in the conceptualization of modernism itself, this study argues for a compromise.

To file this whole enterprise under a thesis title inspired by that of a short, but typically waspish, essay by Theodor W. Adorno may serve as a promise that the following argument will sometimes be conducted densely and not entirely without polemic moments (though without Adorno's long sentences). When Adorno used the opportunity to attack the rise of historicism in German musicology in 1951, the essay 'Bach Defended against his Devotees' was born.<sup>7</sup> Hiding behind a title whose grammatical structure is surely more at home in the English than its native German language, the article enjoys an interesting middle position between sociological and musicological thinking in the collection *Prisms*, which, in Adorno's system as well as in his collected writings, represents the attempt to combine his socio-philosophical with his musicological writings. This outline is mirrored in the structure of this thesis to a certain degree, which has a theoretical, i.e. philosophical, and a practical, i.e. music analytical, part. Nevertheless it must be said that the points of contact between the content of Adorno's article and those of this thesis are limited: for example I do not intend to uphold Adorno's untenable claim that by subordinating music to its historical circumstances, devotees of British musical modernism are searching for a kind of *Führer* authority – that 'they

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<sup>7</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, 'Bach Defended against his Devotees', in idem, *Prisms*, tr. Samuel and Shierry Weber (London: Neville Spearman Limited, 1967), 133–46. Historicism, from *Historismus* in German, is more than historically informed performance, although both are closely related. The historicism Adorno criticizes stems from certain 'musicological circles', who attempted to resurrect 'the order of Being as such, in its most compelling musical form' after the Second World War in order to reinvent an authentic as well as unproblematic Germanness in musicological literature as well as performance (Adorno, 'Bach', 135). The relationship between historically informed performance and historicism is, as Friedhelm Krummacher asserts in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, dialectical in itself (Friedhelm Krummacher, 'Historismus', in Ludwig Finscher [ed.], *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik begründet von Friedrich Blume. Zweite, neubearbeitete Ausgabe, Sachteil 4 [henceforth MGG2], Sachteil 4. Hamm-Kar [Kassel et al.: Bärenreiter, 1996], cols. 335–52.*

enjoy the order of [the] music because it enables them to subordinate themselves.’<sup>8</sup>

I do, however, uphold the notion that the standard view of British musical modernism is in a similar situation to Adorno’s Bach. Where this Bach seems located on the edge between ‘archaic’ and ‘modern’, British musical modernism rests uneasily between Adorno’s ‘regressive’ and ‘progressive’.<sup>9</sup> Like Bach, British musical modernism may therefore be in need of defence against certain trends in that recent literature which is devoted to this topic.

Adorno accuses historicists of turning the titan Bach into a provincial Baroque composer in order to make him one of them, where the new devotees of British twentieth-century music follow the opposite direction by seeking to elevate this music up to the point at which it can participate in the movement of modernism. What these devotees fight against (Adorno’s German word, *Liebhaber*, translates as *devotee* as well as, more positively, *lover*) is what could be perceived as the exclusivity of what I will call A-Modernism – that is, the modernism of Adorno, of the avant-garde, or of some kind of authenticity. Against this they set different versions of B-Modernism – that is, the modernism of British music, or of an imagined B-list of composers. They resemble Adorno’s devotees in that they seek to change fundamentally our perception of particular composers by contextualizing them in a radically new way, by pulling them from a thin line between two aesthetic extremes into one category (‘Thomas Cantor’ or ‘modernist’). These authors represent the, probably very common, view in musicology that the influential Adornian tradition of musical modernism is too constricted and too focused on ‘Teutonic’ composers who also happen to be Adornian avant-garde composers (in essence Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern, with Bartók and Stravinsky as minor figures or even antipodes, as chapter 2 will show), with the inevitable consequence that post-tonal music is favoured as progressive and advanced above tonal music which is perceived as regressive and conservative.<sup>10</sup> Researchers of British as well as Scandinavian and Eastern

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<sup>8</sup> Adorno, ‘Bach’, 135.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>10</sup> By ‘post-tonal’, I here mean the descriptive definitions of what could be summarized as ‘atonality’ and ‘serialism’ in the sense of Paul Lansky, George Perle, and Dave Headlam, ‘Atonality’, in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, OUP.

European music and composers have arrived at this conclusion and demanded some kind of response to the current situation of modernism.<sup>11</sup>

Together with Adorno's polemic dialectics in works such as *The Philosophy of New Music*, the last hundred years of German musicology, with its strong focus on music from Austro-Germany, perhaps cannot be said to have taken serious steps to overcome this imbalance either.<sup>12</sup> One strategy of explaining the existence of this situation is to assume a time lag between Germanic and British worlds of music as well as musicology. The focus on the insularity and perhaps even anti-modernism of the English Musical Renaissance in British mid-century music-historical writing about English twentieth-century music (at a time when Adorno was setting down his ideas about the Germanic avant-garde) could explain this lag,<sup>13</sup> which is formulated by Arnold Whittall as well as, more recently, Philip Rupprecht.<sup>14</sup> Yet it

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<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/47354> (30/5/14) and Paul Griffiths, 'Serialism', in *ibid.*,

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/25459> (30/5/14). By 'tonal' and 'tonality' I mean what Brian Hyer has examined and challenged as music that 'is discontinuous as a form of cultural expression from modal music (before 1600) on the one hand and atonal music (after 1910) on the other' with all the historiographical problems this causes (Brian Hyer, 'Tonality', in *ibid.*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/28102> [30/5/14]).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Daniel M. Grimley (ed.), *Jean Sibelius and His World* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011), and particularly Jeffrey Kallberg, 'Finnish Modern. Love, Sex and Style in Sibelius's Songs', in *ibid.*, 117–36, and Tomi Mäkelä, 'The Wings of a Butterfly. Sibelius and the Problems of Musical Modernity', in *ibid.*, 89–124; Daniel M. Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism* (Woodbridge et al.: The Boydell Press, 2010); James Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge et al.: CUP, 1993); Stephen Downes, *Music and Decadence in European Modernism. The Case of Central and Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010); and Despić & Milin, *Rethinking*. Kenneth Smith's work on Scriabin could be added to this list, as it stresses the need for Scriabin's tonality to be re-contextualized with a new analytic method and a new psychoanalytic background, even if this new context is not claimed to be explicitly modernist (cf. *idem*, "'A Science of Tonal Love"? Drive and Desire in Twentieth-Century Harmony: the Erotics of Skryabin', *Music Analysis* 29/i-ii-iii [2010], 234–63; *idem*, 'Skryabin's Revolving Harmonies, Lacanian Desire, and Riemannian Funktionstheorie', *Twentieth-Century Music* 7/2 [2011], 167–94; *idem*, *Skryabin, Philosophy and the Music of Desire* [Farnham: Ashgate, 2013]).

<sup>12</sup> The main culprits are of course Theodor W. Adorno in his *Philosophy of New Music*; *idem* and Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (eds.), *Aesthetic Theory: Newly Translated, Edited, and with a Translator's Introduction by Robert Hullot-Kentor* (London: Continuum, 2002, c1970); Gianmario Borio and Hermann Danuser (eds.), *Im Zenit der Moderne. Die internationalen Ferienkurse für Neue Musik Darmstadt 1946–1966*, 4 vols. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 1997); Dahlhaus, *Between Romanticism*.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Frank Howes, *The English Musical Renaissance* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966); Peter J. Pirie, *The English Musical Renaissance* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1979); Robert Stradling and Meirion Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860–1940. Construction and Deconstruction* (London: Routledge, 1993), and *idem*, *The English Musical Renaissance, 1840–1940. Constructing a National Music* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001). David Lambourn alludes to this overbalance as well in 'Modernism in British Music, 1900–22', MLitt dissertation (Cambridge, Cambridge University, 1993), 2–1–2, –3.

<sup>14</sup> Arnold Whittall, 'British Music in the Modern World', in Stephen Banfield (ed.) *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 9–26, 11; Rupprecht,

is not entirely obvious what historical force could have created such a time lag. More recently, alternative conceptions of British modernism have found that for their purposes it is necessary rather to rethink the concept of modernism than to account for its lack, as this thesis will show.

Devotees of British musical modernism as well as most music historians, irrespective of their country of origin, would probably not want to deny that the concept of modernism has been in crisis for a while (despite the curious fact that the concept does not have an entry in any edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* between 1898 and 1980).<sup>15</sup> This has led to some suggesting that it might be time to give up the concept and to others urging its expansion (in B-Modernism, for example). The latter is perhaps the dominant postmodernist perspective on musical modernism: despite the avant-garde's own claim to its truth and its exclusivity, postmodernism holds that there is no such absolute truth and that modernism therefore has to be more inclusive. It should open up its canons and allow itself to be remapped, rebranded, or re-evaluated – a call which chapter 2 will examine in greater detail. The problem which arises in the wake of this new requirement is that it endangers modernism's existence as a meaningful concept, and that *in extremis* modernism *becomes* postmodernism. My point is that scholars of B-Modernism, and with it other advocates of marginalized European concert music of the twentieth century, are thoroughly justified in opening up a discussion about the premises of the concept of modernism with regard to tonal music, but this direction of research has not been able to deliver a concept of modernism which is equal to the task. The compromise of this thesis will be to bring modernism and British music of the early twentieth century together, but this has to be achieved by *defending*, as it were, *British musical modernism against its own devotees*.

Yet, why modernism? Why pull out the old scarecrow again when there are less problematic concepts such as 'modernity' or simply 'twentieth-century music' to

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"Something Slightly Indecent"; it is also implied by Donald Mitchell, *The Language of Modern Music* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 110, fn. 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (editions of 1898, 1907, 1927, 1940, and 1954) and *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1980).

be had?<sup>16</sup> The reason is a belief which I share with Arved Ashby, whose introduction to *The Pleasure of Modernist Music* implies that it is not so much atonality or tonality that causes offence on different sides, but the claim to supremacy or the damnation granted those who use them.<sup>17</sup> In this situation, some would like to leave the concept behind altogether (and speak of a broader modernity), while others are happy to stretch what it can encompass beyond its limits. Both directions, however, are usually based on the perception that, however problematically, modernism was one of the most dominant stylistic movements of twentieth-century art music in the Western world and needs to be dealt with somehow – a notion this thesis shares. It is worth salvaging modernism, if the concept can indeed still be used as a useful tool to describe the outrageous, fascinating, and diverse happenings in music. To achieve this status, however, it must be ‘logicalized’, as this thesis argues, which means that it must be freed from its current occupation, as it were, by a particular group of composers and still retain a stable and constricted logical structure.<sup>18</sup>

This study may navigate through tight spots when it seeks to provide modernism with this new logicalized structure. One of the reasons for this unruly behaviour is that modernism ‘has not gone away’,<sup>19</sup> as Laura Tunbridge correctly observes in musicology’s latest attempt to open up and expand the concept; nor is it likely to. We just cannot stop discussing modernism, and that in itself is nearly justification enough to keep discussing it.

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<sup>16</sup> Julian Johnson, for example, has suggested to substitute modernism by the notion of modernity, a more permeable and open concept (cf. the intimate connection between romanticism and modernism in idem, *Who Needs Classical Music? Cultural Choice and Musical Value* [New York: OUP, 2002], 106; the critique of Adorno’s one sided focus on Germanic Neue Musik in idem, “‘The Elliptical Geometry of Utopia’”. *New Music Since Adorno*, in Berthold Hoeckner [ed.], *Apparitions: New Perspectives on Adorno and Twentieth-Century Music* [New York, London: Routledge, 2006], 69–84, 79; or the problem of categorizing Mahler in idem, *Mahler’s Voices: Expression and Irony in the Songs and Symphonies* [Oxford, New York: OUP, 2009], 238, also 231, 241–6). An exploration of Mahler and the Modern can also be found in the chapters of Arnold Jacobshagen (ed.), *Gustav Mahler und die musikalische Moderne* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> Arved Ashby, ‘Introduction’, in idem (ed.), *The Pleasure of Modernist Music: Listening, Meaning, Intention, Ideology* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 1–19.

<sup>18</sup> The process of ‘logicalizing’ will be explained in Chapter 3.

<sup>19</sup> Laura Tunbridge, ‘Round Table: Modernism and its Others. Introduction’, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 139/1 (2014), 177–204, 177.

## Thesis Structure

The following examination of the modernism of early to mid-twentieth century British music operates in two interdependent parts. Part 1, 'Theory', draws out the strengths and weaknesses both of the traditional way of understanding modernism as an exclusive category of 'progressive' twentieth-century music as well as of a recent, more expansionist, trend in modernism studies. On the basis of this analysis, the part suggests a way out of the stalemate between these two modernisms and forward to a new understanding of the concept as a useful tool to describe early to mid-twentieth century music. The solution for these challenges is based on the new development of a historico-philosophical theory that has emerged in the recent work by contemporary radical philosopher Alain Badiou. Badiou's thought has only very recently come under musicological scrutiny, especially since he ventured forth into musicological territory in his *Five Lessons on Wagner* (2010).<sup>20</sup> As my work on this thesis draws to a close in early summer 2014, a monograph, several journal articles, and a series of short responses from music scholars to Badiou's *Five Lessons on Wagner* in *The Opera Quarterly* form the core of Badiou reception in music history and aesthetics.<sup>21</sup> Broadly speaking, this thesis stands in this very young tradition with its intention to perform a move from Adorno to the (in certain aspects less problematic) modified thinking of Badiou and with it, from A-Modernism to B-Modernism, as it were. Over the course of this first part of the thesis, B-Modernism develops from a precarious and self-conscious concept of British modernism into a more theoretically grounded fully fledged concept of modernism, whose validity is shown in the following Part 2, 'Practice', through the lens of British music.

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<sup>20</sup> Alain Badiou, *Five Lessons on Wagner*, tr. Susan Spitzer (London: Verso, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> Musicological responses to and usage of Badiou's thought (in chronological order) in James Currie, 'Music after All', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 62/1 (2009), 145–203; J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism: Revolution, Reaction, and William Walton* (Cambridge, New York: CUP, 2012); Martin Scherzinger, 'Wagner Redux. Badiou on Music for the Future', *Contemporary Music Review* 31/5–6 (2012), 461–85; Naomi Waltham-Smith, 'Badiou Contra Badiou. Review of Alain Badiou. 2010. *Five Lessons on Wagner*, translated by Susan Spitzer. London: Verso', *Current Musicology* 94 (2012), 143–64; and in a series of five responses to Badiou's *Five Lessons on Wagner*: Stephen Decatur Smith, 'Badiou and Wagner: From Fidelity to Prophecy', *The Opera Quarterly* 29/3–4 (2014), 335–41; Michael Gallope, 'The Universal Form of Badiou's Wagner', in *ibid.*, 342–8; Brian Kane, 'Badiou's Wagner: Variations on the Generic', in *ibid.*, 349–54; Naomi Waltham-Smith, 'Rethinking Community and Difference in *Parsifal*', in *ibid.*, 355–60; Kenneth Reinhard, 'Badiou and the Subject of *Parsifal*', in *ibid.*, 361–7. These will be examined in section 3.2.

Throughout the two chapters of Part 1, a strong dialectical undercurrent can be felt. Chapter 2 presents the thesis (A-Modernism) and antithesis (B-Modernism) in the discourse of recent scholarship on modernism and breaks these two thought systems apart in an attempt to understand what both must shed and can contribute to the concept of modernism. This development flows from two respective introductions of A-Modernism and B-Modernism in literary studies to examinations of the two systems' main musicological exponents and their premises of the concept. Thus, Richard Taruskin's notion of a maximalist modernism can be found between an Adornian avant-garde modernism and a much younger and expansionist British modernism, which claims that it must be possible for tonality to be modernist. An analysis of the structure of the competing modernisms reveals that their crucial differences as well as their problems lie in the use of their respective master signifiers, which do not allow a modernism beyond certain boundaries. This discovery shows – perhaps unexpected – parallels between Adorno and British modernism and highlights the work the following chapters need to undertake in order to solve these problems.

The mediating synthesis to this distinctly *positive* dialectic follows in chapter 3, which carves out a solution to modernism's precarious position between being a concept which is either too modernist/exclusive (accepting only the Second Viennese School) or too postmodernist/inclusive (dissolving the coherence of the concept through its application to most post-1910 tonal music). In three consecutive steps, the chapter develops what I call the 'Event-response model'. It firstly introduces necessary parts of philosopher Alain Badiou's historiographical model from his *Logics of Worlds* (2009), which argues for an understanding of history as a series of disruptive Events that elicit three different types of response from an affected entirety of a society: the faithful response of those who embrace the Event's rupturing power and 'produce the process of the new truth [...], which also entails intervening in and working to transform the situation',<sup>22</sup> the reactive response from those who shy away from changes the Event imports into their world, and the obscure response of those who actively seek to destroy the faithful response and the change it comes to represent. Badiou himself implies a possible application of this model to modernism as an Event in musical history, a notion

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<sup>22</sup> Decatur Smith, 'Fidelity to Prophecy', 338.

which was recently taken up by J. P. E. Harper-Scott in *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism. Revolution, Reaction, and William Walton* (2012) and by four authors responding to Badiou's *Five Lessons on Wagner* in *The Opera Quarterly* (2014). After a brief synopsis of these musicological arguments, my own third step forces this model into its final form as a fully fledged theory that bridges the gap between the exclusive and inclusive sides of modernism and functions on the basis of analytical observations. This third step modifies Badiou's model of Event and responses fundamentally. For example, Badiou's three responses possess different moral and political value, with the faithful, communist, response being superior to the conservative, passive reactive response and the fascist obscure one. This results not only in his tendentious naming of them and in their being ordered according to their value, but most importantly in the model's implicit distinction between politically 'good' and politically 'bad' music. My modification responds to this issue by renaming the responses, and by structuring the following case studies of Part 2 chronologically, not systematically. Badiou's faithful response hence becomes 'experimental', his reactive response turns into a 'triadic' response, and the obscure response becomes 'ironic'.

Part 2 shows this theory in action in three case studies of British concert music, representing the three types of response to the Event of modernism between the 1920s and the 1970s. Each of these studies is distinguished by the presentation of new findings in their own right, while they also represent the three responses in different genres of music by composers distinguished by their different career paths. In chapter 4 on Gustav Holst's *Egdon Heath* it is the strong thematic coherence in a seemingly loose thematic structure, in chapter 5 on Elisabeth Lutyens's *O saisons, ô châteaux!* it is the establishment of magical serialism as the answer to a gendered modernism, and in chapter 6 on William Walton's versions of one piece from the 'Entertainments' *Façade* and *Façade 2* this thesis uses so far unexplored archival material to show the development of the cycle from one type of Badiouvian response to another. The chapters within this part each represent and examine one of the three modified Badiouvian responses to modernism. Hence they return frequently to the theoretical premises outlined in Part 1 to add important details and analyses of literature concerning the particular pieces of music, and to check the model's validity. This Part by no means exhausts the

potential of the Event-response model, just as Part 1 does not exhaust the potential for criticism of solutions that scholarship on B-Modernism offers. Rather, the three musical chapters serve to set up a first paradigm for this new theoretical take on modernism by the example of British music and serve to demonstrate the model's reliability in a sufficiently complicated field. At the same time, they intend to bring to the discussion what British modernism needs: a *theoretically grounded* demonstration that some British music is indeed modernist. They do this through a careful combination of textual and musical analysis, which however does not confuse biographical or textual associations with musical modernism.

Chapter 4 examines Gustav Holst's *Egdon Heath* of 1927. The orchestration and the tonal ambiguities of the piece have made it the occasional focus of queries about its seemingly regressive stance towards an Adornian 'advanced state of the musical material'. The chapter argues that the piece responds triadically to the Event of modernism, because it never abandons its tonal hierarchies and instead twists them in a complex way. Its thematic organization, however, dances to another tune and shows the typically triadic unease of a piece challenged by the idea of modernism. The chapter is enriched by details about this type of response, while it does not shy away from occasional comparative glances at Schoenberg's compositional practices. This shows that, with the help of the modified Badiouvian model, the unease of the triadic response to modernism does not result in the critical unease that is sometimes shown in analyses of B-Modernism, and thereby strengthens the thesis of this study.

Chapter 5 examines Elisabeth Lutyens's cantata *O saisons, ô châteaux!* of 1946. With its thoroughgoingly serial construction, the cantata could represent the best possible example for an experimental response to modernism. Any claims to this seem however thwarted by the stance often taken in the critical reception, which frequently genders Lutyens's modernism in an attempt to show that the Cantata's serialism is really regressive. The chapter embarks on a combination of textual analysis of critical and analytical reviews as well as its own musical analysis to show how a Lacanian quilting point of gender has kept the piece from entering the canon of modernism. Frequent glances at the tone of reviews of male composers'

serialism serve as the point of comparison, with those on Webern and Berg taking a front seat.

Chapter 6 examines the crucial role of the ironic response in concert music and affords a wider look at the period covered in this thesis, spanning more than 55 years. William Walton's cycle *Façade* saw many revisions between its first version in Osbert Sitwell's drawing room in 1922 and the public performance of a completely revised cycle at the Aldeburgh Festival in 1979. With the help of an abandoned and neglected early version of one of the earliest pieces of the cycle, 'Said King Pompey', this chapter traces the development of this short piece from an experimental to an ironic response to modernism, as its composer's perspective on the century and its aesthetics changed over the decades. In the course of this comparative analysis of the two versions' texture, form, and, most importantly, tonality, the chapter also does away with the common erroneous perception that the later version of 1979 represents one of Walton's earliest takes on modernism.

In the Epilogue, I turn to the question what the Event-response model can do for the telling of twentieth-century music history. Where Part 1 examines the issues of the geographical issues of music historiography (British music and its connection to modernism), this Epilogue confirms the potential of the model for the temporal issues of music historiography: we are now able to write what I call micro- and macro-histories of the previous century with the help of one single model and can challenge the old evolutionary premises of music history.

### **Manifesto for Modernism**

As the previous pages already seem to suggest, a few ground rules of this thesis should be established in a concise form as early as possible. With regard to the highly charged context the thesis moves in and in the spirit of modernism itself, it is hoped that it is forgivable to set down these rules in a twofold manifesto, an introduction of what the study won't and will do, in order to counter some objections about its nature even before they may arise.

## **CONTEMPORARY TERMINOLOGIES**

This thesis is not about gleaning knowledge about the early twentieth century's readings and misreading of terms like modern, modernist, ultra-modern, or new music. The exploration of what early critics and musicologists had to say on these matters must be left to early articles (e.g. by the critics of *The Musical Times*) and to the relevant entries in the *Handbuch der musikalischen Terminologie*. This thesis is interested in the justifications and strategies that the creators of the retrospective invention of British musical modernism in the twenty-first century have to offer, and one of its goals is to lay bare and, where possible, overcome problematic motivations underlying these.

## **WELTANSCHAUUNG**

This study is by no means free from political or musicological ideology. All it can do to appease its readers is to be as open as possible about the underlying ideology of its thinking. My own *Weltanschauung* is probably not atypical of people of my sex and age: a mild leaning to the left and a less mild feminism. As everyone in my situation does, I have troubled myself with the knowledge that I made choices when I selected my material and that I made choices again when I wrote about it. I cannot pretend to keep this fact out of the thesis, but by drawing awareness to it its impact can perhaps be softened. This thesis does not intend to pretend to deal in a currency which claims to be some kind of 'truth' – the truth about modernity, the truth about modernism, or

the truth about Holst, Lutyens, and Walton – but it does attempt to set out a well founded perspective, which I seek to bolster by applying neither musical nor textual analysis alone, but both of them side by side.

## **TIME**

This thesis does not force its content into one time frame. As the study attempts no survey of pieces of music throughout the entire twentieth century but a systematic development of a workable concept of modernism centred on three selected works, a time frame based on these three would prescribe the years between 1923 and 1979, spanning the first and last versions of ‘Said King Pompey’ from Walton’s *Façade*. Needless to say, however, that between the 1920s and the 1970s noteworthy things happened in the history of modernist music other than Holst, Lutyens, and Walton – not even to speak of the responses that were given to the idea of modernism before 1923 and after 1979. In omitting a time frame in the thesis title in favour of stressing its discursive aspect, I implicitly argue that the Event-response model could be applied to ‘Western art’ music in the twentieth century and, depending on what we define as its crucial Event, even earlier. Chapter 3 explains and defends my choice of Event and its consequences with regard to a starting point of modernism, but owing to the freshness of this model I would invite following applications to contest my starting point and to put the model through its paces in the spirit of good scientific practice.

## COMPOSERS AND TEXT

The thesis sets three case studies (representing the three possible responses to the Event of modernism) of pieces by three different composers against the more common methods of either remapping one composer's life and works or surveying as many pieces by different composers as possible.<sup>23</sup> The reason for this is that I believe that detailed musical analysis can best show the three responses in action. My choice of composers may therefore be perceived as an invitation for criticism, which has to be anticipated. My selection of one piece respectively by Holst, Lutyens, and Walton is of course no coincidence. The study should focus on composers trained and active in the Royal College of Music, that nest of the English Musical Renaissance, as well as composers lacking the association with that powerful institution, in order to balance out an older focus in research on British music on the RCM. Furthermore, I chose a mixture of composers who had respective experiences as soldiers or civilians of both World Wars, which also meant that they had to be born roughly between the 1870s and the 1910s. The three pieces, at the same time, were chosen to be of larger and smaller scale, and instrumental as well as vocal, but, for two reasons, no opera. Firstly, including an opera might have broken the mould of the thesis and have given one case study predominance over the other two (which was to be avoided as this is the very first application of

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<sup>23</sup> The best examples for either extreme are probably Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar*; and Lambourn, *Modernism*.

the model to differing kinds of music) and, secondly, it would have meant departing from the claim of this thesis to make sense of pieces of music whose modernism does not stem from the text they set or from the development of characters or stage design. Of course this does not mean that the Event-response model cannot be used to study opera. On the contrary, it could be applied and should prove extremely helpful for the analysis of characters and their constellations, of narrative, or of dramaturgy, but all of this would have jumbled up the two crucial ends I follow in this piece of writing. In order to prove the model's versatility, one of the three pieces does indeed set a text (*O saisons, ô châteaux!*) and I analyze aspects of this text, but *O saisons's* modernism will be shown to not having to rely on its text being modernist. The three pieces have in common that they all provide material for an examination of their particular relation to modernism as well as modernism's own premises. Finally, I intended there to be at least one female composer in order to counteract what might be perceived as the inherent masculinist emphasis in the canon and in order to put a finger on the same masculinism in the critical and scholarly reception as well.<sup>24</sup> At the

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<sup>24</sup> With this, I might be perceived as railing against the recently formulated claim that only those composers who make 'an original contribution to the development of [...] music' deserve space in books. (Mark Delaere, 'Introduction. New Perspectives on the History and Analysis of Serial Music', in idem [ed.], *Rewriting Recent Music History: The Development of Early Serialism 1947-1957* [Leuven, Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2011], 1-7, 4). For his study, Delaere chooses only male contributors to write exclusively about male serial composers while claiming that anyone criticizing this choice on the basis of the omission of certain countries or regions has misunderstood the concept of music history (ibid.). He does not seem to be aware, however, that his warning misses an even more obvious critique: that there are no women in his collection. As chapter 5 of this thesis will argue, women composers are indeed able to make 'original contributions' to the development of serial music and it seems important to acknowledge their presence particularly in a study on modernism.

same time I always intended there to be at least one male composer as well in order to keep the study away from being filed on the shelf entitled 'women in music studies', where it inevitably would have gone had there been three women composers.<sup>25</sup>

## **PRO MODERNISM**

The thesis retains the concept of modernism as a signifying entity. I would like modernism to be defined concisely and yet widely enough to be applicable to early twentieth-century British music. I want it to regain its status as a meaningful mark of appreciation rather than of tired elitism, and to allow it to cut through the sheer mass of literature, art, and music of the previous century while still remaining international. I want it to be more than 'the m-word', or an 'essentially contested concept', or sliced up into 'early', 'high', and 'late'.<sup>26</sup> I believe that it is better to define modernism and be found wanting than not to have tried.

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<sup>25</sup> The only problem with this shelf is that, feminist that I am, even I do not necessarily go there to look for studies on modernism.

<sup>26</sup> Modernism as 'm-word' (Philip Rupprecht, 'Review: British Music and Modernism. 1895–1950', *Music & Letters*, 93/1 [2012], 103–6, 103) resembles a dreaded and unfashionable feminism (which becomes the f-word) or a dangerous and implicitly prohibited positivism, turning into the p-word. For the notion of essentially contested concepts, see 2.3, section 'Essentially Contested Concepts'. The distinction of different periods within a movement or era tends to emerge when it becomes obvious that there can be no enforceable boundaries established for the movement and that several different streams of thought must be encompassed by it (cf. for example Butler, *Early Modernism*; Harper-Scott, "'True North'" for a 'late' modernism. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane point to the problems with modernism's temporal boundaries in the chapter 'The Name and Nature of Modernism' of their seminal edited *Modernism: 1890–1930* (Pelican Guides to European Literature, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), particularly 22, 34–5.

## Part 1. Theory

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In this first part of the argument, the aim is to gain command over the relevant parts of the ongoing discussion about the concept of musical modernism by breaking it up and analyzing its components. This being said, the point of reasoning in this thesis is to show that the concept of modernism need not be discarded, not even fundamentally changed, in order to reclaim twentieth-century concert music as modernist, which has so far been either overlooked or promoted without a sufficient network of conceptual bolstering.

Part 1 encompasses five main sections in two chapters, which outline recent developments of modernism in the humanities, particularly music history, and philosophy. Chapter 2 examines the break of the recent claims for a 'softer', more inclusive modernism that can encompass music from Elgar to Sibelius from the study of modernism in the old Adornian, Teutonic, A-Modernist way. At the point where this chapter stops, several problems with this latest application of modernism will have become obvious, which result from the strategic moves that were necessary to make space for this B-Modernism in the narrowing field of twentieth-century music studies and, particularly, of A-Modernism. Chapter 3 begins by explaining a new theory by Alain Badiou, which has the potential to overcome these problems. This chapter develops this theory from the initial outline of Badiou's model via the available musicological applications to my own system, dotted with returns to the results from chapter 2, and finally highlighted in a brief exemplary musical case study. At the end of this Part, the ground will have been laid for the second and core part of this thesis, which shows the model in action in three case studies of works by Gustav Holst, Elisabeth Lutyens, and William Walton.

## **Chapter 2. Modernisms**

In a first approach to modernism, this chapter establishes the two major antitheses of the concept of modernism in music. In order to gain an overview over the principles of A-Modernism – the older position of a tightly constricted concept of a modernist modernism with one master signifier – and B-Modernism – the younger position of an open postmodernist modernism held together by a wide network of cultural signifiers – both sections are prefaced by a glance towards the influence on musicological thinking from the discipline of English literature. In A-Modernism, this is exemplified by a canon of writings by, among others, Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane and Peter Bürger, for B-Modernism by the so called New Modernist Studies. I find the heart of musical A-Modernism in Adorno's writings, which form the core of section 2.1, while the much more recent B-Modernism is exemplified in 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 respectively by what I perceive as its most common extensions, a kind of modernism stemming either from a composer's personality, or from a specifically British connection between the First World War and pastoral music. At the end of this chapter, the conditions and premises of these two counter movements of modernism will have been broken down, the relation between the concept's parts explained, and problems pointed out. After a more general critique of complex concepts such as modernism in the Conclusion, it will become clear why an alternative solution is needed. Chapter 3 provides this solution, the synthesis, as it were, between A-Modernism and B-Modernism.

### ***2.1 A-Modernism and its Variations***

A-Modernism has been subject to major recent rethinking. This does not mean, however, that it is passé. For the purpose of this thesis, it is necessary to outline some of A-Modernism's most basic features in order to understand why B-Modernism took the path it did and how its strengths can be retained and its weaknesses fixed in chapter 3. Such an overview could start from many angles; the one chosen here draws upon a canon of modernist studies in English literature

(and neighbouring disciplines to a small degree), which sometimes encompass music, as its starting point to characterize modernism's modernists, as it were.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.1.1 A Literary Introduction to A-Modernism

Primarily and characteristically, devotees of A-Modernism of most artistic denominations believe that modernism is not a fashion, or indeed a style or a period in the more recent history of art, literature, and music, but a fundamental change in the character of art and therefore a break with its institutions. This is what Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane call 'overwhelming dislocations, those cataclysmic upheavals of culture, those fundamental convulsions of the creative human spirit that seem to topple even the most solid and substantial of our beliefs and assumptions, leave great areas of the past in ruins [...], question an entire civilisation or culture, and stimulate frenzied rebuilding.'<sup>2</sup> In their eminent *Modernism. 1890–1930*, the illustrious array of Herbert Read, C. S. Lewis, and Roland Barthes serves to further emphasize this singularity of modernism not merely as a reaction and the follow-up to the period of romanticism, but as a

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<sup>1</sup> In adjacent disciplines, modernism strives as a kind of conceptual melting pot for, mostly early, twentieth-century art and literature in a vast amount of titles, of which only a few of the more recent ones include Tim Armstrong, *Modernism: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005); Juliet Bellow, *Modernism on Stage: The Ballets Russes and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (Farnham, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013); David Bradshaw (ed.), *A Concise Companion to Modernism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003); Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Brian K. Etter, *From Classicism to Modernism: Western Musical Culture and the Metaphysics of Order* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001); Walter Frisch, *German Modernism: Music and the Arts* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: UoCP, 2005); Peter Gay, *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy. From Baudelaire to Beckett and Beyond* (London: William Heinemann, 2007); Gabriel Josipovici, *What Ever Happened to Modernism?* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); Pericles Lewis (ed.), *The Cambridge Introduction to European Modernism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011); idem, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (Cambridge Introductions to Literature, Cambridge: CUP, 2007); Robert P. McParland (ed.), *Music and Literary Modernism: Critical Essays and Comparative Studies. 2nd Edition* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009); Dejan Despić and Melita Milin (eds.), *Rethinking Musical Modernism* (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2008); Charlotte de Mille (ed.), *Music and Modernism, c. 1849–1950* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011); Peter Paret (ed.), *German Encounters with Modernism, 1840–1945* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001); Christopher Wilk (ed.), *Modernism: Designing a New World. 1914–1939* (London: V&A Publications, 2006). Classics such as Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (eds.), *Modernism: 1890–1930* (Pelican Guides to European Literature, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976); Peter Bürger, *The Decline of Modernism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992); Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music, and Painting in Europe, 1900–1916* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Steve Giles (ed.), *Theorizing Modernism: Essays in Critical Theory* (London, New York: Routledge, 1993); and Robert B. Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem: On the Dissatisfactions of European High Culture* (Cambridge, MA, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991) should however not be forgotten.

<sup>2</sup> Bradbury, McFarlane, *Modernism*, 19.

'catastrophic' (Read), 'shatteringly and bewilderingly new' (Lewis) disintegration (Barthes).<sup>3</sup>

Peter Bürger, in *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, sees the very same effect happening, but in his theory the modernist explosion is guided: the 'most radical movement within the European avant-garde, [Dada] no longer criticizes schools that preceded it, but criticizes art as an institution, and the course its development took in bourgeois society.'<sup>4</sup> Modernism is characterized as an aesthetic as well as a political game changer, and it claims 'total dominance'.<sup>5</sup> With this second claim comes its foremost problem in today's musicology: the distinction, following Bradbury and McFarlane's mention of Ortega y Gasset in *The Dehumanization of Art*, of its audience 'into two groups – those who understand it and those who do not, those trained in and acquiescent to its techniques and premises, and those who find it not only incomprehensible but hostile.'<sup>6</sup> Resistance to this aristocratic – or meritocratic – feature and the claim for cultural dominance is doubtlessly what has recently led parts of British musicology to embrace the B-Modernism position this chapter exposes in a second step, i.e. to demand an inclusive and wider concept of modernism than A-Modernism offers.

The basis for this demand may be new in that it addresses modernism's exclusivity and in that it refuses to accept a position at the periphery of musical modernism where, in literary modernism, Britain occupies centre stage. Yet there also exist fair logical reasons for B-Modernism's call for a reorientation of modernism's centre. The concept's definition – its designation, signifiers, extensions – admittedly have never been unambiguous, either in literary studies or in musicology. Techniques, firstly, that may on a superficial glance seem solid indicators of modernism (such as *vers libre* or atonality) often dismantle as their aptitude as signifiers becomes doubtful with the example of an essentially nineteenth-century writer (e.g. Rimbaud) or composer (e.g. Wagner) laying the foundations for what is perceived as a distinctively twentieth-century technique. Technique alone thereby loses its status as a sufficient condition of modernism.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 20–1.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde: Foreword by Jochen Schulte-Sasse*, tr. Michael Shaw (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 22.

<sup>5</sup> Bradbury, McFarlane, *Modernism*, 24.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 27–8.

But furthermore, even its status as a *necessary condition* (as distinct from a historically unique feature) can become doubtful if modernist writers, artists, or composers abandon or refute the technique.

Secondly, modernist themes, interests, or topics are not much better suited to establish a common stock of signifiers. The fascination with speed, with urbanity, mass movements, abstraction, dissolution of values and traditions, or with feminism can seem just as modernist as the obsession with magic or alchemy, with what was perceived as primitive civilizations or cultures, with decadence and decay, with the rise of regionalism, or with misogyny. These contradictions are of course the consequence of the insight that 'modernism can look surprisingly different depending on where one finds the centre, in which capital (or province) one happens to stand.'<sup>7</sup> Questions such as this are crucial for most authors researching the connections between British music and modernism, and the question *when* one finds the centre must also be added of course, in order to make matters even more unsatisfying. Dahlhaus's claim, uttered with regard to the shared aesthetics of Brahms and Wagner, that 'the spirit of an age, insofar as there is such a thing, is to be found in questions rather than in answers' seems to hold true for modernism as well.<sup>8</sup> As chapter 3 will demonstrate, this situation need not be a hindrance in the process of defining modernism, but an advantage – with a shared issue, question, or problem at the centre of a concept such as modernism, the field of music responding to this problem is wider than in A-Modernism.

Consequently, the lowest common denominator of literary A-Modernism's devotees seems to be vague. The intention to shock the establishment together with, and intimately connected to, an obsession with typically twentieth-century topics like women's rights, fascism, the psyche, or identity, are truisms. Specific artistic formulations such as the abstract in painting, atonality and serialism in music, and stream of consciousness in prose, promise greater precision as signifiers of modernism on a first glance, but are naturally much too narrow to provide a definitive delimitation for a field that is as wide as modernism – even in its narrow form of A-Modernism. In the discipline of musicology, Adorno and

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>8</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, 'Aesthetics', in John Deathridge and idem, *The New Grove Wagner* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 99.

others have sought to eliminate this first obvious weakness by enriching the basic premise of two opposing poles, of 'in' and 'out' with musical signifiers as well as value judgements.

### 2.1.2 Adorno: The Spectre of the Avant-Garde

As early as 1917, the dedicated antagonist to modernism or 'monsterism' as he preferred to call it, Cyril Scott, made the harsh observation that

as the classicist is like a pedestrian who embarks on a walking tour with the firm intention of keeping entirely *to* the roads, the futurist is like a pedestrian who starts out with the opposite intention of keeping entirely *off* the roads; thus both these pedestrians are the slaves of the respective intentions.<sup>9</sup>

This accusation could very well be directed against the godfather of the theory of musical modernism, Adorno. In his seminal *Philosophy of New Music*, he laid the foundation of the Schoenberg–Stravinsky opposition that haunts music history of the twentieth century like a spectre: progressive yet provincial, Schoenberg is pitted against regressive yet urban, neo-classicist Stravinsky in a fight of good subversion against bad market orientation in *The Philosophy of New Music*. Supplementing a reading of his book on those composers with his later essay 'The Aging of the New Music' will help to understand Adorno's thought process.<sup>10</sup>

Adorno's idea of progressive music usually forms commonsense ideas about what it is to be modernist in music. This modernist music is one that considers the demands of the material and transcends them, or, in Max Paddison's words: 'any work which strives to achieve consistency in its response to the historical demands of the material will thereby show itself to be progressive.'<sup>11</sup> According to Adorno, these demands of the material cannot be addressed within tonality any more, the sounds of which are old-fashioned, anachronistic, even aesthetically and morally wrong, because they do not fulfil their function in society any more.<sup>12</sup> A footnote

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<sup>9</sup> Cyril Scott, *Philosophy of Modernism (in its Connections with Music)* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., n.d., prob. 1917), 7, 9.

<sup>10</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, 'The Aging of the New Music', in idem, *Essays on Music: Selected, with Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Richard Leppert; New Translations by Susan H. Gillespie* (Berkeley, London: UoCP, 2002), 181–202.

<sup>11</sup> Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), 89.

<sup>12</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, tr. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 32.

allows for exceptions, however. Adorno admits that there are some south-eastern European agrarian regions in which tonality could not only be used without disgrace until recently (from the perspective of 1948), but where this use of tonality suspends all traditions of official music and therefore forms an outside position that resembles the central European avant-garde's inside criticism of regressive music.<sup>13</sup> Prominent examples are Bartók and Janáček, who occupy a space between progressive and regressive as a positively loaded 'stabilized' music.

Next to the category of 'progressive' stands Adorno's notion of 'stabilized' music, originating in the 1928 essay 'Die stabilisierte Musik'. This second type seems to mark an exception from the rule insofar as it creates a middle ground between the two poles of progressive and regressive and thus provides a ray of hope for music at the margins of Continental modernism. That is because it acknowledges the fact that margins are characterized by their 'incomplete absorption' of the centre's conflict between innovation and tradition.<sup>14</sup> One could argue, for example, that whereas the regressive Stravinsky deliberately ignored the obvious historical demands of the material in Europe for the sake of a restoration of authenticity,<sup>15</sup> this stabilized music did in fact consider the demands that arose from the specific composition of its particular canon and that it responded by challenging the canon within its own terms, for example by becoming nationalist or by turning to a pastoral style. Stabilized music is not entirely positively connoted, however. It does not necessarily possess the authenticity and truth it has in Bartók,<sup>16</sup> and for Adorno it can also be characterized by moderate consolidation and submission to market forces. In this case, it will only feign authenticity. This ambiguity of its value makes the category of stabilized music not an ideal choice as an ancestor of B-Modernism. The problem of stabilized music is that it may ideally be showing the right kind of behaviour towards history (as in Bartók's music), but even then it is not sufficiently expressing the state of the material.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, footnote 5, 35.

<sup>14</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, 'Die stabilisierte Musik', in Rolf Tiedemann (ed.), *Theodor W. Adorno, Musikalische Schriften V* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 721–8; Max Paddison, 'Centres and Margins. Shifting Grounds in the Conceptualization of Modernism', in Despić & Milin, *Rethinking*, 65–81, 68–9.

<sup>15</sup> Adorno, *Philosophy*, 105–6.

<sup>16</sup> Paddison, *Aesthetics*, 40. Bartók uses three folk-music forms in order to criticize art music forms such as sonata form.

Adorno's regressive music, as an extreme form of stabilized music and the final, third, type of music in the age of modernism, deliberately domesticates the powers of the new and tries to disguise the apprehended and the preformed as the new, the best example for this being Stravinsky's neo-classicism.<sup>17</sup> Central features of this music are its turn to 'old forms, due to the impossibility of finding new ones that could be easily grasped by existing society' or its critique of 'private individualism in favour of a sense of the collectivity'.<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, these criteria are outlined by Ralph Vaughan Williams in his 1934 essays 'National Music' as the way *forward* for British Music.<sup>19</sup> The resulting possible identification of regressive music with B-Modernism is however problematic: this music would belong to modernism in Adorno's sense, but it would find itself on the concept's wrong side as an inferior type of modern music in thrall to the repressive pressures of capital.

Adorno's main problem is that any signs of a consolidation of music seem to make this music regressive. Truly progressive music has to always be one step ahead of its audience and to sustain its alienation from society's conversion of art into commodities. Even carrying on composing atonally, therefore, cannot suffice for real progression. By the time Adorno wrote 'The Aging of the New Music' in 1955, serialism itself had begun to share the demise of the ill-fated diminished seventh chord from *Philosophy of New Music* – it had turned into an empty shell in the hands of a following generation of composers for whom the technique was a fact and had lost its specific signification in society:

Unfamiliar with the real accomplishments of the Schoenberg School and in possession only of the rules of twelve-tone composition, which have become apocryphal through separation from its accomplishments, these young people amuse themselves with the juggling of tone rows as substitute for tonality, without really composing at all.<sup>20</sup>

This idea is closely linked to two otherwise unrelated lines of thinking which will be explored in chapters 3 and 5. In chapter 3, it will be clarified that Alain Badiou warns that a faithful subject (the equivalent, roughly, of a progressive composer), no matter how revolutionary and innovative, will at some later point become

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<sup>17</sup> Adorno, *Philosophy*, 83.

<sup>18</sup> Paddison, *Aesthetics*, 45.

<sup>19</sup> Ralph Vaughan Williams, 'Should Music Be National?', in idem, *National Music* (London et al.: OUP, 1934), 3–19, particularly 18, 19. Cf. also the essays 'The Folk-Song' and 'The Evolution of the Folk-Song' in the same collection.

<sup>20</sup> Adorno, 'Aging', 196.

'saturated'.<sup>21</sup> In chapter 5, composer Elisabeth Lutyens is shown to share this exclusivist attitude with Adorno, when she reveals her mistrust of serialism as a generally available technique like any other in 1946.

The basis of Peter Bürger's critique of Adorno's untenable reliance on this break with the present is the claim that Adorno overestimates the historical avant-garde movements' unique rejection of tradition by trying to declare this break the ultimate and characterising principle of development of music in the twentieth-century.<sup>22</sup> This is a principle that cannot work indefinitely, because one can obviously break with tradition a few times, but not every Tuesday, as it were. This judgement takes Adorno's known fixation on the avant-garde to a revealing extreme, but it may still be not be far reaching enough in its estimation of the depth and quality of this fixation. It is possible to go even further and assume that it is not Adorno's fixation on the perspective of an avant-garde that is the core of his thinking, but rather the idea that his modernism simply *is* the avant-garde.<sup>23</sup> This notion creates the problem that this modernism will have to exclude all music which does not fit its definition of avant-garde, with British music of the early twentieth century being rejected along with much else.

Needless to say, Adorno wastes no ink on British music, which has no place in his conception of modernism as avant-garde.<sup>24</sup> As his writing continues to inspire and provoke musicology, however, it is important to outline the parts that are crucial for this study. They serve as a paradigm of A-Modernism's issues with defining modernism and therefore provide my argument with the nuclei of those premises that the new theory must develop to the point at which their strengths are preserved and their weaknesses eliminated. Adorno's acknowledgement of different types of music being written during the same period, for example, is a strength, but his conclusion that one of these must be superior to the others is a

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<sup>21</sup> Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event*, 2, tr. Alberto Toscano (London, New York: Continuum, 2009, published in French 2006), 89.

<sup>22</sup> Bürger, *Theory*, 60.

<sup>23</sup> 'Music participates in what Clement Greenberg called the *division of all art into kitsch and avant-garde*, and kitsch – the dictatorship of profit over art – has long since subjugated the particular, socially reserved sphere of art. This is why reflections on the development of truth in aesthetic objectivity must be confined uniquely to the avant-garde, which is excluded from official culture. *Today a philosophy of music is possible only as a philosophy of new music.*' Adorno, *Philosophy*, 13. (my emphasis).

<sup>24</sup> Britten and Elgar are dismissed quickly in Adorno's *Philosophy*, with Sibelius (a British composer by 'adoption', if you like) faring no better. (p. 10).

dispensable weakness, as chapter 3 will show. From this section, the rest of this chapter moves forward in time towards Taruskin's maximalist conception of modernism, and finally towards very recent scholarship on British modernism itself.

### 2.1.3 Moderne/Neue Musik/Modernism

All in all, more conceptual caution (or call it conservatism) seems to have been exercised by musicologists studying A-Modernism during the past few decades. Nevertheless, more recently the deficiency of the canons of musical modernism has begun to present itself with even greater urgency in the works of scholars interested in British and Scandinavian music, as well as of those researching the music of the Balkans.<sup>25</sup> These interventions are directed against what is, rightfully, perceived as modernism's Austro-German *contentual* overbalance as well as an overbalance of Austro-German personnel (composers as well as scholars), and confirms the diagnosis that A-Modernism is unjustly exclusive. This situation has prompted recent responses that seek to criticize this overbalance from the inside and show that even Austro-German music itself cannot be pressed into this narrative. Wörner, Scheideler, and Rupprecht's *Tonality 1900–1950* devotes a large space to the tonality of Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre*, Kurth, and Hindemith, and asserts that

the notion of a general collapse or loss of tonality, *ca.* 1910, has remained influential within music historiography, and yet the textbook narrative sits uneasily with the continued flourishing of tonal music throughout the past century. Tonality, from an early twenty-first century perspective, never did fade from cultural attention, yet it remains a prismatic formation – defined as much by ideological and cultural valences as by more technical understandings of musical practice.<sup>26</sup>

The English term *modernism* itself, however, is untranslatable into German, which instead operates with the three terms *Moderne*, *Avantgarde*, and *Neue Musik*.

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<sup>25</sup> Matthew Riley (ed.), *British Music and Modernism. 1895–1960* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010); articles in *The Musical Quarterly*, 91/1–2 (2008); James Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge et al.: CUP, 1993); Jeffrey Kallberg, 'Finnish Modern. Love, Sex and Style in Sibelius's Songs', in Daniel M. Grimley (ed.), *Jean Sibelius and His World* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011), 117–36; Daniel M. Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism* (Woodbridge et al.: The Boydell Press, 2010); Despić & Milin, *Rethinking*; Stephen Downes, *Music and Decadence in European Modernism: The Case of Central and Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010).

<sup>26</sup> Felix Wörner, Ullrich Scheideler, and Philip Rupprecht, 'Introduction', in eidem (eds.), *Tonality 1900–1950. Concept and Practice* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012), 11–22.

Moderne and Neue Musik deserve a brief examination, as their application in German musicology demonstrates the consequence of strict Adornian thinking.

In their authoritative articles in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart 2*, Rudolf Stephan and Herrmann Danuser follow the common practice in German-speaking musicology by writing about *Moderne* on the one hand and *Neue Musik* on the other.<sup>27</sup> The former arguably lasted from 1888 (Hugo Wolf's *Mörrike-Lieder*) until 1908 (Schoenberg's atonal last movement of the String Quartet op. 10 no. 2) or until 1924 (the end of expressionism, according to Stephan). *Neue Musik*, in this narrative, begins around 1910 with the names Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Bartók, and Hindemith, develops into serialism and finally total serialism, and declines in the 1970s, the decade which witnesses the rise of minimalist music. Danuser seems critical of this periodization. When he states that it is difficult to define any *isms* between expressionism and minimalism, he implies that the sheer variety of music of the time cannot be encompassed by *Neue Musik*,<sup>28</sup> a fear that B-Modernists would vehemently point to as a justification of their rethinking of modernism itself. Nevertheless, the practice of splitting modernism into two terms has an advantage over the Anglophone one, as it seems able to introduce a divide between what turns out to be a rather large assembly of styles, movements, and techniques under the non-discriminatory heading of modernism, but specifically between tonal and post-tonal music. Composers who test tonality's limits like Mahler or the early Schoenberg and Strauss belong to *Moderne*, but the serial Schoenberg belongs to *Neue Musik*. At the same time, however, having two period descriptions (*Moderne*, *Neue Musik*) and one aesthetic one (*Avantgarde*) raises the question of the start and end points of modernism in an aggravated form.

This strict differentiation between tonal and post-tonal is, on the other hand, one of this practice's greatest weaknesses, as it tends to confuse different composition techniques with periods (although the connection between these two is intimate of course). This may be another consequence of Adorno's thinking, which demands that the state of the material constitutes an immediate reflection of the historical situation. This claim, again, arises from Adorno's belief that philosophy (and in

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<sup>27</sup> Rudolf Stephan, 'Moderne', in *MGG2*, Sachteil 6, cols. 392–397; Hermann Danuser, 'Neue Musik', in *ibid.*, Sachteil 7, cols. 75–122.

<sup>28</sup> Danuser, 'Neue Musik', col. 84.

consequence also musicology) is responsible for sensing and resisting the catastrophes of history.<sup>29</sup> The consequence of this general line of thinking for modernism can be simplistic periodizations. *Moderne* reflects on the time leading up to the First World War, whereas *Neue Musik* finally is the music which reflects the looming World Wars and totalitarianism.

Although changes in technique may well define boundaries between periods, the problem with this immediate connection between historical moment and state of the material is of course that the history of music resists to being written in such simple terms. In the early twentieth century, different styles are present at the same time. Tonality, for example, did not stop with Schoenberg's op. 10 no. 2 – not even in Schoenberg's own work. Adorno acknowledges this obvious fact, but solves the resulting issue by insisting that only one style (that which reflects the state of the material) responds adequately to the situation. All others fall short of music's responsibility and are therefore morally inferior. The move from *Moderne* to *Neue Musik*, as it is traditionally constructed in German musicology, is therefore an illusion because it edits out the simultaneously operating styles; among them those in play in, often tonal, British music.

With yet another problematic condition of A-Modernism's concept of modernism thus laid bare, a further necessary requirement for this thesis's new theory emerges: this theory of modernism needs to be able to account for the simultaneous multiplicity of different styles in a way that does not stop it from operating with a single central definition at the same time. In other words, it needs to give up the powerful demand for innovation as a defining attribute of a moralizing modernism, without losing sight of the singularity of the breaks in the history of composition in the early twentieth century.

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<sup>29</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, tr. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1996, c1966), 3: 'Philosophy, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realize it was missed. The summary judgment that it had merely interpreted the world, that resignation in the face of reality had crippled it is itself, becomes a defeatism of reason after the attempt to change the world miscarried.' In *Philosophy of New Music*, this is transferred onto music: 'At the time [1938], the author had already planned to draw into the dialectical treatment the situation of composing itself, which after all determines the situation of music. For the author the power ['Gewalt'] of the social totality was self-evident even in such seemingly remote regions as music.' ('Preface', 3)

### 2.1.4 An Intermediate Conclusion: A-Modernism and Maximalism

A prominent attempt to highlight A-Modernism's weaknesses takes place in Richard Taruskin's *The Oxford History of Western Music. Volume 4*, which defines modernism as maximalism. Taruskin belongs to a wave of scholars who do not seek to rethink modernism peacefully, but openly attack it. An observation by Stephen Ross about critics of literary A-Modernism also applies to musical modernism and Taruskin's view of it:

As the [twentieth] century neared its end, critiques of modernism driven by theoretical challenges to its philosophical, metaphysical, epistemological, and ontological underpinnings proliferated in all quarters. First feminist, then African-American and postcolonial critics attacked: critiques of modernism as sexist, racist, homophobic, hetero-normative, misogynist, anti-Semitic, imperialist, and fascist became conventional.<sup>30</sup>

As is obvious by the titles of the sections in his book, Taruskin's particular concern about modernism in the *OHWM* is its misogyny and the period of elitist maximalism, which he sees as the forerunner to modernism proper until the 1920s.<sup>31</sup>

Taruskinian maximalism connects the romanticism of the late nineteenth century with what he wants to be understood as a modernism beginning in the 1920s. Maximalism encompasses Schoenbergian atonality, but it also features the symphonic and operatic developments of Mahler and Strauss, Stravinsky's ballets, and the varied experiments of Ives and Debussy. In order to encompass the small forms of Webern, however, the term maximalism must change to denote any extreme length or brevity of a piece of music, and not simply large forms, in the section 'Maxing Out' (a problem to which chapter 5 will return). The only British composer to find a place in this maximalist narrative is Havergal Brian, presumably because of his notoriety for over thirty symphonies, among them the monumental no. 1, *The Gothic*.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Stephen Ross, 'Introduction. The Missing Link', in *ibid.* (ed.), *Modernism and Theory. A Critical Debate* (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2009), 1–17, 9.

<sup>31</sup> In Taruskin's *OHWM 4*, the sections 'Another Madwoman', 'Hysteria', 'Female Competition', and 'Gender Bending' express Taruskin's concerns about gender and sexuality of modernism. The sections 'Mahler: Maximalizing the Symphony', 'Strauss: Maximalizing Opera', 'Maximalism Reaches the Max', 'A Maximalist Against the Tide', and 'Maxing Out' (as well as 'The Ivory Tower') critique modernism's maximalism on several levels.

<sup>32</sup> Taruskin, *OHWM 4*, 22. Elgar is dismissed in one sentence (266), which reminds one of Adorno's dismissal of the composer in *Philosophy*.

Owing to the conception of the entire *OHWM* as the work of one single person, Taruskin, it is perhaps understandable that the author is unable to tackle the limits of European and American A-Modernism to the same degree as the edited *Oxford Handbook of Modernisms* or *Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms* do in literary modernism. The problem Taruskin finally has to surrender to, however, is that his aspiration to follow a theoretically informed sceptical approach to modernism is nevertheless confined to the contested canons of A-Modernism; thus the stereotypes the new approach wants to criticize tend to be enforced. For example, his implication that continental European modernism is not so much out of date as ideologically tainted is not substantiated by any exploration of modernisms from the peripheries of the Western World it covers, and to which Britain belongs as well as, for example, Scandinavia, Spain, or Greece. Nor is his justified criticism of modernism's masculinity backed or confronted by the inclusion of any female composers apart from Lili Boulanger, whose output cannot compete with most other composers of the volume simply on the grounds of Boulanger's premature death.

Maximalism is characterized not so much by Taruskin's open condemnation but by his choice of terminology. In very short succession of each other, the first chapter's introductory section, 'Modernism', uses the words *commitment*, *superiority*, *optimism*, *malaise*, *enthusiasm*, *audacity*, *high self-regard*, *self-consciousness*, *urbanity*, *irony*, and, for Schoenberg in particular, *alienation* to mark Taruskin's sceptical thoughts on the matter. While a more detailed exploration of Taruskin's gendering of the concept of maximalism will be undertaken in chapter 5, it should be noted here that the attempt to apply the theory-driven methodology to Western art music leads to Taruskin's ambiguous opinion about modernism – an opinion which is not modified or indeed developed into an expansive notion of modernisms as in the literary answer to A-Modernism, the New Modernist Studies, as section 2.2.1 will show.

After reading the fourth volume of *OHWM* it must seem that modernism is a dispensable term at best and an untouchable one at worst. This is because the volume tries, yet finally fails, to find a satisfying solution for two of the problems with modernism this chapter has unearthed: firstly, it rightly finds that

modernism, as A-Modernism, is a problematic category, but assumes that this results primarily from the composers' aesthetics and only secondarily from scholarship – that the exclusivity and the ambiguous fixation on an avant-garde, as well as the belief in a chronology of styles are all written into the works of a still rather constricted canon of Western art music composers. Secondly, it seeks to introduce maximalism as a new master signifier instead of Adorno's avant-garde or *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart's* atonality, but has to stretch the term maximalism in order to encompass even the tightest core of the A-Modernist canon, the Viennese School. Taruskin, like most A-Modernist arguments, has the problem that the constricted concept of modernism cannot encompass a variety of simultaneous composition techniques and styles in the early twentieth century, or if it can, then only by attaching different value judgements to them, thereby declaring certain groups of works or composers obsolete. One of its greatest strengths, the constriction of the canon by defining modernism with the help of only a few strong designations, seems dwarfed by the disadvantages this approach brings. In A-Modernism's strongest representative, Adorno, this exclusivity is, perhaps deliberately, driven to a point where it does not seem possible to work with any more. Adorno's aim seems to shield *Neue Musik* from exactly what this thesis proposes in the wake of recent attempts to widen the canon: to find a foundation for a widened canon of modernism.

Independently of Austro-German musicology on one side and an establishment of an alternative A-Modernism such as Taruskin's on the other (and mostly unnoticed by them), a small field of British musicology has begun rattling what it perceives as this cage of modernism. The following section 2.2 shows how the basis of the New Modernist Studies in Anglo-American literature has proven fruitful for a group of musicologists, because this theory had the advantage of being well established in its discipline on the one hand, and gives a voice to underexposed elements on the margins, which resembled the position British music occupies beside the stream of continental European modernism in music, on the other.

## 2.2 Extensions of B-Modernism

### 2.2.1 A Literary Introduction to B-Modernism: New Modernist Studies

A-Modernists' perceived lack of precision on the one hand and notorious exclusivity on the other is why, more recently, parts of literary modernism scholarship have felt it necessary to turn away from the prevailing rigid but apparently inadequate definitions in order to form what they call New Modernist Studies. The aim of this version of B-Modernism is to rehabilitate modernism as a concept by 'expanding the field temporally (to include what had been marginalized), spatially (to include transnational arenas and other fields like economics), and vertically (to redo conventional mandarin categories)', as the critic of New Modernist Studies, Charles Altieri, puts it.<sup>33</sup> By seeking this expansion, the New Modernist Studies essentially wrest modernism from the grasp of scholars who *are* themselves modernists and subject it to postmodernist methodology and thought. The result is a wide field framed by collections on modernism and women or race, on non-Western modernisms, on modernism and theory, and on transnationalism. In little time this new field grew so large that in 2008 *PMLA* printed an overview essay by forerunners Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz about the different directions the research of such a postmodernist modernism had already taken, entitled authoritatively 'The New Modernist Studies'.<sup>34</sup> This essay reads like a positive progress report of the threefold expansion (temporal, spatial, and vertical) the authors initiated and is filed under the heading 'The Changing Profession'.

Building on the diagnosis of Susan Stanford Friedman's 'Definitional Excursions: the Meanings of Modern/Modernity/Modernism' in *MODERNISM/modernity*, monographs on modernist writers or peripheral countries have begun to share the field with collections, essays, and books about different groups or aspects of the

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<sup>33</sup> Charles Altieri, 'Afterword. How the "New Modernist Studies" Fails the Old Modernism', *Textual Practice*, 26/4 (2012), 763–82, 767.

<sup>34</sup> In chronological order: Laura Doyle, Laura Winkiel, *Geomodernisms. Race, Modernism, Modernity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005); Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Bad Modernisms* (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2006); Sanja Bahun-Radunović and Marinus Purgurēs (eds.), *The Avant-Garde and the Margin: New Territories of Modernism* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006); Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, 'The New Modernist Studies', *PMLA* 123/3 (2008), 737–48; Ross, *Modernism and Theory*; Maren Tova Linett, *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Women Writers* (Cambridge, New York: CUP, 2010); Mark Wollaeger (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms* (New York: OUP, 2012).

field, and most adepts seem to subscribe to one fundamental agreement: that modernism is a 'variegated response to a manifold modernity'.<sup>35</sup>

Friedman recognizes one of modernism's central problems, building on its definitions' ambiguity:

'the fact of not only diverse but downright opposite meaning'

in the definitions of modernism as a literary, grammatical, cultural, and political phenomenon. Next to functioning as a binary, circular, or metonymic concept, Friedman's diagnosis accuses the old modernism of also dragging the related terms 'modern' and 'modernity' down into indeterminability with it. However, instead of adding one more to the chorus of definitions, she turns what she perceives as modernism's basic problem into her solution:

'The fact of not only diverse but downright opposite meaning *signifies*.'<sup>36</sup>

With this verbalization, modernism eventually becomes postmodernist modernism. Friedman's article itself informs the methodology of Jenny Doctor's passionate argument for a British musical modernism in 'The Parataxis of British Musical Modernism',<sup>37</sup> but it also left its marks on books which in their turn gained further influence on musicology with a little time lag, as did Jed Esty's *A Shrinking Island. Modernism and National Culture in England*. This, in turn, provides one crucial strand of thinking for musicological applications such as Heather Wiebe's analyses of pieces by Benjamin Britten or J. P. E. Harper-Scott's essay on the Sibelianism of Williams Walton's First Symphony.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ross, 'Introduction', in idem, *Modernism and Theory*, 1.

<sup>36</sup> Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of Modern/Modernity/Modernism', *MODERNISM/modernity*, 8/3 (2001), 493–513, 510 (my emphasis).

<sup>37</sup> Jenny Doctor, 'The Parataxis of "British Musical Modernism"', *The Musical Quarterly*, 91/1–2 (2008), 89–115.

<sup>38</sup> J. P. E. Harper-Scott, "'Our True North": Walton's First Symphony, Sibelianism, and the Nationalization of Modernism in England', *Music & Letters*, 89/4 (2008), 562–89. Further applications of Esty's model in music history are Heather Wiebe, "'Now and England": Britten's "Gloriana" and the "New Elizabethans"', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 17/2 (2005), 141–172; eadem, 'Benjamin Britten, the "National Faith," and the Animation of History in 1950s England', *Representations*, 93/1 (2006), 76–105; Philip Rupprecht, "'Something Slightly Indecent": British Composers, the European Avant-Garde, and National Stereotypes in the 1950s', *The Musical*

Turning to B-Modernism in music itself, the overwhelming marginality of British music in accounts of twentieth-century music initially seems difficult to explain, and critics of the old modernism are justified in pointing out how little the canon of modernism and of twentieth-century music more generally has reacted to the bloom of composition in the country from the late nineteenth century onwards. This state of affairs was first criticized and sought to amend by pointing out the surprising richness of experiments in British music between 1900 and 1922 by David Lambourn, whose thesis of 1993 argues the obvious: that there were many contacts between European and British music during this time, and that British composers were not at all as conservative as we usually think.<sup>39</sup> However, neither his nor my thesis can attempt to prove or refute either the suspicion that it was the programming of 'British novelties' at the early Proms which still makes us think of British music as separate from all else, or that the English Musical Renaissance spoiled the chances for more 'progressive' composers, or that it was mid-twentieth century British musicology's own fault for letting the trend of establishing modernism as the dominant aesthetic signifier of twentieth-century music pass it by.<sup>40</sup>

What Lambourn's thesis fights against (in vain, I think) is the simple but nevertheless hard to overcome problem that it hardly seems to matter how progressive we claim British composers to be, as long as the concept of modernism is 'occupied', as it were, by another group of composers exhibiting one particular aspect of progressive composition (pitch organization). What my thesis will do about this issue in this first step is to find out how the recent bloom of B-Modernism, to which Lambourn belongs as a predecessor, shapes the current perception of the concept of modernism and what its strengths can do for the modernism of British music that will be developed in chapter 3. My aim is to walk this tightrope further than Lambourn and most B-Modernists and to make modernism potentially available to all Western art music of the early to mid-twentieth century and release it from its serfdom to the Viennese without blowing

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*Quarterly*, 91/3-4 (2008), 275-326; Daniel Grimley, 'Landscape and Distance. Vaughan Williams, Modernism and the Symphonic Pastoral', in Riley, *British Music*, 147-74.

<sup>39</sup> A point passionately argued in D. J. Lambourn, 'Modernism in British Music, 1900-22', MLitt dissertation (Cambridge, Cambridge University, 1993).

<sup>40</sup> Jenny Doctor implies that the first of these possibilities might apply (in Doctor, 'Parataxis', 99). The second and third suspicions are my own.

it up. After early manifestations of B-Modernism such as Lambourn's, which seek to pull a variety of music across the divide between regressive and progressive, the current strand of B-Modernism seeks to rebrand modernism for a small canon of British music. My model, as it develops in chapter 3, rethinks modernism to the point where it lays a claim to being able to describe the connections and tensions between all Western art music in the early twentieth century.

A manifesto in spirit and in passion for this type of British modernism as well as B-Modernism more generally can be found in Jenny Doctor's article "The Parataxis of "British Musical Modernism"", which complains that 'the exclusion of British music from prevailing conceptions of interwar "modernism" is a presumption that currently cries out for reassessment':<sup>41</sup>

So, why is it not appropriate to assess twentieth-century British music and music making of that period in similar terms [to those of Continental modernism]? Is it not possible to consider the music that was composed and performed in Britain then as repertory that needs to be reconsidered, remarketed, and rebranded today in terms that are markedly and unequivocally different from styles that have come to exemplify Continental avant-garde practices of the period? The time has come to question the ways in which narratives of twentieth-century musics have been told, celebrating the extreme as a sine qua non; that is, after all, only one potential 'modernist' element.<sup>42</sup>

The problem Doctor voices is undeniably Adornian, yet again: the focus in twentieth-century music historiography lies on the 'progressive' Austro-German tradition, while Stravinsky, *Les six*, and the *Ballets russes* function as the 'regressive' counterpart. This is a focus which is not questioned in earnest even in Taruskin's New Modernist approach to musical modernism. In a language that is as uncompromising as the modernism she accuses of excluding British music, Doctor calls for this gap to be filled quickly and decisively. However, her questions also imply that music business might have more profane reasons for being interested in establishing British modernism. A commodification of relabelled British music (such as Doctor might hint at with her use of words) could boost a British record and book market struggling during the economic crisis. Obviously, this kind of reasoning would be what Adorno perceives as the most dangerous ideological turn

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<sup>41</sup> Doctor, 'Parataxis', 99.

<sup>42</sup> Doctor, 'Parataxis', 111-2. A similarly passionate case is presented in Vlastimir Trajković, 'Thinking the Rethinking (of the Notion of) Modernity (in Music)', in Despić & Milin, *Rethinking*, 27-40.

the scholarship of any music could possibly take. In the overwhelming majority of the available scholarship and most of Doctor's own work, however, these considerations play no part, which makes it possible to discard this commodified 'Britmod' and concentrate on scholarly B-Modernism throughout the rest of this thesis.

The field of scholarship on British musical modernism is relatively small as yet as well as young. There are two major and central collections concerned with connections of any kind between British music and modernism. The earlier (the Spring/Summer issue of *The Musical Quarterly* 2008) positioned itself under the title 'British Modernism', combining five essays and a 'Foreword' by Byron Adams.<sup>43</sup> It was followed in 2010 by Matthew Riley's collection *British Music and Modernism. 1895–1960*, which consists of 14 chapters and an introduction by Riley himself. By then, however, problems with the continued usage of the term modernism had already begun to stick out. In the later collection, Ben Earle's chapter attacks Björn Heile's perception of the changeable recent history of the concept of modernism, which observed the 'modernism-bashing' by Lawrence Kramer, Susan McClary, and Rose Rosengard Subotnik to have been overshadowed by the term becoming the buzz word of Anglo-American historiography once more.<sup>44</sup> Earle maintained that Heile failed to notice that this criticism was particularly and exclusively directed against the institutionalization of modernism in the United States. Heile, in his role as a reviewer of Riley's collection, replied that Earle attempted to return to the stereotypical Adornian modernist composer as heroic sufferer (by belittling the Manchester School).<sup>45</sup> Thus, Earle accused Heile of using the concept too widely, and Heile stated that Earle used the concept too narrowly. Interestingly, both used the word 'cliché' to pin down what they perceived as the cardinal problems of modernism; Earle found the time lag a cliché (which he connects to Paul Griffiths's understanding of the issue in his chapter, but

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<sup>43</sup> *The Musical Quarterly*. 91/1–2 (2008). It should be noted that B-Modernism is not a phenomenon restricted to British authors, but encompasses English-speaking musicology.

<sup>44</sup> Ben Earle, "'The Real Thing – At Last'? Historicizing Humphrey Searle', in Riley, *British Music*, 293–325, 293–4. Earle criticizes Heile's 'Darmstadt as Other', which, however, does deal with the accusations Earle brings forward. See also Kramer's twelfth chapter, 'Ghost Stories', from *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History* (Berkeley: UoCP, 2002), McClary's 'Terminal Prestige: the Case of Avant-Garde Musical Composition', *Cultural Critique* 12 (1989), 57–81, and Rose Rosengard Subotnik's chapter 'The Challenge of Contemporary Music', in eadem, *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

<sup>45</sup> Björn Heile, 'Musical Modernism, Sanitized', *MODERNISM/modernity*, 18/3 (2012), 631–7, 635.

which was also deployed in Philip Rupprecht's article 'Something Slightly Indecent').<sup>46</sup> Heile, on the other hand, criticized Earle's belief in the modernist narrative of the composer as heroic, alienated, sufferer as a cliché.<sup>47</sup> The concept of modernism remains the problematic heart of B-Modernism and consequently, this branch has suggested different strategies to solve the issues at hand, most of which concern the signifiers of modernism, yet again.

The field of British musical modernism can be grouped into several tendencies, but all subscribe to the New Modernist idea that modernism's salvation lies in what Altieri has termed the spatial expansion of modernism.<sup>48</sup> All, however, then need to connect their claim for British modernism to A-Modernism in some way in order to justify the use of the term. Most discard atonality as the master signifier of modernism (because, despite all the controversies surrounding this particular topic, atonality and early serialism seem Austro-German specialties) and are therefore left with several other options to bind British modernism to Continental modernism. The two most common and promising of these doubtlessly are to connect the modernism of a particular piece of music to a modernist person, persona, or identity, or to a composition technique, an aesthetic concept, genre, or topic – or to both. Both strategies (dealt with in the following sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3) assume that a variety of different signifiers can replace the one master signifier of atonality. Naturally, this approach holds not only specifically musicological problems, but more general ones, the latter of which will be addressed in the conclusion to this chapter.

### **2.2.2 The Composer in British Musical Modernism**

Naturally, no scholarship on British modernism will rely exclusively on the force of personality to establish a British modernism. Rather, aspects of personality will frequently play into what are supposed to be considerations of technique as a sort

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<sup>46</sup> Earle, "Real Thing", 294; Philip Rupprecht, "Something Slightly Indecent".

<sup>47</sup> Heile, 'Modernism', 635.

<sup>48</sup> This is not to say that there are no attempts to expand modernism chronologically, which Walter Frisch made an argument for in *German Modernism*. Chronological expansion coupled with an element of vertical expansion of a kind – between the different arts – can be studied in Butler, *Early Modernism*, which introduces the idea of a consolidated modernism, a 'more pragmatic, audience-orientated adaptation of new techniques, which often demands a highly allusive compromise with the past' as a second phase in the arts after a phase of 'radical change to the language of an art' (258).

of amplifier for an argument which is perhaps perceived as not strong enough or too subjective. A starting point in Riley's collection is provided by the inclusion of arguments about the role of Schoenberg and Stravinsky in British reception in two chapters by Deborah Heckert and Gareth Thomas. On this most general level, the names of the two modernist *éminences grises* provide an intelligent bridge within the book between a chapter on Elgar's reception as 'modern' in contemporary critiques on one side (which serves to address the plurality of denominations and opinions in the early twentieth century itself) and considerations of actual musical material on the other, whose modernism needs to be proven in detail. In view of the reliance of many authors in the collection on historical evidence, it helps the overall goal to establish in the first chapters what the British musical public actually knew (or could have known) of Continental modernism.

Both chapters show the speed with which Britain – and that usually means London – caught up with modernist taste, facilitated by the, for Londoners, apparently less irritating and more established means of art criticism (by Roger Fry and Clive Bell in Heckert's discourse) and ballet (in Thomas's argument). This, however, does of course not prove the existence of a British modernism *per se*. Diaghilev's modernism in Thomas's account, for example, is mentioned very carefully, and the, for ballet typical, combination of stage, design, costumes, choreography, and music makes it difficult to speak a verdict on this or that composer's behalf anyway. British composers for the *Ballets russes* such as Berners and Lambert, whose *Romeo and Juliet* ran in 1926 in Monte Carlo and subsequently in London, receive relatively little attention from Thomas beyond contemporary press cuttings. Even if compositions by British composers were played at a Diaghilev ballet, or together with a Schoenberg or Stravinsky piece, this does not make these pieces modernist automatically – any more than a piece by Vivaldi would be made modernist by being played before or after one by Schoenberg: modernism itself is not a contagion, but if the master signifier were turned from atonality to appearing beside a Schoenberg piece in a concert, then it would be. Thomas's chapter justifies its existence in the collection mostly because of the frequent mention of the modernist personalities of Stravinsky and Diaghilev, but only in their function as signifiers for modernism, not as 'proven' modernists.

Another pair whose personalities seem a preferred site for the search for a B-Modernist personality is Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gustav Holst. Harper-Scott asserted the traditional opinion about Vaughan Williams's attitude towards modernism when he claimed that 'it takes a special kind of personality – a particular cultural and moral outlook – to write a modernist work, and Vaughan Williams apparently did not have it',<sup>49</sup> which is examined based on a Schenkerian analysis showing the Fourth Symphony to be, if anything modernist, a tonal derision of modernism.<sup>50</sup> More and more often, however, Vaughan Williams is thought of as potentially modernist, and not least because of his personal involvement in the First World War. The trend on display here is to regard those composers as representatives of a 'hard' pastoralism who, unlike George Butterworth (possibly the most famous British composer to be lost at the Somme), returned from the War and sought to come to terms artistically with their experiences up into the 1920s. Daniel Grimley certainly draws upon the most sophisticated network of modernist personalities to weave Vaughan Williams's musical wartime memorial, the *Pastoral Symphony*, into the context of modernism in literature and painting: Paul Nash's wartime paintings and Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* are connected to the Symphony's musical references to Stravinsky's *Le sacre du printemps* and Debussy's *Nuages*.<sup>51</sup> The label of 'potential modernist' is thereby returned to Vaughan Williams, whose oeuvre takes on a darker and perhaps more melancholy shade by its composer's affiliation with such personalities.

Gustav Holst is the second composer whose personality could be read as modernist for several reasons, among them his wartime experience. B-Modernism scholarship has not yet picked up on the rich potential of this composer, however; maybe this is because Holst entered the War late enough to merely witness tired troops in disarray far from home.<sup>52</sup> Christopher Scheer's contribution to Riley's

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<sup>49</sup> J. P. E. Harper-Scott, 'Vaughan Williams's Antic Symphony', in Riley, *British Music*, 175–96, 176.

<sup>50</sup> Chapter 6 will throw more light on this derision of modernism as one of the three possible responses to modernism itself, but Vaughan Williams's Fourth Symphony returns as an example for the ironic response to modernism in the Scholium of section 3.3.2.

<sup>51</sup> Daniel Grimley, 'Landscape', 160–1, 164, 153.

<sup>52</sup> Colin Matthews however seems to regard Holst's wartime experience as a minor influence on his composing, as he mentions it in passing as an example for a break from Holst's rigid routine of composing and teaching. (Colin Matthews, 'Holst, Gustav'. *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, OUP. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13252> [30/5/14]).

collection tackles this situation. Scheer develops the image of a traumatized Holst who returned from Greece a changed person and erected a monument to a lost generation in the First Choral Symphony.<sup>53</sup>

Vaughan Williams, too, comments on Holst's modernist 'personality' in an essay of 1920, in which he claims that Holst did indeed have what it takes to be a modernist like Schoenberg. In the essay, Vaughan Williams celebrates his friend's characteristics by constructing a collage of his modern personality, pointing to Holst's life, his attitude towards his work as well as towards his colleagues and pupils.<sup>54</sup> Before Vaughan Williams embarks on this account, however, he seeks to define his meaning of 'modernity'. Unlike the 'modern idiom', which is associated with a superficially modernist musical language (frequent 'major ninths', no 'long tunes', 'eight horns bellow[ing] out high D's') and a bohemian lifestyle, Holst's modernity encompasses the close 'relationship between the mind that expresses and the means of expression'.<sup>55</sup> Holst shows this in his wide reading and original thinking (leading him, for example, to Sanskrit topics), in his thoroughness in teaching, in his insisting on music being taken seriously, and his refusal to compromise (leading perhaps to Imogen Holst's sometimes overly critical conclusions about his music).<sup>56</sup>

Holst's music, claims Vaughan Williams, displays this modern-ness in its metric disturbances, the sometimes strong harmonic clashes, in the clearly distinguishable personal style of its composer, and in its 'uncomfortable' character that mirrors the disturbing times of its composition.<sup>57</sup> All things considered, these features would certainly count as modern (in accordance with the term Vaughan Williams uses), in the sense that they are 'of their times'. Modernist features of composition, however, take the blame in this account for a situation in which 'the "modern idiom" consists of a handful of clichés of instrumentation coupled with a harmonic texture watered down from the writings of composers who flourished

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Having gotten rid of his 'von', Holst entered service in 1918 as a YMCA music organizer in Salonica. (Michael Short, *Gustav Holst: The Man and his Music* [Oxford, New York: OUP, 1990], 159–60, 162).

<sup>53</sup> Christopher M. Scheer, "A Direct and Intimate Realization". Holst and Formalism in the 1920s', in Riley, *British Music*, 109–24.

<sup>54</sup> Ralph Vaughan Williams, 'Gustav Holst: An Essay and a Note', in idem, *National Music and Other Essays* (Oxford, New York: OUP, 1987, c1932), 129–53.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 134, 135, 137.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 137, 143, 153, 138.

twenty-five years ago [i.e. 1895].<sup>58</sup> Holst is claimed instead for a certain kind of truer modernism than a chromatic or atonal one – truer because it flows *from* the composer's attitude to life and work *into* the music. With an idiosyncratic conception of the words 'modern' and 'modernist', Vaughan Williams thus provides B-Modernism with possibly the earliest version of an affiliation between personality and modernism.

Principally, the problem of approaching the modernism of a composer via their personality is that this person is assumed to have been modernist all their lives, or at least throughout the major and most relevant parts of their careers. In the course of the following chapters, this notion will be broken apart, because it encounters several problems. In his discussion of the British reception of Diaghilev's London seasons, for example, Gareth Thomas throws in Ernest Newman's observation on the relevance of *La Boutique fantasque* that 'if anyone other than Diaghilev had put it on it would have been "voted just as an ordinarily good music hall or pantomime show; it was welcomed so effusively – almost obsequiously – in some quarters simply because it was put on by M. Diaghilev."<sup>59</sup> The power of a modernist personality is strong then, even in 'regression': Diaghilev could programme *La Boutique* and remain the impresario of modernism, and Schoenberg could write the tonal *Weihnachtsmusik* of 1921 as well as *Glück* and *Verbundenheit* for male chorus of 1929 and remain a modernist composer,<sup>60</sup> whereas later on Stravinsky could become a serialist and still remain identified as the 'other' modernist. Nevertheless, the modernism of Schoenberg and Stravinsky is usually established not by their connection with other people, but through analysis of their music, which gives the desired stability to their status. Modernism as well as anti-modernism, that is to say, are more stable when found in a piece of music, as the composer's name or relation to other names is no guarantee for either.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 129.

<sup>59</sup> Gareth Thomas, 'Modernism, Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes in London', in Riley, *British Music*, 67–92, 78.

<sup>60</sup> The functionality of these pieces may of course be presented as a reason for their tonality, but it is not clear to me why Taruskin's uncompromising 'modernist giant' Schoenberg should not have written a serialist *Weihnachtsmusik*, had he wished to do so.

For Adorno, the personality of a composer certainly is an important enough factor to base the entire structure of *Philosophy of New Music* on the two poles Schoenberg and Stravinsky and the expression of their respective psyches in music, but he insists that it is their music's representation of extremes which earns these two composers their place in the book in the first place: 'only in extremes does the essence of this music take shape distinctively; [...] For this reason, and not under the illusion of great personalities, these two authors are exclusively considered in detail.'<sup>61</sup> This rejection of personality as a signifier is one of his strengths. For the middle position between A-Modernism and B-Modernism held by Taruskin in the *OHWM 4*, personality likewise plays an important role. Schoenberg's image as the alienated modernist, as section 4.1.3 will demonstrate in the context of Holst's modernism, is nearly as significant (in the sense of being an important signifier) as his maximalism, and the two are intertwined.

As music history gradually begins to abandon the old currency of household names inside and outside of the canon, however, it seems logical to look for modernism in music rather than in the composer. This will be held up in this thesis, which thereby abandons this B-Modernist approach to seek modernism as the consequence of composer personality.

### **2.2.3 The Pastoral in British Musical Modernism**

It is possible to advance yet other aspects in order to widen the concept of modernism in the sense of B-Modernism. One particularly common strategy in scholarship on British musical modernism is to draw upon the topic of World War I and its connection with the English pastoral. Both Stephen Downes's examination of Bridge's *The Sea* and Daniel Grimley's consideration of Vaughan Williams's *Pastoral Symphony* combine arguments about a modernist personality with a core of technical aspects – and both handle the concept of the pastoral. The specific quality of the English post-World War I pastoral has also served as the background for Anthony Barone's 'Modernist Rifts in a Pastoral Landscape', as a marker of innovation in Paul Harrington's 'Holst and Vaughan Williams. Radical Pastoral', and as a new master signifier of modernism in Eric Saylor's "'It's not Lambkins

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<sup>61</sup> Adorno, *Philosophy*, 7.

Frisking At All". English Pastoral Music and the Great War'.<sup>62</sup> Landscape, in a wider sense, forms an important part of the argumentation in Harper-Scott's "Our True North", which connects Walton's shift from the urban, London-based 'enfant terrible' in *Façade* to a more rural, Northern 'conservative' in the First Symphony with a reversion to English landscape and values in the wider modernist community. Apart from a typically wide network of associations between Walton and, among others, British Sibelianism, Heideggerian philosophy, and the Tolkienian vision of the Shire, he follows Jed Esty's aforementioned study *A Shrinking Island* in its observation of a recollection of Englishness in the late works of literary modernists Virginia Woolf and T. S. Eliot.<sup>63</sup>

My concern here, however, is the notion – plausible on a first glance – of a British modernism that Saylor in particular, but also Grimley, bring forward – a modernist pastoralism which developed after and partly as a reaction to World War I. As this notion of the British post-War pastoral is one of the strongest topics the scholarship on British modernism has put forward, it can be afforded a higher status than other analytical B-Modernist arguments.

As the centenary of the War is upon us, its relevance for British culture becomes visible once more, the scale of which is perhaps even more comprehensible for an outsider after a reading of classics such as Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory*.<sup>64</sup> There can be no doubt that the performed repertoire in London, at least, changed fundamentally in 1914: living German-speaking composers were hardly

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<sup>62</sup> Anthony Barone, 'Modernist Rifts in a Pastoral Landscape. Observations on the Manuscripts of Ralph Vaughan Williams's Fourth Symphony', *The Musical Quarterly*, 91/1–2 (2008), 60–88; Paul Harrington, 'Holst and Vaughan Williams. Radical Pastoral', in Christopher Norris (ed.), *Music and the Politics of Culture* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), 106–27; Eric Saylor, "It's Not Lambkins Frisking At All". English Pastoral Music and the Great War', *The Musical Quarterly*, 91/1–2 (2008), 39–59.

<sup>63</sup> Harper-Scott, "True North".

<sup>64</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford et al.: OUP, 1975). Maybe it is indeed true that many countries have their own national traumata. What Vietnam is for US Americans and the Holocaust is for Germans, World War I seems to be for the British. The Imperial War Museum London is receiving new specifically dedicated galleries on the occasion of the centenary of the War and will launch educational initiatives in 2014: <http://www.iwm.org.uk/centenary> (all links in this footnote 15/10/2013). The British government plans further extensive educational and commemorative events to remember the event: <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/first-world-war-centenary>. Compare, however, Jeremy Paxman's venomous objection to David Cameron's plans for the Centenary to become a national festivity in October 2013 on the occasion of the renovation of the Imperial War Museum in time for the centenary. *The Guardian*, 8/10/2013 (<http://www.theguardian.com/global/2013/oct/08/jeremy-paxman-david-cameron-first-world-war>).

performed anymore, and many close ties with Austro-German musicians and composers severed.<sup>65</sup> It may nevertheless be worth mentioning that social historians seem not as certain about the War's actual impact on British culture in a wider sense as scholars of literature or musicologists, the latter of which seem to mirror the common opinion that the War was a watershed in the history of British civilization. Comparing the British situation after the War to that of France, modern historian Adrian Gregory remarks, for example: 'happy is the country with no history of defeat', implying that the War would not turn Britain inside out as it did Germany or France; not because of sheer numbers of the fallen, but because of the changes to society resulting from the conflict.<sup>66</sup> Social and cultural historian George Robb asserted:

Whether or not the war originated trends or merely accelerated those already in operation, it dramatized for contemporaries the transition between two significantly different societies. One, marked by rigid segregation and inequalities between the classes and sexes, world economic supremacy, and imperial expansion; and another, more egalitarian and characterized by greater individual prosperity, but where industrial and imperial power were in serious decline. [...] Whether the war promoted 'tradition' or 'modernity' is rather sterile. One could compile endless, rival lists illustrating wartime changes and continuities without gaining a deeper understanding of the conflict.<sup>67</sup>

In the field of musicology, the consequences of the War seem to be read as facilitating the final and irrevocable modernist invasion of Europe. Eric Saylor's criticism of this assumption is that it excludes the specific pastoralism of British music, once again.

Even when music critics, musicologists, and analysts do turn their attention to the subject [of pastoralism], the results are not always welcome. Regardless of whether their analysis is stylistic or interpretive, the term 'pastoral' is often applied pejoratively by unsympathetic writers imply [*sic*] – or sometimes state outright – that such music as falls under its rubric is a reactionary mishmash of escapism, sentimentality, and nostalgia – in short, that it is antimodern.<sup>68</sup>

In a manner similar to Jenny Doctor's aforementioned bitter complaint, Saylor criticizes a perceived unfairness towards British music. In the common narrative, according to his account, pastoralism is looking backwards, provincial,

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<sup>65</sup> Lambourn, *Modernism*, section 1–8, 'The 1914–1918 War'.

<sup>66</sup> Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), 2.

<sup>67</sup> George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War* (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave, 2002), 3.

<sup>68</sup> Saylor, "Lambkins", 40. Saylor does not name his 'unsympathetic writers'.

conservative, naïve, simple, and escapist. Modernism, on the other hand, is described as looking forwards, urban, complex, and an adequate expression of contemporary society and politics; it is innovative and involves a technique applicable independently of national sentiments or prejudices.

Saylor wants the English pastoral of the twentieth century to be understood as a complex artistic response to the national trauma of the War. His procedure, even if he does not explicitly formulate it, is to install the 'Great War' as a new master signifier of a modernist pastoralism. Of all conceivable pastoral pieces, the ones written by English soldier-composers between 1915 and the late 1920s acquire their modernism 'second-hand', as they seem indelibly attached to the modernism of the War. For Saylor, this attachment is a *process* of modernization. An act of adding values and claims to a set of signifiers takes place in the course of modernization: 'the modernity of the pastoral comes from its power to modify its conventional signifiers in ways that were relevant to contemporary culture',<sup>69</sup> and contemporary culture, of course, was crucially shaped by the traumatic Great War. Saylor takes many cues from Fussell's rich study of literary pastoralism during and about the War's Western Front. Where Fussell is careful, however, not even to mention modernity or modernism in the chapter relating to pastoralism, 'Arcadian Recourses' (apart from one mention of Robert Graves's language as 'modern' in scare quotes),<sup>70</sup> Saylor's argumentative structure could be summarized in the following syllogism:

- (1) The First World War is modernist (because it shatters British pre-War civilization).
- (2) The English pastoral is an artistic response to the First World War.
- (3) The English pastoral is modernist.

Perhaps surprisingly, this argument has a fundamentally Adornian formal streak. The parallelism becomes clear when Adorno's modernism is forced into a similar syllogism:

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 45. The problems start with the fact that 'modernism' and 'modernity' are used interchangeably in the essay.

<sup>70</sup> Fussell, *Great War*, 268.

- (1) Whatever technical feature successfully resists the commodification of tonality is a master signifier of modernism.
- (2) Atonality is a means of resisting the commodification of tonality.
- (3) Atonality is the master signifier of modernism.

In Saylor's argument, English post-War pastoral in British music represents the alternative to atonality in Austro-German music in that the pastoral replaces atonality as the master signifier of musical modernism. This can only be valid, however, if the First World War actually possesses a unique status in British history, which is difficult to ascertain for the aforementioned reasons. As the pastoral also does not possess atonality's distinct technical character and is altogether less radical than the latter, the modernism established by the English pastoral as a master signifier will be a kind of consolidated modernism, the idea of which is founded on Christopher Butler's arguments of a modernism made up of two phases:

There seem then to have been two phases of innovation: that of radical change to the language of an art [...], followed by a more pragmatic, audience-orientated adaptation of new techniques, which often demands a highly allusive compromise with the past.<sup>71</sup>

This kind of consolidated alternative modernism resides in the English post-War pastoral, whose features take on their new meaning by 'modify[ing] its conventional signifiers'.<sup>72</sup> With the help of the new cultural master signifier, the War, the pastoral is here claimed to be able to effect a change in the meaning of its own signifiers as well. They become signifiers of modernism, and thereby unseat A-Modernism's master signifier, atonality.

English post-War pastoralism, however, is not the only of its kind able to turn itself into a dark pastoralism (i.e. for Saylor, modernist pastoralism) with the help of a political master signifier, and the stability of this new B-Modernist construct therefore remains precarious. The classical example of a political pastoral is Schubert's song cycle *Die Winterreise*, into which a Kramerian hermeneutic window can be opened that considers the music's features darkened by the 'textual

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<sup>71</sup> Butler, *Early Modernism*, 258.

<sup>72</sup> Saylor, "Lambkins", 45.

inclusion' of the topics of nationalism and exile in Wilhelm Müller's text.<sup>73</sup> This rather simple hermeneutic window has the potential to disrupt the narrative of the modernizing War pastoral, because it is perfectly legitimate to open such a window into the *meaning* of the music in question (which is darkened in both cases), but this is not automatically followed by the establishment of the music's adherence to modernism. In order to prove this second assertion, Saylor's article returns to the methods of musical analysis of three case studies.<sup>74</sup>

The first example, Elgar's *Une voix dans le désert* has the problem of being associated with pastoralism and the War merely through its text by Émile Cammaerts. The analysis of one musical feature which evokes a melodic fragment from Vaughan Williams's *On Wenlock Edge* is the only musical device connecting the piece to pastoralism, not to mention modernism. In this first case, then, Saylor's hermeneutic window is of the type 'textual inclusion', with a War pastoral signifier in its text.

The window into Vaughan Williams's *Pastoral Symphony*, the second case study, is a textual inclusion as well, but of a problematic type. As is well known, the work was intended by its composer as the exact dark, war-inspired pastoral Saylor has in mind, but its early listeners entirely failed to grasp this – although they should have been the first to pick it up, if legends about the national trauma the War caused can be believed. In this second case, listeners heard the pastoral, but not the modernism; which may serve as evidence that the link between the War and pastoralism is not *per se* as strong as could be assumed.

The third case study, Bliss's *Morning Heroes*, manages to skirt the problems of the earlier cases to a degree, because it sets texts which clearly link the War with the pastoral (among others Wilfred Owen's *Spring Offensive* and Robert Nichols's *Dawn*

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<sup>73</sup> Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800–1900* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: UoCP, 1990), particularly 'Tropes and Windows'; Erika von Borries, *Wilhelm Müller – Der Dichter der Winterreise. Eine Biographie*. (Munich: Beck, 2007), 128–30, 150–1. See also Heinz Wetzel, 'Wilhelm Müller, *Die schöne Müllerin* und *Die Winterreise*. Die Frage nach den Zusammenhängen', in Helmut Koopmann, Peter Horst Neumann, Lothar Pikulik et al. (eds.), *Aurora. Jahrbuch der Eichendorff-Gesellschaft für die klassisch-romantische Zeit*, vol. 53 (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1993), 139–71, 164. It is probably no coincidence that Thomas Mann lets his dying protagonist Hans Castorp mutter scraps of 'Der Lindenbaum' during a muddy offensive on the Western front (once again the War, but on the opposite side) at the very end of *Der Zauberberg*.

<sup>74</sup> There are three not because Saylor works with the same model I want to propose, but because they show three levels of connection between textual and musical modernism.

on the *Somme*) and because the music itself has dissonant episodes. Nevertheless, the victory is tarnished – with dissonance on board, the traditional master signifier of modernism is present and the link between modernism and the pastoral cannot therefore be shown to work entirely via War poetry. *Morning Heroes* simply does not need the textual inclusion of the pastoral or indeed the musical pastoral in order to claim some kind of modernism, because it has dissonance. Where, as in this case, atonality and pastoral are shown to be vying for the position of modernism's master signifier, their, arguable, arbitrariness establishes one further problem for modernism, but one on a much deeper level. Now the question is not so much anymore which signifier would be the 'correct' one to be made master signifier, but how one technical feature or *one* style could be expected to act as a credible marker of the modernism that we want to establish in the first place. This issue will be solved in chapter 3 by reallocating modernism's ontological status in order to lift it out of its current position as the end point of an arbitrary signifying chain and ascribe it the quality of an idea driving the production of different responses to its appearance.

Back to Saylor, whose 'process of modernization' succeeds in finding evidence that, with the help of the new master signifier of the War pastoral, it is possible to open new hermeneutic windows into our understanding of the music as a dark pastoral; a reading which is doubtlessly strengthened by that fact that it was taken up by several British composers at the same time. Nevertheless, strictly speaking these windows open towards the *meaning* of the music (pastoral), not to its *stylistic category* (modernism). The musical analysis in the article stops short of finding evidence for modernism where emancipated dissonance is not given. This is a first indicator that B-Modernism's alternative master signifiers may not be able to provide modernism with a stable foundation; and that therefore another strategy must be developed in chapter 3 if this foundation is to be found.

Daniel Grimley's goal in 'Landscape and Distance' with regard to modernism and pastoralism is more dialectical than Saylor's. It seeks to

challenge the assumption that [Vaughan Williams's *Pastoral Symphony*] constitutes an exclusively English musical idiom. Rather, the symphony reveals tensions between inward and outward impulses, between notions of Englishness and a more cosmopolitan Continental European modernism, which in turn reflects a dialogue

between abstraction and representation, tradition and innovation, stability and instability.<sup>75</sup>

The selected case study certainly offers itself as an ideal piece to examine the interlocking of modernism and pastoralism. Here, as opposed to Saylor, the pastoral does not seek to change its signifiers into a modernist master signifier, but it employs alternative master signifiers to point out how gaps between the concepts of an English, non-modernist, tradition on the one hand and ‘abstraction’, ‘innovation’, and ‘instability’ (i.e. modernism) on the other could be closed. The main gap to be observed is in the discrepancy between the piece’s well-known early reception as an English pastoral and its composer’s reprocessing of his possibly traumatic experiences as an ambulance driver on the Western front. In a move to keep the argument subtle, Grimley does not assert the immediate modernism of the pastoral, but implies that the pastoral’s function to point out gaps between tradition and modernism might be a modernist move in itself. To play this kind of game is just what one could expect of a composer like Vaughan Williams.<sup>76</sup>

Grimley’s first argument for the symphony’s modernism is its rotational form which connects it to ‘music of “first generation modernists” such as Strauss, Mahler, Elgar and Sibelius’.<sup>77</sup> This is problematic insofar as this conceptualization of modernism’s master signifier as rotational deformation could be criticized for similar reasons as other B-Modernist alternative master signifiers: it is a formal device which can be shown not to be specific to the canon of modernism, or indeed the twentieth or nineteenth centuries.<sup>78</sup> Unlike this first point, Grimley’s following association of the *Pastoral Symphony* with *Le sacre du printemps* connects the Symphony not to the modernism of a form, but to that of another piece: ‘the opening material, with its gently oscillating woodwind quavers [...] is an invocatory gesture, the evocation of an Arcadian landscape of the type associated in modernist

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<sup>75</sup> Grimley, ‘Landscape’, 148.

<sup>76</sup> As Harper-Scott has pointed out in the essay within the same collection as Grimley’s, ‘Antic Symphony’.

<sup>77</sup> Grimley, ‘Landscape’, 151. This rests on Hepokoski’s claim in ‘The Essence of Sibelius: Creation Myths and Rotational Cycles in *Luonnotar*’, in Glenda Dawn Goss (ed.), *The Sibelius Companion* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1996), 121–46, 128, according to which a deformed rotational sonata form can be a signifier of modernism.

<sup>78</sup> James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (Oxford et al.: OUP, 2006), particularly in Appendix 2. However, rotation is mentioned as a principle of any sonata form as early as p. 16.

musical practice with mystic circles and shamanistic ritual.’<sup>79</sup> The beginning of the *Symphony* could be heard as an English ‘May rite: the reimagining of a circular pastoral dance intended to augur the arrival of spring in the Greenwood.’<sup>80</sup> The basis of the modernist allusions in this essay is shifted from Austro–German modernism to the Franco–Russian type of early Stravinsky. Atonality loses its superiority as master signifier, and particular features of structure, rhythm, and form take its place. As with Saylor’s argument, this swap of master signifier illustrates the potential arbitrariness of what is chosen as this master signifier, and points to the deeper problem with the ontological status of the concept of modernism itself.

The following movements are associated with other types of wider modernist culture as well – the second with Paul Nash’s wartime paintings, the third with Esty’s aforementioned theory of the shrinking island, and the finale with a number of English and modernist works and thoughts, some of these pointing forward to Vaughan Williams’s later *Sinfonia Antartica* and *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.<sup>81</sup> The *Symphony* is moored safely in a wide network of contemporary culture. Its ambivalence towards modernism is evident, and the result of meticulous analysis is therefore that ‘in a characteristically modernist gesture, Vaughan Williams’s ‘Pastoral’ *Symphony* offers a complex and often fractured vision.’<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, this modernist gesture is not A-Modernism of course, and Vaughan Williams, like so many other British composers, has to be left circling the centre of the modernist universe, despite the *Pastoral Symphony*’s undoubted value as an important and influential piece of music.

It must be concluded that in ideal circumstances (such as the *Pastoral Symphony*), the particular shape of English post-War pastoralism has the potential to become a vindication of British modernism. It cannot, however, serve as a fully fledged model for British modernism (let alone the wider notion of a postmodernist non-Continental B-Modernism), because the exclusivity of the War as master signifier falls short of providing a solid basis for actual musical analysis. There exists no

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<sup>79</sup> Grimley, ‘Landscape’, 153.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 162–73. Other points of reference in the finale are *Ulysses*, *The Wasteland*, and even an advertisement for a gramophone with recording function.

<sup>82</sup> Grimley, ‘Landscape’, 173.

model for the expanded kind of modernism B-Modernism promotes that would be able to rely on the analysis of the piece of music alone, and not additionally a large network of allusions and associations that are open to criticism on various levels. The reason for this is that modernism's signifiers cannot be changed without the concept losing its stability. Changing how the master signifier is 'quilted' (to use a Lacanian term) can help to open appreciation of a modernist work as such (as chapter 5 will demonstrate), but a change of master signifier will not *make* a work modernist. The master signifier turns out to be a necessary condition for the re-evaluation of a piece of music, but not a sufficient one.

### ***2.3 Conclusion: An Impossible Concept?***

The recent scholarly attention given to the expansion of musical modernism has been faced with two main problems. Firstly, that adding signifiers to modernism (as is done when composer personalities are declared modernist) may facilitate the connection of tonal music to modernism, but finally renders the concept of modernism useless, because the borders of the concept become indistinct. Secondly, that when the pastoral modernist stream seeks to replace the master signifier, atonality, with that of the War pastoral, this will lead to a very narrow repertory again. This set of problems has been realized and tackled by devotees of A-Modernism in music who, not unlike Altieri, feel that a return to core values is due. In his review of Riley's collection, Stephen Downes's *Music and Decadence in European Modernism: the Case of Central and Eastern Europe*, and David Metzger's *Musical Modernism at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*, Björn Heile remarks that

while there is a lot to be said for a broad and inclusive definition of musical modernism, we should be wary of diluting the concept too far by including everything produced within ever widening historical boundaries and by losing sight of its radical and subversive potential.<sup>83</sup>

One of the contributors to Riley's collection, Ben Earle, likewise implies a return to hard core values, when he states three years after *British Music and Modernism* in his 2013 monograph on Luigi Dallapiccola that

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<sup>83</sup> Heile, 'Modernism', 637.

what is required for the adequate interpretation of those kinds of non-modernist music that were treated as beyond the pale by an English-language musicology backed into a corner by the ideological exigencies of the Cold War is not a dilution of the meaning of the term 'modernism', but a greater effort of conceptualization with regard to the repertoires against which modernism defined itself.<sup>84</sup>

The resilience of the approaches of B-Modernism seem affirmed, however, in such collections and monographs as the aforementioned ones. Their strength is that they seek to readjust modernism's premises, its signifiers, in order to achieve the expansion that is needed, although they may not quite succeed because of their underestimation of the power of A-Modernism's master signifier. They are supported additionally by the obvious weaknesses of this modernist modernism, its exclusivity and its ambiguities, which are no less problematic on closer inspection.

Yet there are even deeper concerns about the concept of modernism, which affect both A-Modernism and B-Modernism alike and will be expanded on in the rest of this section. If modernist (A-)modernism and postmodernist (B-)modernism are the thesis and antithesis of the dialectic this chapter traces, then the first of two more general critiques, that of 'essentially contested concepts', serves to highlight the irreconcilability of the two as long as no synthesis is yet found. The second, a Lacanian meditation on the insufficient nature of the concept, serves to point the way forward for chapter 3.

### ***Essentially Contested Concepts***

The first general problem for the concept of modernism is that it potentially belongs to the category of essentially contested concepts (ECCs), a category established by sociologist and philosopher Walter Bryce Gallie for slippery terms like democracy or freedom. By ECC Gallie means 'concepts the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users,'<sup>85</sup> i.e. everyone agrees about the concept being relevant and having a certain meaning, but no one agrees on which meaning is the right one. A solution is not

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<sup>84</sup> Ben Earle, *Luigi Dallapiccola and Musical Modernism in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: CUP, 2013), xii.

<sup>85</sup> W. B. Gallie, 'Essentially Contested Concepts', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, LVI (1955–56), 167–98, 169.

immediately suggested in his essay. Jim Samson argues for acknowledging musical modernism as an ECC:

The fact that everyone [...] is rethinking [modernism] these days sort of makes the case. On the other hand, an ECC is not a permissive society, and I suspect the danger of all this rethinking, whose main thrust seems to be to favour multiple parallel modernisms, is that we just might lose touch with certain essentials.<sup>86</sup>

Samson here points to the weakness at the centre of postmodernist modernism: the concept will not sustain a possibly infinite expansion, contested as it already is. His solution to this problem is to fall back into a hard A-Modernism, and to suggest that we keep the term modernism, but also that we adopt a modernist mentality of 'either/or' when dealing with modernist music. Modernism is reinstated as 'ideology of the modern' and a strict border between modernism and 'conservatism' is re-enforced.<sup>87</sup> In an attempt to mediate this strict position, Samson suggests that both modernism *and* conservatism have to be rethought. In principle, this is what this thesis envisages as well. It attempts to salvage the virtues of A-Modernism and rethink conservatism, but it will furthermore redefine the status of these concepts, based on the following Lacanian point of criticism.

### ***The Signifying Chain and the Quilting Point***

Ferdinand de Saussure points to a fundamental difficulty that faces not only the linguist, but any user of concepts: 'the linguistic sign united, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image.' And additionally: 'the bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary'.<sup>88</sup> In the essay 'The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud', Jacques Lacan takes this basic concern further, claiming that signifiers always merely point to the next signifier in a potentially infinite chain.<sup>89</sup> To illustrate the problems we encounter when dealing with signifiers, Lacan tells the story of two children watching a train station come into sight from their compartment on board. "Look," says the brother, "we're at

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<sup>86</sup> Jim Samson, 'Either/Or', in Despić & Milin, *Rethinking*, 15–26, 24.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>88</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, tr. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 66, 67.

<sup>89</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud', in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, tr. Bruce Fink, in collaboration with Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 412–41.

Ladies!” “Imbecile!” replies his sister, “Don’t you see we’re at Gentlemen.”<sup>90</sup> Both are of course wrong, but the example shows that signifiers always stand ‘above’ the signified: doors without a plate above or on it saying ‘Ladies’, ‘Gents’, or showing a person in a wheelchair, cannot be identified as toilets. They form, thereby, not mere ‘one-to-one correspondences suggested by the role imputed to the index finger pointing to an object as an infant learns its mother tongue’, just as the word ‘tree’ never signifies *the* essence of *the* tree.<sup>91</sup> ‘We can take things no further along this path than to demonstrate that no signification can be sustained except by reference to another signification’:<sup>92</sup> the word ‘toilet’ on the plate, the word for the door, the word for the room, the expression ‘water closet’, all point to the next word for something that lies beyond.

This signifying chain also haunts more elaborate concepts like modernism, of course. It would even seem that, to put it after a famous Lacanian expression, ‘there is no such thing as modernism’. If modernism is an essentially contested concept already, then much of its credibility depends on what the different positions on modernism present as their version of modernism’s signifiers (e.g. atonality, rhythmical fragmentation, the War pastoral, or deformed sonata forms); yet Lacan’s example is a reminder that even a neat list of signifiers cannot bring the scholar closer to modernism itself. Free-floating signifiers of modernism are not able to reach any one point in which the ‘incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier’ stops, unless such a stop is enforced.<sup>93</sup> And free-floating signifiers by sceptics of A-Modernism abound, as 2.2 has demonstrated. Modernism is not just atonal, Viennese School, or *Ulysses* anymore; it is characterized by maximalism, highbrow, or misogyny – new signifiers that have been acquired by the concept over time.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Lacan, ‘The Instance’, 417.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* 415.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 419.

<sup>94</sup> Taruskin’s aforementioned maximalism in *OWHM* 4, Christopher Chowrimootoo’s critique of highbrow modernism in ‘Reviving the Middlebrow, or: Deconstructing Modernism from the Inside, in “Roundtable: Modernism and its Others”, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 139/1 (2014), 187–93, and Susan McClary’s famous critique of Schoenberg’s hysterical atonality in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), particularly 104–8.

Lacan achieves this enforcement in a so called quilting point (originally *point de capiton*, the upholstery button in a Chesterfield sofa), which is provided by the master signifier.<sup>95</sup> In such a point the otherwise loose stuffing (the signifiers) of the concept, as it were, is held together under a tightly stitched button, which provides the solution to the problem of a potentially unending chain. Here, 'signified and signifier are knotted together'.<sup>96</sup> Ideologies, attitudes, in short a person's perspective, which are used to read signifiers in a certain way, are crucial to the quilting point, but not identical to it.

For A-Modernism, this distinction between master signifier and signifiers usually works very well: the master signifier could be a narrative in the form of a stream of consciousness, or perhaps, for the sake of the argument, atonality. A piece of music may be freely atonal, and still be rhythmically, dynamically, and texturally conservative. Still, the master signifier, *atonality*, will convince most people that the corresponding whole – the piece of music – indicates modernism. Most people would disagree, however, that this makes a regular rhythm, modest dynamics, and a Western orchestra modernist *per se*. Rather, these signifiers appear as modernist by association – famously brief pieces by Anton Webern may not, for example, beat the brevity of Bach's Gavotte from the *French Suite* no. 6 by much, but most people would still agree that the Webern is modernist and the Bach is not.

In B-Modernism, or postmodernist modernism, atonality is rejected as master signifier, because it excludes too much literature, art, or music. However, when atonality is not a signifying presence, it seems to become much more difficult to argue convincingly for the music's modernism, although many other signifiers like maximalism in some aspect or an extra-musical signifier like a connection with the War may be discernible. When one of these is promoted to the status of a master signifier, Eric Saylor's problem from section 2.2.3 occurs: with a change of master signifier of modernism from a technical feature (atonality) to a historical one (the War), the musical standard signifier of the pastoral can indeed help signify what the quilting point dictates, but only as long as this quilting point is present. If the War as master signifier is removed, the pastoral reverts back to what it signified

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<sup>95</sup> Sean Homer, *Jacques Lacan* (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2005), 42.

<sup>96</sup> Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1996), 149.

before the War was 'added'. This makes the English pastoral rather difficult to tie down as a signifier of modernism, because it must additionally face the same criticism as A-Modernism's signifier (and as Taruskin's maximalism): it excludes too much music. If the response to this insight is to construct a new master signifier of modernism for each piece of music, however, or to use the composer personality as the quilting point, the opposite effect happens: too little will be excluded, which will critically increase modernism's precariousness as an ECC.

This chapter has thrown spotlights on the strengths and weaknesses of two major positions on modernism, the A-Modernism of a German-speaking musicology highly influenced by Adorno's thinking and the B-Modernism of a mostly English-speaking musicology which is based on the perception that modernism needs to encompass more music than it does in A-Modernism. That said, A-Modernism and B-Modernism describe two sides of the same coin. Although B-Modernism is intentionally and consciously opposing the 'either/or' of A-Modernism, it does not seem to be able (yet) to prescribe a concept of modernism which does justice to its own claim. That is because B-Modernism either substitutes A-Modernism's master signifier for others, which then also exclude much music, or seeks to break up the concept's integrity. Thereby, however, modernism becomes too vague to be useful to music historiography. A-Modernism and B-Modernism *together*, however, would be able to encompass a large amount of music in the early twentieth century deserving to be subsumed under the label of modernism. Yet the two reject each other's premises. A-Modernism's exclusivity keeps the concept of modernism intact, and B-Modernism's claims unravel it. B-Modernism rediscovers the fruitful existence of tonality in the twentieth century, and A-Modernism turns a blind eye towards it.

Yet, there are hidden connections between these two opponents. Interestingly, it is in Adorno that A-Modernism shows a more balanced kernel underneath the forbidding shell. For Adorno, like for B-Modernism, tonal music is always a presence to be reckoned with in the writing of music history of the twentieth century (as can be seen in his notion of regressive and stabilized music). Owing to his decided stance against anything remotely popular or simplistic, however, he needs to reject tonality as a real expression of the age and therefore seeks not to

deny its existence, but its value. B-Modernism wants to reinstate precisely this lost value of tonal music, but encounters the problem that modernism itself is built on the value of the atonal. The deployment of another master signifier, as this chapter has shown, will not yield this value, but only swap one excluded group of music for another (for example music that has no connections with the First World War, or whose texture or length is not 'maximalist') – this is another, perhaps surprising, coincidence between Adorno and B-Modernism. The rejection of one master signifier in favour of different signifiers of modernism for a composer or a particular piece of music might yield value, but will explode the concept. The rejection of the concept of modernism as a last resort of an extreme kind of B-Modernism, finally, will rob music historiography not only of a powerful tool, but also one that is used very frequently.

What the following chapter will seek to do, therefore, is to keep the concept of modernism intact and give it the one strong master signifier it needs to function, so that its A-Modernist structure is preserved. At the same time, I will suggest a way how the concept can still yield value to tonal music, so that B-Modernist equality between tonal and atonal music is obtained. This will be achieved through the application of a philosophical model of a historical Event and its responses from Alain Badiou's recent *Logics of Worlds. Being and Event 2* to the concept of modernism. I argue that if modernism takes on the character of a Badiouvian Event, it will be granted conceptual stability as an idea of modernism, characterized by a master signifier, *pantonicity*. At the same time, a larger canon of modernist music, be it tonal or atonal, shares an equal status as different types of response to this Event of modernism. This model thereby has the potential to fulfil both A-Modernism and B-Modernism's requirements and take the discussion of modernism to a new level.

### **Chapter 3. Musical Modernism, a Theoretical Compromise**

With the advent of B-Modernism and the resulting fall of static modernist signifiers, time frames, canons, and personnel, modernism has effectively become postmodernist. It was a similar expansionist tide, in effect the loss of a conceptualization allowing for the universal validity of certain truths, in the fields of politics, arts, love, and science that brought French radical philosopher Alain Badiou to the point where an attempt to stem this tide in the field of philosophy in the 1980s seemed necessary to him.<sup>1</sup> In this one crucial realization Badiou's agenda and the – to me – unresolved issue of British musical modernism coincide in the belief that a postmodern expansion and a resulting fragmentation of values or of certain concepts will finally harm the entire field of ethics (Badiou) or aesthetics (this thesis). Badiou seeks a fundamental return to a modernist worldview, in which decisions about right or wrong are made again and in which facts and ideas are no longer equally valuable (as they tend to be in postmodernism), but where only one singular Truth must prevail. This requirement seems in principle like that of A-Modernism, but it is distinguished by in fact being a post-postmodern argument (and unlike in a mathematical equation, a double minus [post-postmodern] is different from a simple plus [modern] here).

For Badiou, such a singular and violent Truth in the world is given rise to by a rupturing Event, which erupts (without having been triggered by humans), shakes up society, and disappears, leaving its Truth behind in a precarious state. All of society, however, now respond in some way to this Event and are thereby bound essentially to this Event and its Truth.<sup>2</sup> Badiou exemplifies this model in the history of revolutions that shape our understanding of world history, and it is the aim of this chapter to provide a frame for a similar model in the world of music, into which modernism enters as such an Event.

This operation encompasses three parts, which build upon each other as they crystallize the final shape of what I will call the Event-response model. Referring

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<sup>1</sup> Politics, arts, love, and science are the four conditions of philosophy, according to Alain Badiou. This means that philosophy seeks to make sense of the procedures in these four fields and to work with the Truths they produce.

<sup>2</sup> In the following sections, core concepts of Badiou's theory like Event and Truth as set in upper case when they are used in their function within his theory.

back to the order of the previous chapter, the exposition of Badiou's concepts and the necessary parts of his theory in the first section of this chapter can be compared to A-Modernism in its rigidity and strictness. The chapter then moves back into Anglo-American musicology, as it examines the use that applications of Badiou's system in this discipline have detected, all of which have been formulated in order to make sense of the developments of music history and aesthetics. As might be expected, these applications have the potential to point the way forwards in many ways, but they pass by some of Badiou's issues or create new problems, which my own application will carefully reflect and transcend. In the final and third step, therefore, I formulate the final Event-response model, which is going to be used in Part 2 of this thesis to facilitate a new and functioning encounter between modernism and British music of the early twentieth century. Throughout this section, I will point out how my model compares to the different arguments that will have been described to make sense of modernism (Adorno, Taruskin, scholars of British Modernism, Badiou, Harper-Scott in *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism*, and the group of musicological Badiouvians' positions)<sup>3</sup> and demonstrate how this new model solves the issues in these approaches.

### **3.1 Badiou's Model of Revolutions**

If Rancière is the philosopher of equality, then Badiou could be called the philosopher of revolution. As such, he is interested in how political, artistic, scientific, and historical change occurs and how the change that occurs in revolutions is preserved or destroyed. Possibly one of the most fundamental premises for the true revolutionary in the moment of revolution is that the revolution forces them to make a decision – and the right one – and to produce the Truth in what follows. In *L'Être et l'événement* (1988; translated in 2005 as *Being and Event*), Badiou consequently attacks such neoliberal relativism which seeks to

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<sup>3</sup> These 'Badiouvians' are: James Currie, 'Music After All', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 62/1 (2009), 145–203; Stephen Decatur Smith, 'Badiou and Wagner. From Fidelity to Prophecy', *The Opera Quarterly*, 29/3–4 (2014), 335–41; Michael Gallope, 'The Universal Form of Badiou's Wagner', *ibid.*, 342–8; Brian Kane, 'Badiou's Wagner. Variations on the Generic', *ibid.*, 349–54; Kenneth Reinhard, 'Badiou and the Subject of *Parsifal*', *ibid.*, 361–7; Martin Scherzinger, 'Wagner Redux. Badiou on Music for the Future', *Contemporary Music Review*, 31/5–6 (2012), 461–85; Naomi Waltham-Smith, 'Badiou *Contra* Badiou. Review of Alain Badiou. 2010. *Five Lessons on Wagner*, translated by Susan Spitzer. London: Verso', *Current Musicology*, 94 (Fall 2012), 143–64; and eadem, 'Rethinking Community and Difference in *Parsifal*', *The Opera Quarterly*, 29/3–4 (2014), 355–60.

replace the force of rigid, singular, and universal Truths with more flexible and equal situations, criticizing in his 'Preface' to the English translation the 'declaration [...] that all cultures were of the same value, that all communities generated values, that every production of the imaginary was art, that all sexual practices were forms of love, etc.'<sup>4</sup>

Rethought and enriched with a good deal of new content, this, for many people surely problematic, judgement results in what Badiou formulates as the postmodernist axiom, expressed provocatively in the sequel to *Being and Event*, *Logiques des mondes* (2006; translated in 2009 as *Logics of Worlds. Being and Event 2*): 'there are only bodies and languages'. This means that 'communities and cultures, colours and pigments, religions and clergies, uses and customs, disparate sexualities, public intimacies and the publicity of the intimate: everything and everyone deserves to be recognized and protected by the law.'<sup>5</sup> Badiou holds against this axiom of what he derogatorily terms 'democratic materialism' that 'there are only bodies and languages, except that there are truths.'<sup>6</sup> The re-established Truth as the entity powerful enough to bar postmodern plurality and to push-start a stalling Marxist project, becomes the means to further the communist cause. For Badiou, the idea of Truth is marked as eternal and 'identifiable beyond the empirical manifestness of their existence' (which additionally presents Truths as opposed to the democratic materialist relativity between bodies and languages).<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, Truths do manifest themselves in Events, which in their turn are the place in the theory where historicity enters the scene where Truth is concerned. An Event represents the idea that also fuels the Truth, but the Event binds it to reality and thereby to temporality. As Steven Decatur Smith explains, the Event of the French Revolution 'flashes up and vanishes unpredictably', but in its wake it

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<sup>4</sup> Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, tr. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2005, published in French 1988), xii.

<sup>5</sup> Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event, 2*, tr. Alberto Toscano (London, New York: Continuum, 2009, published in French 2006), 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 4. This is the axiom of the 'materialist dialectic', not to be confused with the dialectic materialist, a problematic remnant of GDR and Stalinist ideology and Badiou's 'black sun' (*Logics*, 3).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

becomes possible to claim the Truth of the 'radical equality of all people'.<sup>8</sup> This particular connexion between Truth and Event allows Badiou to extrapolate a circularly progressing and regressing history of a kind of pure communism, which the following example of 'Spartacus' will show. Despite its force of a 'rupture', an Event is elusive and can remain tangible only in a Trace of the Event, which appears with the Event, but does not vanish with it.<sup>9</sup> To this Trace Subjects relate. These are not individuals, but, as Decatur Smith agrees, 'a collection of individuals organized by a political bond, or a church, or a body of physical laws resulting from a new line of scientific investigation, or a work of art, or a loving couple.'<sup>10</sup>

An entire society can be shaken, Badiou thus implies, by what is nothing more (or rather nothing less) than the manifestation of a Platonic idea, which in itself is not tangible, but springs up in an Event. The Event forces a response from everyone affected by it, and Badiou distinguished three of these: the 'faithful' response, which 'produces' the Truth after the Event has disappeared, the 'reactive' response, which 'denies' the Truth, and the 'obscure' response, which seeks to 'occult' or destroy it.

### 3.1.1 Spartacus

Badiou's own example for the development of this model in *Logics of Worlds* utilizes simple and well known historical situations, which are however brought into perhaps surprising connection to each other, and this example may therefore serve as my exemplification as well. The faithful subject, in this example, is represented by Spartacus's army of self-declared former or freed slaves in 73 BC. A Badiouvian Subject is not an individual or a community (like Spartacus himself), but rather 'the mode according to which a body [a 'multiple-being' or 'bearer of a subjective formalism'] enters into a subjective formalism with regard to the production of a present,' or in simple terms, a group of people who have a common view about a Truth.<sup>11</sup> The trace of the 'revolt-Event' is these slaves' conviction that 'We slaves, we want to return home.' This trace is beyond doubt the Trace of an Event – not just any event – because it possesses an underlying Truth (*all people*

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<sup>8</sup> Decatur Smith, 'Fidelity', 337.

<sup>9</sup> Badiou, *Logics*, 50.

<sup>10</sup> Decatur Smith, 'Fidelity', 338.

<sup>11</sup> Badiou, *Logics*, 594.

are free to go where they like) and because this claim is not in itself a reaction to immediate surroundings of a group of people, but the expression of an unheard and yet universal claim in its purest simplicity.<sup>12</sup> This extraordinary move by the faithful subject in its fidelity creates a new present, written  $\pi$  (in which ‘the slaves want to and can decide to be free to return home’). This revolt is joined by countless slaves who have their own motives for joining and their own skills, abilities, and disabilities – which makes them a faithful body, which however, is more than the sum of the number of all its, potentially defective, individuals together. Their faithful response to the Event is their aim to keep the present in existence (fig. 3.1).

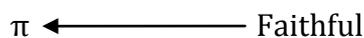


Fig. 3.1: Direction of the faithful subject, cf. Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*.

Other interests are soon hurt by this faithful response, however. Another group of slaves is overcome by fear of punishment and suspicion against them by their owners in the wake of Spartacus’s revolt, despite their refusal to join the insurrection themselves and therefore their personal distance from any violent or insubordinate acts. As a result, they decide to behave as if the insurrection had not happened, go about their business as usual, and hope for changes from within the system in the long run, for example in the form of their masters honouring the obedient slaves’ loyalty by giving them more small freedoms.

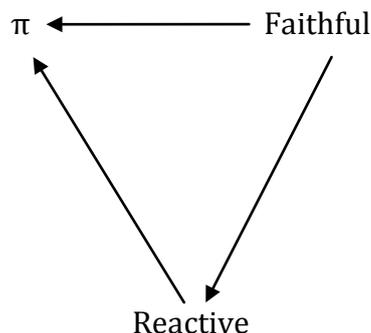


Fig. 3.2: Direction of the reactive subject in relation to the faithful and the present.

<sup>12</sup> In consequence of this distinction between Event and event, the distinction between faithful response and obscure response can be difficult. Cf. section 6.2.3.

This group forms the reactive subject in its denial of the new present (fig. 3.2): it depends on the production of the present by the faithful subject, but its own intervention reshapes the present as well:

From a subjective point of view, it is not because there is reaction that there is revolution, it is because there is revolution that there is reaction. We thereby eliminate from the living subjective field the whole 'left-wing' tradition which believes that a progressive politics 'fights against oppression'. But we also eliminate, for example, a certain modernist tradition which believes that the criterion for art is the 'subversion' of established forms, to say nothing of those who wish to articulate amorous truth onto the fantasy of a sexual emancipation (against 'taboos', patriarchy, etc.).<sup>13</sup>

Here, Badiou's intentions are unusually transparent. Firstly, he launches the application of the model to three of his four conditions of philosophy or 'subjective destinations': politics, art, and love, which are thereby given another confirmation as the basis of his thought. Secondly, however, he insists that the communist revolution comes first, temporally as well as in regard to relevance, which I will dispute in section 3.3.

If the distinction between faithful and reactive subjective directions seems relatively straightforward, the third one complicates, and at the same time completes, the picture. Roman society is of course shaken to its core by the basis of its work force declaring itself free to leave and even, in true 'faithful' and 'terrorist' spirit, taking to arms to secure this newly discovered right. Marcus Licinius Crassus is credited with the brutal counterinsurgency Roman law enforcement unleashed against Spartacus's army. Revolting slaves were hunted down and either killed in battle, or, if caught alive, crucified along the now famous Via Appia. Crassus's move to fight the revolution can be understood as a logical, if brutal, response to the slaves' insurrection, but what singles his actions out as obscure is his intention to eradicate the entire movement and exhibit the corpses of the faithful body after its destruction. The obscure response can and will take this extremist turn because it posits the existence of a 'full and pure transcendent Body, an a-historical or anti-evental body (City, God, Race...)'.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Badiou, *Logics*, 62.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 59–60.

As an explicitly detestable and ideologically dangerous type, the obscure response nevertheless features together with the other two responses in Badiou's graph. Obscurity naturally affects the present in its own way, but it is also fuelled by the reactive response, for example by reactive slaves who betray Spartacus's followers to their Roman masters (fig. 3.3).

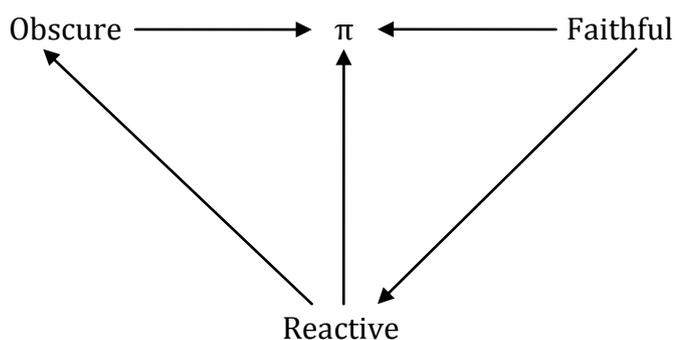


Fig. 3.3: Direction of the obscure subject in relation to the other subjects and the present.<sup>15</sup>

These three responses form the core types of response. The faithful one is complemented, however, by a later offshoot of the same type. In Badiou's slavery example, this second faithful response – the resurrection – is represented by François-Dominique Toussaint Louverture, named 'the black Spartacus' by the French governor Étienne Maynaud Bizéfranc de Laveaux after he had led his troops to victory over the French in the Haitian Revolution; and the Berlin-based communist 'Spartakusbund' around Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. Its temporal distance to the original three types of response renders this second faithful subject less relevant to the following considerations in this study, which is concerned with the pluralism of responses during the twentieth century, i.e. in a single period of history (fig. 3.4).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 63.

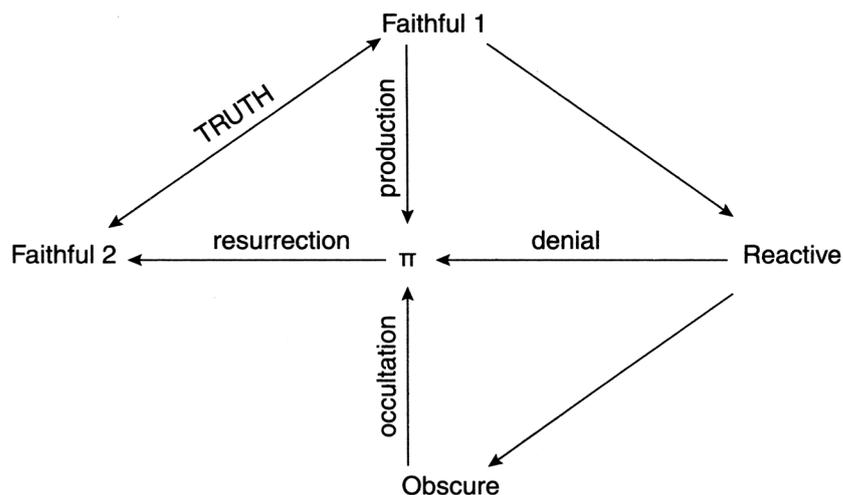


Fig. 3.4: Badiou's schema of figures and destinations (in Badiou, *Logics*, 67).

Two additional observations must be made at this point. The first is that the example of the slave revolt does not imply that any kind of reactive response should be likened to slavery *per se*. While the reactive subject may sometimes emit the feel of a slavish response, the tenor of any comparison between reactive slaves and, as I will later demonstrate, reactive music is not the state of being enslaved itself but the ambiguity towards the revolution of the new. Secondly, the relationship between the three responses and the Event requires one further point of clarification. If the faithful subject is confused with the Event itself, an irresolvable Adornian situation arises once more, in which the avant-garde *is* modernism. If the Event is Spartacus's revolution itself, then the two other responses do not *belong* to the Event, but form counter-responses to it. Transferred to music this means that if Schoenberg's String Quartet op. 10 no. 2 is the Event, then any British, Scandinavian, or even Austro-German tonal music misses the target and remains on the margin of the central evental site. Only if, as can be gleaned from Badiou's system, the Event itself is an idea and its trace a name, will all responses – faithful, reactive, and obscure – gain ontologically equal status as responses to it.<sup>16</sup>

This model, which may seem like a conventional, even old-fashioned, model for making sense of history, rests upon the claim that *all three* responses are intimately connected with the original Event. Badiou maintains for political

<sup>16</sup> This remains true even if one or more of these responses are given differing value in a second step.

purposes that 'the subject reveals itself as the contemporary of the eventual present, without necessarily incorporating itself into it.'<sup>17</sup> His interest is to exclude the obscure subject from shaping the Present in a positive way, yet this response's effect on the Present ('occultation') is as undeniable as that of the faithful ('production') or reactive ('denial') responses. This means that the responses are equal in that they possess the status of response, and that they are judged and evaluated as such and *ex post facto*.

### 3.1.2 Schoenberg

Badiou's interest in art and music of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has shown itself repeatedly in his works, if perhaps not with the same frequency as his discussion of literature (and there in particular Mallarmé and Beckett).<sup>18</sup> *Five Lessons on Wagner* has obviously formed the most common basis of musicological Badiouvians' involvement with the philosopher's thought, but it will play only the role of a trigger for musicological applications in this study as it concerns itself much more with a defence of the composer Wagner from arguments by Adorno and Lacoue-Labarthe than with his own system's applicability to this or other composers. As Michael Gallope correctly finds, in *Five Lessons* 'many of [Badiou's] trademark concepts (truth, event, subject, void) are virtually absent from the text',<sup>19</sup> which in turn seems to have led to the same absence of these concepts in the musicological reception of this book.

Earlier on in *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou devotes more space to a 'musical variant of the metaphysics of the subject', a 'scholium' or commentary on the margin, which is based on an earlier essay of the same title and deserves to be addressed here.<sup>20</sup> Unlike mathematical set theory, whose history serves not merely as an example of the faithful response in the field of science, but as a methodology for Badiou's philosophical enquiry throughout the whole enterprise of *Logics of Worlds*, this designation of the musical exploration as well as its description as a 'variant' serve to keep its content's relevance in Badiou's scheme in check. Nevertheless, he uses

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<sup>17</sup> Badiou, *Logics*, 62.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., in 'Preface', 'Artistic Example: Horses', 16–20.

<sup>19</sup> Gallope, 'Universal Form', 342.

<sup>20</sup> Alain Badiou, 'A Musical Variant of the Metaphysics of the Subject', tr. Justin Clemens, *Parrhesia: A Journal of Critical Philosophy* 2 (2007), 29–36. Cf. Badiou, *Logics*, 79–90.

this musical example to expand on the incorporation of particular human beings into Truth-processes – an indispensable feature when dealing with Events in the arts, which are tied to particular composer or artist personalities. This musical variant proves problematic despite its potential fruitfulness for the musicologist, but it is not Badiou's central issue. The reader must therefore not expect a fully fledged musical reading of the model, but rather a stroll through the model's still rather abstract terminology and methodology.

Badiou's first clarification is the term 'world':

German music at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth: the final effects of Wagner – suspended between virtuoso burlesque and exaggeratedly sublime adagios – in Mahler's symphonies and lieder, some passages in Bruckner's symphonies, Richard Strauss before his neo-classical turn, the early Schönberg (*Gurrelieder*, or *Pelleas und Mélisande*, or *Transfigured Night*), the very first Korngold...<sup>21</sup>

Here, Badiou's perspective seems rather similar to Adorno's and A-Modernism. With a line of Austro-German 'great men' from Wagner to Mahler to Strauss to Schoenberg, he seems to refute the postmodernist perspective of modernism, which seeks to expand, if not explode, this imagined line of succession. Badiou's definition of the Event entering this musical world affirms his Teutonic focus and cuts modernism back to the personality of Schoenberg:

The event is the Schönberg-event, namely that which breaks the history of music in two by affirming the possibility of a sonic world no longer ruled by the tonal system. This event is as laborious as it is radical, taking nearly twenty years to affirm itself and disappear. We pass in effect from the atonality of his *String Quartet no. 2* (1908) to the organized serialism of *Variations for Orchestra* (1926), via the systematic dodecaphonism of the *5 Pieces for Piano* (1923).<sup>22</sup>

Both this 'world' and this 'Schoenberg-Event' seem intent on carving in stone what music historiography has been seeking to dismantle: the absolutist, Germanocentric inscription of Schoenbergian atonality as the mythic turning point of Western music history. Additionally, the trace (or name) of the Event is distinctly problematic. In *Being and Event* it was defined as the 'destruction of tonality'<sup>23</sup> or else 'an organization of sounds may exist which is capable of defining

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<sup>21</sup> Badiou, *Logics*, 79–80.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>23</sup> *Idem*, *Being*, 393.

a musical universe on a basis which is entirely subtracted from classical tonality.’<sup>24</sup> Both names (destruction and subtraction) stress the negative aspect of the change in the textbook rules of harmony, and that it is given the privilege of breaking the history of music in two in the previous quote does not much to help. Most music historians today would probably reject such a one-dimensional reading of Schoenberg’s atonality in view of the variety of tonal systems available and utilized in the early twentieth century. Taking this clear disadvantage of Badiou’s Variant into account, my logicalization in section 3.3 will change this name of the Event from Badiou’s rupturing diachronic split of history to a synchronic perspective of the simultaneous options available for composers.

The Variant begins to offer more potential for my project in the following move, for which Badiou distinguishes four positions or ‘affects’ that individual composers can adopt in relation to the Truth of the Event. Contrary to expectation, these are not directly deduced from the three subjective directions or responses to the Event, because they demonstrate individual artistic calculation and response. It is here that Badiou’s interest in the music of his immediate contemporaries begins to upstage the music he seemed to be concerned with at the beginning of ‘Scholium’. The first of four affects is ‘terror’, ‘the desire for a Great Point, a decisive discontinuity that will institute the new world in a single blow, and complete the subject’.<sup>25</sup> While we might be persuaded to think of Schoenberg himself for this position, Badiou names the Pierre Boulez of the early 1950s. The concept of the ‘point’ (a sudden and provocative innovation), as opposed to the ‘opening’ (a slower and more considerate introduction of novelties), is typical for the terrorist, who can easily be identified as a part of the configuration of the faithful subject. The terrorist’s characteristics are quick decisiveness, an ‘inflexible will’, and a preference for polemics.<sup>26</sup>

The second affect is ‘anxiety’, ‘a fear of points, the retreat before the power of the discontinuous, of everything that imposes a choice without guarantee between two hypotheses [...], the desire for a continuity, for a monotonous shelter’.<sup>27</sup> Despite

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<sup>24</sup> *Idem*, *Logics*, 80.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

these pejorative overtones, Badiou rates anxiety as a 'creative affect, to the extent that this creation is still governed by the opening rather than by the abruptness of points.'<sup>28</sup> Hiding away as long as possible from the painful points that others are making on behalf of a new present, anxious composers are, according to Badiou, Stravinsky with his belated conversion to serialism or Henri Dutilleux, treading in the footsteps of Alban Berg's desire to have both melody and serialism. This position is not strictly speaking a reactive response, but nor is it truly faithful. Rather, Badiou seems to want to open up his rigid threefold model, which perhaps reminds of Adorno's cutting psychoanalytical categories of progressive (faithful), stabilized (reactive), and regressive (obscure) composers. Instead, the system seems to recognize its need to become permeable for individual choices within composers' *œuvre*. This option forms an important possibility for British composers who must be seen as resisting this rigid Adornian model, as my own adaptation later in this chapter will show. Thereby, Badiou's model begins to show its potential advantage for my purpose over Adorno's stricter trinity of composer personalities.

Badiou's third musical affect is 'courage', 'the acceptance of the plurality of points, of the fact that discontinuities are at once inexorable and multiform.'<sup>29</sup> This affect belongs to the faithful subject, although it seems to join the faithful revolution late. The point of this faithful courage is more than to accept the existence of a breach of the old order; it is to embrace the disruption and continue in the spirit of the revolution. Perhaps contrary to expectations for this 'third' affect, 'courage' is not related to the third response, the obscure subject, in any way, but it seems to take place around the same time as the obscure response in the original model. Badiou's example is Webern, whose anti-maximalist approach is to solve one challenge per piece and who here appears to be following the decisions of the avant-garde without being their leader. The choice of Webern seems a misfit in this system simply because Webern does not fit the chronology, which revolves between the early and, in the following affect late, Boulez.

The fourth and final affect is 'justice', 'the desire for the subject to be a constant intrication [*sic*] of points and openings. With respect to the pre-eminence of

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

becoming-subject, it affirms the equivalence of what is continuous and negotiated, on the one hand, and of what is discontinuous and violent, on the other.’<sup>30</sup> If the trace of the Schoenberg-Event is a battlefield, then the just person arrives rather late to pick up the broken bones. The terrorists have made their successful ambush, the anxious have fled, and only the courageous are disciplined and optimistically carrying the flags. All there is to do now for the just is to take the revolution safely into the future, bring it to acceptance in society, and turn military into political strategy. The just persona puts away the sticks and pulls out the carrots, as it were. Badiou’s example is the later Boulez. After a good deal of terror the composer ‘learnt about justice, between 1950 and 1980, insofar as he acquired the power to slacken the abruptness of the construction when needed and to develop his own openings without brutally denying them through a heterogeneous point’.<sup>31</sup> For Adorno, this affect of justice might already be the attitude of the second or third generation of New Music composers, whose relation to their atonal and serialist heritage has grown stale, as Adorno describes in ‘The Aging of the New Music’.<sup>32</sup> For Badiou, however, this is not yet the point of ‘saturation’, which he sees reached at the time of his writing the book (i.e. in the mid-1980s). Nor does this position of justice belong to the second faithful subject, because it is too early. It must be assumed that the point of saturation follows on the affect of justice, and that into this saturation, the second faithful subject breaks with the will to resurrect the ideas of musical modernism.

Altogether, Badiou gives no hint as to how precisely this variant is to be understood in relation to the original model, and this is its main issue. The simplest explanation is that in the variant, Badiou is concerned with different types of modernist composers, but his own application is somewhat deficient. The obscure response, for example, cannot feature in this variant because it is represented by bodies formed of individuals *outside* the arts. What this and the previous model of three responses do invite, however, is an application in music with the potential to solve the crucial issues of a system that seeks to avoid the pitfalls in A-Modernism as well as B-Modernism: the ‘modernism-Event’ holds in place one central

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>32</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, ‘The Aging of the New Music’, in *ibid.* (ed.), *Essays on Music. Selected, with Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Richard Leppert; New Translations by Susan Gillespie* (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 2002), 181–202, 185.

ontological kernel and with it a master signifier of modernism, which A-Modernism offers and B-Modernism lacks. At the same time, the existence of highly differing responses provides the openness that B-Modernism seeks and much of A-Modernism denies. Finally, the Event is not to be confused with its faithful response, which is what distinguishes this model from a benign reading of Adorno. Expansion at the expense of conceptual identity can be avoided if the model is applied to music history in a fruitful way. If modernism were the Event, then the three different responses to modernism can relate music which, in the standard understanding of the concept, should never fulfil the requirements of modernism to this rigorous concept.

Nevertheless, this model is limited in other ways, which will have to be dealt with in order to achieve this goal. Badiou's own fixation on Austro-German modernism and Boulez are such a limitation, but also his political premises, which tie him back to the A-Modernist dichotomy between good/progressive/faithful and bad/stabilized-regressive/reactive-obscure music. In order to resolve this tension, the master signifier of the Event (Badiou's 'destruction of tonality') will have to be reviewed as well as the value the three responses possess.

Several recent musicological applications deal with the possibilities and issues of Badiou's philosophy, but while they succeed to qualify Badiou's fixation on Schoenberg and Boulez, some of them either intensify the problem of politicization or establish a new point of fixation – Wagner. In order to change this model to a thoroughly applicable system for defining and analyzing British musical modernism in the last section of this chapter, the model's vital parts need to be distinguished from the political ideology and criticism of current musicology in the following section.

### 3.2 Badiou in Musicology

For the purpose of this thesis, it is useful to draw a relatively narrow line around those pieces of 'Badiouvian musicology' that concern themselves immediately with the concepts of Event and, in consequence, of responses to such an Event. This reception of Badiou's thinking can be sorted into two groups, depending on whether they operate with the concept of the Event and, if so, whether they take into account the existence of a plurality of responses or not.<sup>33</sup> The relevance of this criterion arises from the space that is given over to 'divergent' music in the context of the modernism-Event only if this multiplicity of responses is acknowledged (if no such multiplicity is acknowledged, the model's usefulness for modernism falls behind even Adorno's usefulness for describing such divergent music).

The essays in the group concerning itself with just *one* response, fidelity, can be shown easily to confront serious problems.<sup>34</sup> Lawrence Kramer's 'Music Recomposed' criticizes the role of what he calls the Beethoven-Event for music history.<sup>35</sup> For Kramer, Beethoven constitutes a Badiouvian event by being a presence which ruptures its world by answering the question 'why one can't write like Mozart' anymore and by thereby producing a state of compositional affairs behind which music history cannot go back.<sup>36</sup> In order to be faithful to this Beethoven-Event, 'we are required to do exactly what Beethoven did.'<sup>37</sup> Naturally, this prescription turns out to be problematic and Badiou's model is therefore dismissed. This case raises a common misunderstanding concerning the character of the Event, however. An Event is not a composer or their corpus of works (despite Badiou's misleading naming of the Event), but it is an *idea* which manifests itself without dependence on a preceding state of affairs or composers at a crucial time. For Kramer's example, this might mean that his Event is the point at which the idea emerges in the world of Austro-German composition that 'the

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<sup>33</sup> This counting excludes those applications which do not concern themselves with the model this thesis works with and are therefore set aside in the following discussion: Currie, 'Music after All', which mostly deals with Badiou's *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, tr. Peter Hallward (London, New York: Verso, 2001) and the question of political context in music; Gallope, 'Universal Form'; Scherzinger, 'Wagner Redux'; Waltham-Smith, 'Badiou *Contra* Badiou'; and eadem, 'Rethinking Community'.

<sup>34</sup> In this group are Kane, 'Badiou's Wagner'; Lawrence Kramer, 'Music Recomposed. Remarks on the History of the Same', *Journal of Music Theory*, 54/1 (2010), 25–36; and Reinhard, 'Badiou and the Subject'.

<sup>35</sup> Kramer, 'Music Recomposed', 29.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

genre of the Symphony is the most prestigious genre of music'. The symphonies by Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, or Schumann respond to this in an attempt to reflect this idea in different ways, while the lack of a corpus of symphonies by Wagner forms another type of response to the same idea. Kramer's application of the persona Beethoven as Event *and* its response confuses this crucial difference and must lead to the impossible prescription that in order to be faithful to the Beethoven-Event, one has to write like (or be) Beethoven. In my own application, the essential distance between personnel and Event will therefore play an important role.

Brian Kane's critique of *Five Lessons on Wagner* presents the one-response issue in a more complex form than Kramer, but ultimately this critique exhausts itself at the same point as Kramer's. Kane is very aware of the danger of tautology in Badiou's system, when he accuses the philosopher of giving too much potency to the faithful subject. Kane sees the faithful position as one which can obscure the need for proper justification of an Event. 'How are we to know where Wagner's greatness really lies? Without criteria, the answer is simply, "Because I said so." If the faithful subject believes it, then, for the faithful it is so.'<sup>38</sup> Here, it is not confusion between Event and response as in Kramer, but the sole dependence of the Event on its faithful response, which causes problems. If faithful support were the only (and thereby master) signifier of a successful Event, then this Event could indeed not hold much credibility. In fact, however, Kane admits that Badiou did not explicitly claim Wagner to be an Event in *Five Lessons*, and strictly speaking therefore accuses the philosopher of a crime he cannot be convicted of (though he may have committed it without explicitly saying so). Even so, Kane's accusation is strong, as it points out one more problematic similarity between Badiou and Adorno. The existence of other responses beside the faithful one (Adorno's stabilized and regressive musics) to the Event are irrelevant if these can be dismissed as purely unproductive. For Kane, this is the underlying premise which leads to his reliance of the Event on the faithful response alone.

For Kenneth Reinhard, another commentator on *Five Lessons*, the existence of the reactive response is in danger of being nothing more than a 'refusal' or a 'reaction

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<sup>38</sup> Kane, 'Badiou's Wagner', 353.

formation' to the faithful, serial direction, which thereby again gains a problematic prerogative over the other responses *and* the Event itself.<sup>39</sup> The lesson from these critiques for my application is twofold. The Event will possess its own master signifier, as it also does in Badiou, so as to refute mere dependence on the faithful response. Furthermore and against Badiou's own application, the three types of response will gain equality and their own signifiers, in order to avoid falling into the Adornian trap of acknowledging different responses only in order to declare the majority of them as invalid because they fail to adhere to the correct master signifier.

There exists one musicological application of Badiou's model of Event and response that acknowledges the existence of the three types and response and seeks to rethink their value to a certain degree. In *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism. Revolution, Reaction, and William Walton*, Harper-Scott attempted such a re-evaluation on the basis of William Walton's opera *Troilus and Cressida* (premiered in 1954 and, in a revised version, again in 1976, not long before the elemental revision of abandoned pieces from the cycle *Façade*, which this thesis's chapter 6 examines) and instrumental works such as his First Symphony. One of the crucial intersections between Harper-Scott's thinking and Badiou's perspective is the belief that 'labelling music as modernist or not is not a neutral aesthetic judgement but always a political act.'<sup>40</sup> Harper-Scott operates under a principle whose relevance for a Richard Taruskin he also stresses: that music, including so-called Western art music, is necessarily caught up in a network of politics and ethics (in Taruskin's case this is the Cold War), and that it is therefore never innocent or detached from the structure at work in the society it is produced, received, or repressed in. Consequently, the book is inherently political in itself, not only in its examples on the side – about the current situation in British politics of education, of the resurrection of Thatcherism, or of the Arab Spring – but in two other moments of which the latter requires explanation in the context of my thesis: firstly, *Troilus and Cressida's* topic of faithful love (in Badiou's terms as one of the four conditions of philosophy), and secondly, the book's claim that modernism is informed by political as well as musical history.

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<sup>39</sup> Reinhard, 'Badiou and the Subject', 362.

<sup>40</sup> J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism: Revolution, Reaction, and William Walton* (Cambridge, New York: CUP, 2012), xii.

For Harper-Scott, modernism is intrinsically bound up with communism: ‘every political possibility that presented itself for reflection or action on Walton’s part was [...] fundamentally determined by the communism-Event. The place of modernism – that communist–fascist–emancipatory–totalitarian critical paradox – in this political reality is of course not immaterial.’<sup>41</sup> Even stronger is the claim that ‘both for Walton and for us today, the role of modernism as the central artistic truth-Event in the time of the political truth-Event of communism is of vital importance.’<sup>42</sup> This, again, is surpassed by the idea that ‘in artistic terms it is necessary to understand such a political response principally in relation to a creative artist’s response to modernism.’<sup>43</sup> Modernism is for the arts what communism is in politics (Badiou’s crucial philosophical condition). But modernism does more than run along parallel. Rather, modernism is an artistic expression of communism, sharing the latter’s feature of a radical change of the surrounding society. This becomes most clear in Harper-Scott’s reading of the character of the faithful and reactive responses to musical modernism. The Event ‘of which twentieth-century modernism is a “maximalization” [...] remains, as it was for Romanticism, the French Revolution.’<sup>44</sup> Thus, the faithful response that Badiou’s Schoenberg gives in *Logics of Worlds* is in fact a resurrective, second faithful response to this earlier Event, and the cycle of responses repeats itself after this one. The crucial point is that ‘the truth of which emancipation of dissonance is the resurrected trace is ultimately communism, as witnessed in the first sequence, from the French Revolution to the Paris Commune.’<sup>45</sup> Faithful modernist music carries the torch of communism, even between the major political sequences of communism.

The direct connection between modernism and communism is subtle and can be found in two elements: firstly, in the character of the trace of the Event and secondly in the character of the reactive response. In *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism*, the name of the Event is *emancipation of dissonance*. The return to this apparently old-fashioned and ideologically tainted quilting point of musical modernism is justified with the reference to the comparability of tonality to a

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 182.

powerful state ideology.<sup>46</sup> A break with this ideology can be nothing less than a revolution. The emancipation of dissonance becomes the musical equivalent to the rise of the working classes, and it is followed by the overthrow of the tonal (or capitalist) system and the resulting disappearance of the difference between dissonance and consonance (or working class and aristocracy/middle class), the erasure of the *categories* of dissonance and consonance.<sup>47</sup>

The second crucial political moment in Harper-Scott's application of the Badiouian theory lurks in the characterization of the reactive subject. As expected, this response is the one which William Walton gives most consistently throughout the larger part of his career (apart from faithful beginnings and, as my own case study on a late version of *Façade* will show, obscure endings) and which is therefore of the greatest relevance to Harper-Scott's reading of *Troilus and Cressida* as well as the First Symphony and the Cello Concerto in his final chapter. For Harper-Scott, the reactive response presents 'reactionary novelties', which pose a complicated, but promising, object of study: 'the modernism [...] of a conservative modernist [i.e. of a reactive subject], is an unconscious subordination to the Cause. Herein lies its interest and value to the Left.'<sup>48</sup>

In other words, as long as the third communist sequence has not begun to happen yet, reactionary novelties represent the best possible, if imperfect, input for the scattered elements of the faithful subject. An example in the political sphere is post-War social democracy, whose relationship to communism seems similar to that of Walton's music from the 1930s to 'high modernism'. At this point, Harper-Scott revisits the aforementioned aesthetic theory of Esty's *The Shrinking Island* to account for the specifically British situation in the 1930s and 1940s. The resulting British, 'nationalized modernism' is additionally crossed with the Heideggerian twofold concept of *wiederholen* (to repeat and to fetch back) in order to establish the '*authentically* reactive' subject, which 'like the faithful, brings the truth of modernism to presence, in this case through "repetition".'<sup>49</sup> This repetition can be found in the rotational form of the Cello Concerto's first movement and the First

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 231.

Symphony provides ample moments of *fetching back* its dissonances to a tonal outline in its last movement. Walton's turn to reaction is sealed in this last movement, which, according to Harper-Scott's politicized perspective, is in accordance with the times it was written in and can stand as an example for today, as the third communist sequence has not yet unfolded and the only subjective position carrying the idea is therefore the reactive one. In order to produce reactive music, which will be able to uphold the faithful flag in a more humble way, a faithful music needs to have appeared, however. The production of the so-called reactive novelties depends in its entirety on the previous existence of the faithful revolution, which, it must be followed, can be found in high modernists such as Schoenberg – again.

In this study, Harper-Scott crosses many seemingly incompatible systems in order to enable a more modernist than postmodernist B-Modernism. The majority of the examination is given to the reactive subject, which the author perceives as the least harmful (and possibly even most useful), if deficient, response that can be given in a situation such as contemporary politics or British music between the 1930s and the 1950s. By using Badiou's system, Harper-Scott establishes a stable connection between early twentieth-century A-Modernism and its contemporary British counterpart, which successfully skirts the challenges many expansionist B-Modernist arguments face. An example is the ever problematic character of the connection between the differing styles of simultaneously composed music from the Continent and from Britain, but thanks to the evanescence of the Event in this system, Walton does not need to be proven to have been a virtuous student of the latest Schoenberg scores. For the composer, it is enough to be sensitive to the fact that the emancipation of dissonance, in the air since Wagner (at the latest), is in graspable reach in order to enable different responses to this Event. The re-evaluation of the reactive response, based on Badiou's own concept of the reactionary novelty, seeks to snatch the reactive response from the wrong side of the opposition between good/faithful/communist/progressive on the one and bad/reactive–obscure/capitalist/regressive on the other side and attempts to incorporate this type of response into  $\pi$  (the Present, established by the faithful subject) after all and despite itself.

This directs the gaze straight onto the obscure response, which is one of several aspects falling by the wayside in Harper-Scott's calculation. Even though this application operates with more than one single response to an Event, the third response remains on the wrong side of the Event, and even sinks deeper in its worthlessness as the reactive rises. This means that the fundamental problem of the dichotomy between good and bad in Adorno, Badiou, and the aforementioned Badiouvians is not solved, but in fact deepened.

Another obvious problem is the thoroughgoing politicization of modernist (and in fact any) music, which might be considered dangerous for the position – some might dare call it the 'unity' – of the field of music research. A very large part of music historians would find themselves unmasked as reactive, or worse, obscure, musicologists, while all music of the twentieth century would have to be checked for its communist premises. The following final section of this chapter shows that Badiou's system is only capable of unlocking its full potential and become useful for a wide variety of music, if fundamental changes to the substructure and premises of the system are made, some of which have already been pointed out: the Event as an idea with a master signifier, three ethically equal responses, and finally a basic de-politicization of the exclusively communist basis of modernism in Badiou and Harper-Scott.

### ***3.3 B-Modernism, Stabilized***

The Event-response model, put through its paces by Badiou himself as well as by the group of the Badiouvian musicologists (Kramer, Kane, Reinhard, and Harper-Scott), needs to be wrested from their grasp, as it were. In a section such as the present one, which works its way rigorously through the Badiouvian material in order to redefine it, the question of how much actually needs to be changed in a slightly unreliable system in order to make it work is one which posits itself with urgency. This situation can perhaps be exemplified in the trivial analogy of a night-time conversation with an emergency plumber. When the continuous water heater of my shower recently caught fire and melted most of its own cables, the hurriedly consulted plumber gave me the choice whether I wanted to be able to have a shower again in the morning (in which case he would only replace the lustre

terminal and cut the melted cables as far as possible) or if I wanted the entire machine replaced and be on the safe side for the future. In this case, however, it would take a week during which I would have to seek alternative means of washing myself. Being a short-term tenant, I chose the former option, because I knew that the next and inevitable cable fire would be my successors' problem.

With Badiou's model a similar choice has to be faced: like Harper-Scott, to subscribe to the politicization with all its consequences and merely rescue the reactive response from the wrong side of the equation (knowing that one might end up with strong obscure elements in the next analysis of British music which then has to be explained by alternative means), or to make the model fireproof, as it were, by making fundamental changes.<sup>50</sup> In this section, I take the responsible landlady's position, and suggest major changes to the theory, perhaps even up to a point at which Badiou might deny involvement with it (despite the profession of his tolerance towards dissenting scholars made on the homepage of the new journal *Badiou Studies*).<sup>51</sup> This is a drastic step, which may leave the system vulnerable for the duration of its reassembly (no shower for a week, as it were), but the result is a model which the second part of the thesis proves to be highly effective and able to dodge the issues of the various discussed models of modernism whose weaknesses I analyzed in the previous sections (Adorno, Taruskin, British modernism scholars, Badiou, Badiouvian musicologists, and Harper-Scott).

The changes this section suggests can be summed up as a 'logicalization' of Badiou's Event-response model.<sup>52</sup> As this model is not merely a recent one, but

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<sup>50</sup> In Viennese philosopher Otto Neurath's essay 'Protocol Sentences', this is also the difference between the empiricist, who, like a sailor on a leaking ship, must maintain and repair the system as they go along, and the hermeneutic or speculative approach, which pull their ship into a dry dock, as it were, and rebuild it from scratch. (Otto Neurath, 'Protocol Sentences', in A. J. Ayer (ed.), *Logical Positivism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishers, 1959), 199–208. This example is taken up by music theorist Matthew Brown to explain and mend the differences between music theorists and New Musicologists (Matthew Brown, "Adrift on Neurath's Boat". The Case for a Naturalized Music Theory', *The Journal of Musicology*, 15/3 (1997), 330–42. The analogy does not carry to the point, however, where Harper-Scott could be called an empiricist or I a hermeneuticist.

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.badioustudies.org> (05/11/2013).

<sup>52</sup> In speaking of logicalization, I deliberately avoid the term 'neutralisation' or 'neutrality'. The former could be seen as charged with an implication of neutering or emasculating, which are not intended here. Logicalization in this context means the taking back of political and moral implications of the original ideas and their transition into the realm of a much more peaceful and

also accounts for no more than a fraction of the overall issue in *Logics of Worlds*, its potential has not yet been stretched to its limits in Badiou scholarship. The reason this argument will attempt this stretching is not so much that it is possible to do so but that it seems necessary in order to save twentieth-century music from yet another divide into 'good' and 'bad' music, which is implied already in the discussed musicological applications with their dependence on the faithful response only (plus the reactive as opposed to the obscure in Harper-Scott). However, this divide is inherent in the original model itself and Harper-Scott's application, which, together, draw up the battle line between the faithful and the reactive responses on one side, driving the progress of society, and the obscure response on the other, seeking only to destroy faithful and reactive contributions. The following logicalization therefore attacks the two underlying fundamentals of this difference in value: firstly, the political character and naming of the Event in the following section 3.3.1, 'De-Politicization', and secondly the ethical inequality and naming of the three responses in 3.3.2, 'Circularity'.

### **3.3.1 De-Politicization**

I principally agree with Harper-Scott that modernism is not a neutral aesthetic category. Nevertheless, I believe that there should always be a way to be aware of the political implications of labelling without having to subscribe to one or the other political direction in order to label. The background of this belief is simple realism – that the discipline of musicology might become obsolete if we all truly in each given moment made irrevocable political decisions when ascribing a style or a period to a piece of music. In order to be able to *communicate* within our field it must be possible to stand on common ground for a certain amount of time without one scholar operating with a theory which is genuinely and exclusively leftist, and the other with a network of beliefs that are genuinely and inherently rightist. A scholar, not even fundamentally of the latter political colour, but without the belief in a coming communist revolution would have to reject Badiou's and Harper-Scott's premise that modernism is an expression of communism and therefore be impelled to reject the entire argument.

Modernism was certainly bound up with historical communism, but it also was with fascism, and indeed found itself prosecuted and prohibited by both systems alike. Concepts like degenerate art and socialist realism may suffice as reminders of this historical problem. They also serve to comprehend the change from the perceived bravery of modernism in the face of a politically turbulent first half of the twentieth century, which tried to claim art for its totalitarian purposes, and modernism's perceived elitism and stagnation (Adorno's 'aging') in the second half, when modernist complexity began to stand for a Taruskinian maximalism, a deliberately 'difficult' style excluding the majority of potential recipients. Despite this value judgement, modernism has come to be perceived as a sufficiently dominant style by the twenty-first century to make scholars of British, Scandinavian, or south-eastern European music (B-Modernists) seek inclusion of marginalized art under its wing.

Their background is fundamentally postmodernist, which tears at the fabric of the concept of modernism itself, but moreover they were shown in the previous chapter to have to sacrifice conciseness of modernism's system of signifiers in order to achieve modernism's expansion. The more A-Modernist application of Badiou by Harper-Scott – an attempt to re-suture the concept of modernism – has been shown to be one-sided as well; only the music which emancipates its dissonance holds a claim to being a faithful response to an Event which is in fact political – its traces being a series of major European revolutions. Therefore, music finds itself slipping under yet another ideological roof, which would again exclude an impressive amount of twentieth-century music – minimalism, jazz, and 'world music' at the forefront, but many other kinds as well, possibly even neo-classicism. The crucial difference to B-Modernism, whose network of signifiers is too wide, is that this basically A-Modernist model's master signifier is too narrow, yet again. Obscure (and, in Badiou's model even reactive) music belongs to the dark side of modernism, as it were.

The first step to solve a multiplicity of problems is to reject the political character of the Event point blank. This avoids the unnecessary constriction in Badiou and Harper-Scott to a series of communist revolutions, which presses the Event into being the 'Schönberg-event' or the subtraction 'from classical tonality' in the first

place.<sup>53</sup> This subtraction from tonality, or ‘destruction of tonality’ in *Being and Event*, forms an all too simple dichotomy with its positive characterization (the emancipation of dissonance). With our hindsight today, it is a truism to argue that the emergence of atonality and serialism opened entire new possibilities for composition. Yet to call this change the emancipation of dissonance implies that anything that does not emancipate its dissonances is old-fashioned at best and morally wrong at worst – which is not an option for this thesis. The best de-politicized way to describe the Event of musical modernism is therefore a term such as Schoenberg’s *pantonal*.<sup>54</sup>

This is the idea that several tonal systems are present and available to composers in the early twentieth century. From this idea, which will form the kernel of the new Event of modernism, the trace of ‘the existence of a *simultaneous plurality of tonal systems*’ can be deduced. The presence of several different options of composing forms the Event rather than the emancipation of dissonance, because this emancipation is only one of the responses which follows the Event, but which is not to be confused with the Event itself. Referring back to Badiou’s Spartacus, this is quite clear; in that case, the Event was the idea of freedom, and Spartacus’s revolution formed a response to the appearance of that Event. Pantonality is the situation in which it is possible to make a choice which is entirely new and free, the choice to compose tonally, polytonally, atonally, or, finally, also serially with many further options such as octatonic or pentatonic systems.

As the following section will establish, this pantonality itself says nothing *per se* about the degree or kind of dissonance which has to be present, because the Event is not bound to atonal dissonance as Adorno’s system is. However, what signifies

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<sup>53</sup> Badiou, *Logics*, 80.

<sup>54</sup> The terms ‘pantonal’ and ‘pantonality’ are used here in the sense of Schoenberg’s *Harmonielehre* (n.p.: Universal Edition, 2001, c1922), 486–7 (footnote). ‘Zudem ist die Frage gar nicht untersucht, ob das, wie diese neuen Klänge sich schließen, nicht eben die Tonalität einer Zwölftonreihe ist. [...] Wenn man durchaus nach Namen sucht, könnte man an: polytonal oder pantonal denken.’ (‘Apart from that it has not been examined if these new sounds’ closure could not be the tonality of a twelve-tone series. [...] If names are really needed, one might think of polytonal or pantonal’). It is not, however, used in Rudolph Réti’s sense, as the ‘outright opposite’ of atonality (i.e. bitonality, polytonality, fluctuating harmonies, electronic music, ‘colour’ in music) (Rudolph Réti, *Tonality, Atonality, Pantonality: A Study of Some Trends in Twentieth-Century Music* [London: Rockliff, 1958], 4). Instead, it functions as a wider term for atonality itself, as it does in Schoenberg’s notion of the possibility of ‘denoting synthesis of all keys’. (‘Atonal’, *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. rev. Ed. Michael Kennedy. *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, OUP. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e617> [14/11/13]).

the Event of modernism is the minimal presence of tonality and atonality. The time frame of this Event of modernism, pantonality, is an open one of course. The Event is not bound to the appearance of one particular piece of music, because it is the idea behind different tonal approaches to composition, which enables composers to make choices and, in consequence, produce atonal, serial, or tonal music.

At this point in the development, the first crucial advantages of this model emerge, compared to the discussed types of approach from Adorno to Harper-Scott. The model seems still relatively close to Adorno's concept of avant-garde as modernism tying itself to the state of the material. The role of Adorno's advanced state of the material is taken by the larger pantonality in the new model. Emancipated dissonance in Adorno is substituted by the presence of tonality and atonality. What will become clear when the responses are added, however, is that Adorno's state of the material with its emancipated dissonance is in fact one of the three types of response. This means that the hold that emancipated dissonance and the state of the material had over the modernist canon is suspended in this new model, which is potentially open to all music which responds in some form to the idea of pantonality, and not just to a constricted canon of music which shows one particular master signifier during a particular time frame. As the master signifier of modernism, pantonality also fulfils Lacan's requirement that a master signifier is a signifier without a signified better than for example emancipated dissonance.<sup>55</sup> The latter has the status of a normal signifier relating to the presence of dissonances without resolution, whereas the former describes the presence of several signifieds and cannot therefore be summarized as the signifier of either of them. Compared to Adorno, Badiou, and Harper-Scott's decision, pantonality seems a more inclusive, even postmodernist, version of modernism.

This development of the name of the Event from *atonality* to *pantonality* to the *existence of plural tonal systems* does not reinscribe Schoenberg as a father figure, superego, or even Christ, of modern music into music history and does not make the year 1908 precisely (the year which witnessed the genesis of 'Entrückung' from Schoenberg's String Quartet op. 10 no. 2) the breaking point in the history of

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<sup>55</sup> Lacan, quoted from Kenneth M. Smith, *Skryabin, Philosophy and the Music of Desire* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 64.

Western music.<sup>56</sup> It merely points out that from the early twentieth century onwards, tonality was complemented by other systems of pitch organization or at least in a state of flux. The traces of this development can be seen in many pieces of music in many different ways: in Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1894), Elgar's First Symphony (premiered 1908), Bartók's Fourteen Bagatelles for piano (1908) or *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* (1911), Casella's *Nove pezzi* for piano (1914), Sibelius's Fifth Symphony (1915), and even in piano miniatures such as some of Prokofiev's *Mimoletnosti* (better known as *Visions fugitives*, 1915–7), to name but a few household names from the centres of European music-making as well as its peripheries.<sup>57</sup>

The model thereby fulfils the most important condition of B-Modernism, the opening of the canon. In opposition to usual B-Modernism, however, the model leaves pitch as the defining category in place and thereby satisfies an important Adornian condition. This is its advantage over B-Modernism, which needs to search for new signifiers of alternative categories for nearly each piece of music because it cannot satisfy A-Modernism's requirements. The new *plurality of tonal systems* enables a variety of responses on a wider spectrum than the dichotomy in B-Modernism between 'good tunes' and 'difficulty' have been able to. Those fields

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. Julie Brown, 'Understanding Schoenberg as Christ', in Jane F. Fulcher (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the New Cultural History of Music* (Oxford et al.: OUP, 2011), 117–62.

<sup>57</sup> The modernism of all these pieces except Prokofiev's has been claimed at least once, be it in contemporary or later reception (and these claims' quality is not judged here): Boulez stated about Debussy's *Prélude* that 'in the organization of sounds, that conception [of musical time] rejected the harmonic hierarchies existing as unique *données* of the sound-world.' (Pierre Boulez, 'Debussy and the Dawn of Modernism, Webern's Rarified Beauty, Stravinsky's *Sacre*: The Cornerstone of Modern Music', in Jack Sullivan [ed.], *Words on Music. From Addison to Barzun* [Athens: Ohio University Press, 1990], 273–81, 275). More generally on Debussy's modernism see Richard Taruskin, 'The First Modernist', in idem (ed.), *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays* (Berkeley, London: UoCP, 2009), 195–201. About the modernism of Elgar's Symphony, see J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006). For Bartók, see Elliott Antokoletz, "'At Last Something Truly New". Bagatelles', in Malcolm Gillies (ed.), *The Bartók Companion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), 110–23, Michael P. Steinberg, 'The Politics and Aesthetics of Operatic Modernism', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 36/4 ('Opera and Society: Part II', 2006), 629–48, and more generally Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), 46–7. Casella's modernism is claimed in Virgilio Bernadoni, 'Trascrivere e assimilare: Strategie Caselliane di confronto con la musica Europea', in Mila de Santis (ed.), *Alfredo Casella e l'Europa: Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Siena, 7–9 giugno 2001* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2003), 193–206. Sibelius's modernism is attested by James Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge et al.: CUP, 1993) and, more generally, already in Constant Lambert, *Music Ho!: A Study of Music in Decline* (3rd edn., London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1966), in the chapters 'Sibelius and the Integration of Form' and 'Sibelius and the Music of the Future'. Despite their tonality, Prokofiev's *Mimoletnosti* or *Visions Fugitives* feature as early exponents of a Russian modernism in Peter Deane Roberts, *Modernism in Russian Piano Music: Scriabin, Prokofiev, and Their Russian Contemporaries*, vol. 1 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993) at various points. Again, Scriabin could seem to belong to this list as well.

that are influenced by a piece's harmonic outline as well – thematic development, form, and texture, including rhythm and meter – come to represent important analysands as well. This in turn means that the toolkit of musical analysis can act as *the* means of choice to provide analyses of modernism. The frequently more diverse methodology of scholarship interested in British modernism – the construction of networks within wider civilization and culture – is not overstretched with this model. This does not mean, naturally, that the non-harmonic parameters of music have to be left out of an analysis which operates with this Event-response model. Rather, the model as this thesis uses it establishes pantonality as the idea that triggers its group of master signifiers (tonality, atonality, serialism, and everything in between), but the character of the different responses can be found in the other parameters as well, as will be shown in Part 2. Compared to Taruskin's maximalism, this model's advantages are even more comprehensible. It requires only a response in pitch to the Event of modernism, pantonality, and not the adherence to the rather vague category of maximalization in genre, texture, or form.

The advantages over Badiou and Harper-Scott, at the same time, lie simply in this de-politicized model's availability to a musicology which does not subscribe to a communist basis of thought. The trace of this pantonality is the establishment of the *parallel existence of plural tonal systems* with the direct consequence of *choice* between these systems for all composers in the process of composing and within any composition. This purely descriptive secondary name of the trace (and the Event) robs the Event of a good part of its ideological fustian and does not run the risk of confusing Schoenberg with the creator of the Event (which he is not, despite Badiou's own terminology). Even the core idea of *pantonality*, despite its intimate connection with Schoenberg as his preferred term for 'atonality', serves the purpose of this thesis better than Badiou and Harper-Scott's *emancipation of dissonance*. In line with the meaning of the prefix 'pan', describing something inclusive yet different rather than exclusive and distinct, pantonality points to the newness of the techniques under its roof while claiming that it is not out there in order to kill off all others (or be itself killed off in due time). Seen as a purely logical development which begins to emerge around 1900 with *Salome*, *Verklärte Nacht*, and *Pour le piano* and onwards, composers are now able to choose from a

variety of tonal systems for any new piece of music. Yet not all found it necessary to use the new systems of free atonality or serialism at all, while some others may well have chosen the technique, but with a different outlook in mind.

In contrast to the other Badiouvian applications in musicology, this new model keeps the Event safely removed from being inhabited by a composer or groups of composers, and therefore avoids the confusion of Event and faithful response. This difference is one which even Badiou does not in all cases observe. In 'Scholium', for example, two of the four affects – terror, anxiety, courage, and justice – are represented by different stages in Boulez's oeuvre. *Structures* for two pianos of 1952 and unspecified works between 1950 and 1980 are supposed to represent terror and justice respectively, with Webern granted a mediating role as the courageous. The choice of two stages of Boulez shows that the choice of one composer as a representative of one affect, or indeed response, is not envisaged in earnest in Badiou's own system, and Webern's inclusion between Dutilleux and the later Stravinsky and an even later Boulez disrupts the chronology. Responses, it must be concluded, are given in works, not by people. Even *within* one piece of music elements of different responses can surface. The best example in support of this claim is perhaps William Walton's First Symphony, whose first three movements seem to belong to a more faithful phase than the last movement's reaction.<sup>58</sup>

With this section, the basic development of Badiou's theory away from the expression of a kind of musical communism towards a system of musical modernism around the dense core idea of pantonality is complete. The Event has been established as the aloof idea that music need not be tonal. This idea is not represented, inhabited, or personified in one piece, technique, or composer, but it is removed from these. Thereby, modernism itself is not incorporated in a piece, technique, or person, but in an idea, which summarizes the essence and master signifier of modernism, pantonality. The extensions of this idea will always differ in

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<sup>58</sup> This change is sometimes accredited to Walton's swap of lovers during the composition (Humphrey Burton and Maureen Murray, *William Walton. The Romantic Loner: A Centenary Portrait Album* [Oxford: OUP, 2002], 64), sometimes to a change in his response to modernism (Harper-Scott, *Quilting Points*, 222). Stephen Lloyd's *William Walton: Muse of Fire* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001) cites writer's block around the Finale, but the final reason is given as 'emotional' – Walton's unhappy entanglement with Imma von Doernberg and his release into the happier affair with Alice Wimborne, 123–134.

kind from the idea itself. These extensions can be found in the responses that are given in pieces of music to the Event of modernism. The following section will deal with the correct setting out of the names and character of these responses.

### 3.3.2 Circularity

If, as the previous section established, responses are to be analyzed in works rather than in composers, then the next question must be how the aforementioned chronological issue in Badiou's own model is to be solved. This system demands that 'the contemporaneousness of a figure of the reactive or obscure type depends on the minimal production of a present by a faithful figure.'<sup>59</sup> Yet, in 'Scholium' matters seem more relaxed insofar as Webern can find a place between Dutilleux and Boulez – although Schoenberg still remains the ultimate faithful trigger for Badiou. If, however, as I argued in 3.3.1, the potency of Schoenberg's pieces is decreased in favour of an Event characterized by its trace of the existence of plural tonal systems, then the chronological as well as the moral dominance of the faithful over the other two responses somewhat relaxes its grip. With the plurality of choices (tonality, atonality, and serialism) unfolding their full potential over more than one decade, the insistence on a chronological order of the responses during this time seems difficult to uphold. This doubt is confirmed by the potential criticism of the original chronological model that, in order to characterize some piece of music as reactive, the composer's knowledge of the preceding faithful responses needs to be presupposed.

The messiness of music history (like any history) is a strong point in favour of a rejection of too sterile a chronology of faithful, reactive, and obscure responses, which would open this model to the criticism also haunting systems like Christopher Butler's notion of a modernism consisting of the two phases of radicalism and of consolidation.<sup>60</sup> The abundance of tonality between 1900 and 1950 as well as more or less late conversions to one of the more faithful options (Stravinsky's [proto-]serial *Septet*, *Cantata*, and finally *Agon* or indeed Elisabeth Lutyens's adoption of a serial technique of her own making in 1939) or detours across the lines of battle (as in Vaughan Williams's seemingly abrupt use of

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<sup>59</sup> Badiou, *Logics*, 62.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. my critique in section 2.2.3.

dissonances in the Fourth Symphony, or Schoenberg's more tonal *Kol Nidre* to a degree) forbids interpretations of history which are too keen on writing history as one of progress.<sup>61</sup> Just as the advent of atheism has not – and is not likely to – put an end to all kinds of religions, the advent of serialism did not exterminate the possibility of tonal music, be that its original intention or not.

The suggestion to suspend Badiou's demand for a strict chronology represents a first step towards greater equality of the responses, which, together with the stated rejection of Badiou's and Harper-Scott's politicization and the resulting exclusivity, is an objective of this thesis. If the faithful response assumed the role of the *first* response, it would automatically gain advantage over the later ones, which might then be perceived to be nothing more than secondary responses to the faithful response in their turn. Moreover, this section will change the responses' names, which, in Badiou's own system, obscure the principally equal value of the music which is labelled as 'reactive' or 'obscure'. Together, these two aspects of a suspended chronology and revised naming provide a powerful boost to the equality of responses and can be summarized under the principle of circularity, which these final paragraphs introduce.

In Badiou and Harper-Scott's models, the three main types of response are influenced by and in turn influence the Present, which occupies a central location around which the responses each pull inwards from a distinct external point. The result is the diamond-shaped structure of fig. 3.4 (p. 78), which insists on the difference of these responses and refuses even the slightest possibility of any intersection between them. Furthermore, this model has one 'bright' and one 'dark' corner: not only are the faithful responses directly linked, but they pass on Truth exclusively between them. There is no connection allowed between the obscure and the second faithful response, while the first faithful response remains on top of the model in the truest sense. With crucial elements at the centre already changed in this model, my last and, like the aforementioned developments unauthorized, change brings the three responses to the point at which they are on a par with each other.

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<sup>61</sup> Further evidence to this can be found in Felix Wörner, Ullrich Scheideler, and Philip Rupprecht (eds.), *Tonality 1900–1950: Concept and Practice* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012), in which concepts and works from Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre* to Barber's *Nocturne* are discussed.

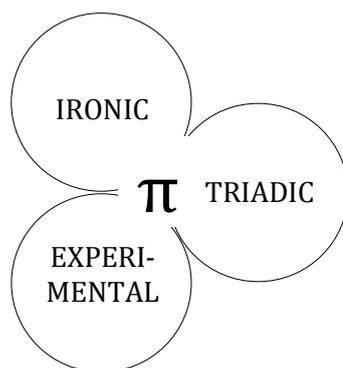


Fig. 3.5: De-politicized circular Event-response model.

The new circularity of responses in fig. 3.5 consists in their potential for intersection, but mostly in their simultaneity and their equality, represented in fig. 3.5 by the three circles which could at any moment intersect, which have no direction or order and which border on the two other respective responses. The name of the faithful response has been changed to ‘experimental’, that of the reactive to ‘triadic’, and that of the obscure to ‘ironic’, as the sections dealing with each response and their features and signifiers will explain.

The best justification for the need of simultaneity and against a strict chronology of response types will be given in the following three major case studies of Gustav Holst’s mostly reactive *Egdon Heath* of 1927, Elisabeth Lutyens’s faithful *O saisons, ô châteaux!* of 1946, and in William Walton’s conversion from a faithful response in the first version of one piece from *Façade* to an obscure one in its last and final version from 1979. The span of more than half a century between faithfulness and obscurity confirms the simple and, to the music historian probably obvious, fact that it is not sensible to speak of a *succession* of responses, but of a *field*.

Nevertheless, the *equality* of responses is an entirely different matter. In Badiou, only the faithful response holds a positive outlook. For Harper-Scott, the reactive response is a lesser evil by producing reactive novelties which have the potential to carry a revolutionary idea through an ideological ice age. Both authors, however, reject the possibility that the obscure response could function as a carrier of positive values, or even that it produces anything worthwhile at all, because it is too intricately linked with a capitalist mindset seeking to destroy the communist faithful response. In contrast, my logicalization of the model demands that all three

types gain the same principal value in order to free the model from its Adornian exclusivity. This does not mean that all music that is analyzed with the help of the model is automatically 'good' music, but rather that reactive or obscure elements do not automatically make a piece 'bad' music. Following the thesis's overall aim to provide a model for the analysis of musical content rather than of textual or cultural association with modernisms from other disciplines (as B-Modernism does) or of a construction of a series of musical-communist revolutions (as Badiou and Harper-Scott do), there is no reason to deny the reactive and obscure responses the potential they hold for the analysis of music of the twentieth century.

The obscure response possesses certain inherent potential even in Badiou's own application, but this potential has been overlooked by Badiou himself as well as Harper-Scott and the musicological Badiouvians. Turned into the model's possibly most advantageous feature, the obscure response can account for a particular kind of dissonant tonality of early twentieth-century British music, as the case studies of Vaughan Williams's Fourth Symphony at the end of this chapter and of Walton's 'Said King Pompey' in chapter 6 will argue. In Badiou's original example of the Spartacus uprising, the acts of Crassus provide a grid for what obscure music will do when it confronts faithfulness. Harper-Scott is certainly right to identify minimalist music as a kind of music which could be said to meet atonality on a battlefield with the intention of eliminating any traces of the latter and pretending that it had never existed in the first place. Where the simplest tonal moves are enforced, atonality perhaps has really no space. But Crassus did more – and something contradictory to what Badiou and Harper-Scott perceive as the aim to eliminate all traces of the faithful. After destroying Spartacus's army and its physical members, he famously had the Via Appia 'decorated' with the crucified bodies of those caught alive. As I will show later in my musical example of this response, this exhibition of the destroyed faithful body is a distinctive characteristic of the obscure response, although neither Badiou himself nor Harper-Scott point this feature out explicitly. Nevertheless, Badiou's example of an obscure response in the arts is that of iconoclasm, which of course is not merely about destroying faithful responses in art, but about exhibiting the ruins of it as the sign of victory over it and as a warning: when the Nazis declared certain art to be

'degenerate', they mounted a fully grown exhibition of this art (followed by an exhibition of 'degenerate music' on the occasion of the Reichsmusiktage in Düsseldorf 1938, ostracizing jazz, new music, and particular composers such as Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Stravinsky, Eisler, and many more) and when the Taliban blew up the famous Buddha statues, the disfigured remains were left standing.<sup>62</sup>

If the resurgent slaves are dissonances, then this exhibition of their bodies by the obscure subject is nothing but the exhibition of 'dead' dissonances: that is, dissonances which are robbed of their functional contexts within the piece of music and displayed on the harmonic surface without having any fundamental impact on the structure itself. Again, this Badiouvian comparison is one which is coloured by its connotations (Spartacus, after all, is the hero, and Crassus the villain). However, there are other examples of the obscure response, which show its function in a more positive light. Consider a biological example. An antigen-presenting cell of the body's immune system (for example a macrophage or a dendrite cell) fulfils a very similar task to that of the obscure subject, but it is much more positively connotated in our everyday understanding of the world. After all, an antigen-presenting cell not only kills foreign organisms, but it exhibits fragments of their structure on its surface so that the immune system's T-cells can be alerted to the particular structure of the harmful intruder and mobilize the necessary mass defence. Without this deeply obscure behaviour of the immune system, none of us would be alive.

In music, this display of alienated dissonances is also often associated with neo-classicism, albeit not particularly with one of its prototypes, Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*, but perhaps more with works such as Hindemith's opera *Mathis der Maler* of 1933–35.<sup>63</sup> Intersections between neo-classicism and the obscure do certainly occur, but the two are not identical as the example of Vaughan Williams's

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<sup>62</sup> Badiou, *Logics*, 73.

<sup>63</sup> In contrast, Badiou characterizes neo-classicism as the second faithful, resurrective, response in the arts (Badiou, *Logics*, 78). This does not necessarily have to be a contradiction, however, as Badiou's neo-classicism is not identical with this particular kind in music, but possibly imagines the style as a resurrection of something that had once indeed been a faithful response to a previous Event.

Symphony in the following 'Scholium' will show: neo-classicism has an obscure streak of some description, but not all obscurity is neo-classicist.

Not to be confused with Constant Lambert's musical enemy of choice, Pastiche, more generally, the obscure response to the Event of modernism is characterized by displaying not just any remnants of musical styles on the surface but by targeting specifically dissonance. Dissonance, of course, was identified as A-Modernism's master signifier in chapter 2, and its destruction has therefore particular repercussions. For Badiou, Harper-Scott, and Adorno, this master signifier is valid, and its destruction or derision must therefore represent a step backwards at best and imminent ideological danger to music's role in the rebellion against capitalism or the bourgeoisie at worst.<sup>64</sup>

Responding obscurely, however, does not necessarily mean that the response carries the dead bodies of dissonances around. Rather, this response presents an inherent conflict in its material which, at the time of composition, has already been decided in favour of tonality, but whose traces are still present. The obscure response, in this thesis, is therefore not the evil capitalist master attempting to destroy communist dreams of freedom, but it is the composer's retrospective reading of a modernism which is perceived as a lost cause. An element of nostalgia in this position may be hidden behind irony, but it is nevertheless present and returns to the obscure subject some degree of dignity that it never has in Badiou and Harper-Scott. The irony of this response may even tie it to the reactive response, while its decided violence connects it to the faithful one at the same time. As such, it has potential for overlapping with both other positions, as the new model of fig. 3.5 shows. This obscure response can therefore be renamed (and thereby established as an equal to the other two responses) as the 'ironic' response, because its signifier is a 'surface' dissonance that gives the impression of violent clashes between pitch classes, while it is in fact tonal underneath.

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<sup>64</sup> This does not even end with Badiou and Harper-Scott opposing the obscure in music, but concerns obscure responses like Wyndham Lewis's *Blast*, named and shamed by Martin Puchner as an exponent of 'rear-guardism', which is one type of 'bad modernism' (Martin Puchner, 'The Aftershocks of *Blast*: Manifestos, Satire, and the Rear-Guard of Modernism', in Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz [eds.], *Bad Modernisms* [Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2006], 44–67).

The ironic response is far from being merely the troublesome spoilsport which prevents the rightful revolution. Just like the other two responses, the ironic fulfils its function as an overarching principle, as it were, of the musical, more precisely the harmonic, material. The repercussions can again be seen when compared to the previous six approaches to modernism. The ironic response is much more than Adorno's regressive music. Regressive music is defined by its lack of the right signifier (emancipated dissonance), but ironic music possesses its own signifier and describes a position which deals creatively with modernism. Regressive music only hinders progress, but ironic music provides a solution for the future of tonal music. Regressive music is defined by its lack, ironic music by its structural richness – after all it deals with two layers of pitch structure, tonality and surface dissonance.

In theories such as Taruskin's and B-Modernism, this ironic response could provide a connection between dissonant modernism and tonal music, but their theories lack this link. In order for ironic music to be modernist, it only has to respond to the Event of modernism, which it does by seeking to exhibit the traces of one feature of pantonality on the surface of another feature of pantonality. This response does what B-Modernism requires – it claims the modernism of tonal, yet dissonant, music – but it is able to tie this tonal music back to the Event of modernism itself. Compared, finally, to Badiou and Harper-Scott, this response gains entry into the system in the first place in my application. Unlike Badiou's obscure response, the ironic response now resides in the musical material, and unlike Harper-Scott's obscure response, the ironic presents itself in music which comes from the same canon as music of the faithful or reactive kind. At the same time, this new availability of the ironic response for consideration in the canons of modernism rescues modernism from its Adornian obsession with an opposition of two morally constricted options for music, which is carried into Badiou's and Harper-Scott's systems as well as that of the Badiouvian musicologists. Instead of the dichotomy between progressive/good and regressive/bad modernism, there is now a potentially intersecting, third, way music can respond to modernism.

The claim of logicalization demands more, however, than to pull the obscure response onto the same morally superior level as the other two responses by

renaming it and re-evaluating it. Rather, it demands the transfer of all three responses into a logical, circular, de-politicized sphere, where they will act as ways to describe, make sense of, and categorize, the highly paradox differences between the different ways twentieth-century music has found to respond to modernism and which neither A-Modernism nor B-Modernism have been able to fully grasp – the former because they confuse the faithful response with the Event of modernism itself, the latter because they give up on modernism as a coherent idea. What is still missing is the re-evaluation and consequent renaming of the faithful and the reactive responses. Seeing that both are of a less problematic nature in the original Badiouian model, this requires less theoretical groundwork than in the case of the obscure/ironic response.

For Badiou and Harper-Scott, the faithful response represents the optimal connection between a piece of music and the Event of modernism; it is the only response which shows fidelity to the Event and *produces* the Truth. If the goal is to create a concept of modernism which reflects the music-historical reality, then this moral superiority needs to be discarded. What the faithful response does, in fact, is to *experiment*. It is not any more the fact that it produces the only valid music which defines this experimental position, but the fact that it produces a kind of music which is bent on establishing new pitch class structures.

With the experimental response losing its superiority over the ironic response, the reactive position also needs to be reconsidered. This is a response which seeks new expressions within tonality, that is, basically within the context of the triad. This does not automatically make it any less progressive than the experimental or the ironic responses.<sup>65</sup> Rather, this *triadic* response can establish highly original ways of fragmenting an intact tonal structure, or of creating new ways of reflecting tonality in its texture, as the example of Holst's *Egdon Heath* will show in chapter 4.

Together, these three responses – ironic, experimental, and triadic – form the three types of response music can give to pantonality in the early twentieth century.

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<sup>65</sup> This position is backed in Wörner, Scheideler, and Rupprecht, *Tonality*; and therein particularly in Rupprecht, 'Among the Ruined Languages: Britten's Triadic Modernism, 1930–1940', in *ibid.*, 223–45, which uses the same designation as this thesis to characterize something that is tonal and (can be analyzed as) modernist as 'triadic'.

Neither of these possesses moral or chronological dominance over the others, and neither decreases the quality of the music which is designated as such. Each type possesses its own signifier – surface dissonance, emancipated dissonance, or tonality – and all adhere immediately to the Event of modernism and its trace, the simultaneous existence of plural tonal systems. The experimental response does not possess singular access to modernism, and the triadic and ironic responses are not excluded from modernism because their signifiers have been connected to modernism as well.

With this immediate and new connection between the concept of modernism and three types of responses, this model has the advantage over both A-Modernism and B-Modernism. Where these two could only ever have all or nothing, this model provides the productive compromise my Introduction promised. It combines the advantages of A-Modernism and B-Modernism in that it keeps the former's conceptual rigour (one master signifier/trace of modernism, and one master signifier each for the three responses to modernism) and, at the same time, accounts for the plurality of music history as the latter does. Yet this new model avoids the respective problems of A-Modernism and B-Modernism alike. It is open towards an expansion of the canon, but does not need to inflate the concept of modernism in order to achieve this expansion. Instead of having to make a decision for all or nothing, this model can provide us with both, as it were. It transcends the modernist aesthetics of 'yes' and 'no', while fostering music-historiographical progress.

So far, I have located the Event-response model primarily as a model to aid readings of modernism in Western art music, be it of the 'centre' or the 'margin'. There can be no doubt that the model could possess applicability in pop, jazz, and non-Western music, all of which respond in different ways to Events of certain types in their respective worlds as well. This need not be an Event of modernism though, and in each case an application of the model needs to clarify its Event, trace of the Event, master signifier, signifiers in the music, and the types of response involved. In pop music, for example, this becomes much more difficult as defining factors beyond the naming of the Event need to be clarified: should an Event-response model build upon songs or upon bands/artists or albums? Does

music analysis alone provide not only enough, but the valid evidence for the determination of the type of response (many would argue that music videos, stage design, and even the clothes worn by the musicians play a much more decisive role than they do in 'classical music')? If an example for a development of different responses is the 1990s emergence of Britpop as a counter movement to Grunge, then what is the trace of the Event? This thesis cannot attempt to answer these questions, but it will not claim that this makes them less interesting. Rather, they serve as evidence that the model's potential for applicability in other fields deserves future attention.

### **Scholium: Intersections**

This first exemplification aims to show the logicalized model in operation in a compact form. This encapsulation of the new model's benefits mirrors Badiou's 'Scholium' in *Logics of Worlds* in name, but unlike the latter, this one relates music more closely to the actual three-response model without digressions into Badiou's ambiguous four-affect system. It also demonstrates that intersections of experimental, triadic, and even ironic, kinds of response to the existence of a *plurality of tonal systems* can occur within pieces of music and can be accounted for with the logicalized model.

The example of such an intersection of triadic and ironic elements is Vaughan Williams's Fourth Symphony, written between 1931 and 1934. Ursula Vaughan Williams spread one of the most insistent and characteristic legends about this work while skilfully as well as tactfully avoiding giving away names:

[Vaughan Williams's] own story of the genesis of his Fourth Symphony was that he had read an account of one of the 'Freak Festivals' [i.e. an unnamed festival for contemporary, probably New, Music] in which a symphony, he couldn't remember who had written it, was described in some detail. Like the myth of Beethoven and Fidelio, his breakfast-time reaction was an immediate 'il faut que je compose cela'.<sup>66</sup>

In Vaughan Williams's 35-minute symphonic response to this modernist 'freakishness', triadic elements cross, or intersect, ironic ones. Apparently described by Walton – who was at the same time struggling to come to terms with

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<sup>66</sup> Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W. A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: OUP, 1964), 190.

the Finale of his own First Symphony – as ‘the greatest symphony since Beethoven’,<sup>67</sup> the four-movement work wrestles with its provocative display of dissonances and with its ending in an ‘Epilogo fugato’ (which again opens a connection to Walton’s Symphony: Vaughan Williams’s article about the Fugue in *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians* was what Walton is said to have consulted when faced with Constant Lambert’s challenge of writing a fugue for his Finale).<sup>68</sup>

While it is the task of the following larger case studies to provide detailed analyses of the three types of response to modernism, this miniature examination serves to enquire into the nature of intersections within one work and the principal way in which responses function. An experimental response to the Event of modernism will utilize some kind of far progressed – or indeed widely fraying, ideally atonal – harmonic system. In the traditional reading, this would be the approach of the Second Viennese School. The triadic response will shy away from what it perceives as an inappropriate revolution in the extreme, but will nevertheless respond with a careful approach to dissonance and a highly ambiguous tonal outline (or even excess and ornamentation).<sup>69</sup> Typically, this is the response given in most tonal music of the early twentieth century and particularly in British music of the time, which was granted only limited access (if any) to the canons of modernism by A-Modernist historians. The ironic response, finally, distinguishes itself by the violence of its response towards *pantonicity* and what it perceives as its representation in the world, the experimental response. This response can be made up either of a deliberate overly simplified tonality or a tonal structure which displays dissonances as a kind of trophy on the surface of an otherwise tonal structure.

When Vaughan Williams’s Fourth Symphony premiered in 1935, it shocked its audience and its critics. This shock possibly resulted from the fact that the

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>68</sup> Lloyd, *Muse*, 119. Vaughan Williams’s entry ‘Fugue’ appeared in *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Edited by J. A. Fuller Maitland, M.A., F.S.A. In *Five Volumes*. Vol. II (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1906), 114–123, and unchanged in the subsequent editions of 1927, 1948, and 1954.

<sup>69</sup> ‘Miniaturism, fragmentation, hysterical hyperbole, sensuality, ornament and degenerate ugliness’ are named in Stephen Downes’s *Music and Decadence in European Modernism: The Case of Central and Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), 43, as signifiers of a decadent modernism, which in essence belongs to the triadic response to modernism.

composer was none other than Vaughan Williams, who was labouring under the notion that he was the personification of Englishness in music (as he had shown in his previous three symphonies which all seemed to carry Englishness even in their titles). In the *Musical Times*, William McNaught summed up the frustration of those who 'wish that he had left this modern international game alone and stuck to pastimes of which he is a natural master.'<sup>70</sup> Neville Cardus hit the nail on the head with what might be an early and derogatory description of the dilemma of the triadic response to modernism *avant la lettre*:

The Continental listener this evening would wonder why the composer, having discarded the idioms and general emotional tones of pre-war English music, has stopped short of a post-war freedom of rhythm and a post-war harshness of dissonance. [...] The content of Vaughan Williams's music – considered in the abstract, apart from the technique – is respectably middle-class English, and the technique, as I have suggested, is old-fashioned, looked at from standards unashamedly modern.<sup>71</sup>

Similar critical reaction, reaching from astonishment to disappointment, could be listed, but these two comments may serve as a reminder of the problems that twentieth-century music between the battle lines of modernist and conservative has faced from the start. 77 years later, Harper-Scott attempted to cross this persistent puzzlement by straightforwardly stripping the Symphony of what modernist seal of approval it had ever possessed by pointing to its entirely tonal structure: 'In terms of motivic and tonal process the first movement of the Fourth Symphony could have been written by Beethoven or Schubert.'<sup>72</sup>

Vaughan Williams's Fourth Symphony is a typical example of a piece lost in the trenches of modernism, as it were.<sup>73</sup> Yet with the new toolkit of three logicalized responses to one modernist Event at hand there is no need for a charged decision between the categories of either modernist (McNaught) or non-modernist (Harper-Scott), both of which are used unfavourably in these authors' judgements.

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<sup>70</sup> William McNaught, 'Vaughan Williams's F Minor Symphony, in "Gramophone Notes"', *The Musical Times* 79.1144 (1938), 442–443, 443.

<sup>71</sup> Neville Cardus in the *Manchester Guardian*, quoted from Michael Kennedy, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: OUP, 1964), 245.

<sup>72</sup> J. P. E. Harper-Scott, 'Vaughan Williams's Antic Symphony', in Matthew Riley (ed.), *British Music and Modernism. 1895–1960* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 175–96, 179.

<sup>73</sup> This is a situation which Jonathan Cross has described as the gap between 'too modern' and 'not modern enough' (Jonathan Cross, 'Modernism and Tradition, and the Traditions of Modernism', *Muzikologija/Musicology: Journal of the Institute of Musicology of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts*, 6 (2006), 19–42, 30–1).



an essential part of the material for the Epilogue, whose first part is entirely made up of groups of instruments operating with these two opposed principles. The dissonant, even brutal, result certainly makes for an unsettling listening experience. These 'overlapping' dissonances, however, are not the result of the atonal structure in an experimental response, but instead fit the description of the 'surface' dissonance in the ironic response.

In line with Vaughan Williams's perception of Continental modernist 'freaks', the work presents its dissonances only on the surface of its underlying F minor in order to ironize what he perceived as modernism's 'freakishness'. The piece thereby enforces A-Modernism's premise that the master signifier is first and foremost located in the harmony, more precisely the tonality, of a piece (a choice this thesis adheres to by identifying the trace of the Event in the idea of *pantonality*). What is more, however, the Symphony shows how this model is able to pull the different loose threads of a piece together in which triadic elements intersect those elements which seemed modernist to contemporary critics but could not be accounted for by a rigid atonality-focused A-Modernism.

A-Modernist scholars such as Harper-Scott had to deny the Symphony participation in modernism, while B-Modernist critics such as McNaught and Cardus could not call upon an equally strong system of signifiers to back their claim that the Symphony *is* modernist. Only the Event-response model is able to frame the complex relation between this symphony and modernism in a satisfyingly strong system of signifiers without editing out seemingly non-conformist signifiers. The piece responds triadically to modernism (whose master signifier is *pantonality*), but its two motifs intersect this response with an ironic element (signified by the 'surface' dissonances), which emerges particularly strongly in the 'Epilogo'.

### **3.4 Coda: So What?**

It is in the nature of the concept of modernism to be controversial, and doubly so in a postmodernist world. This is all the more reason to endow the logicalized Event-response model with its final justification. Critics might ask what it is this model achieves that we could not have any other way. The simple answer is that it breaks up the one principle which resided in nearly all A-Modernism, and implicitly even most expansionist B-Modernism, which sought to categorize modernism: the principle of 'either/or'.<sup>74</sup> Whether it is modernism versus romanticism, tonality versus atonality, Taruskin's maximalist versus Downes's 'decadent' miniaturist, Adorno's avant-garde versus stabilization and consolidation, the expressionist versus the neo-classicist, Schoenberg the German versus Vaughan Williams the English, the hard core's elitism versus the expansionist's globalization, or finally modernism versus postmodernism, so far there were always two irreconcilable principles or *isms* that could not describe adequately the seemingly contradictory situation, but only parts of it, which were then declared more valuable than others.

The Event-response model operates with a central Event and three responses and thereby provides the promised compromise for a large amount of music, but it is a way forward at the same time. That is because the concept of modernism has been developed at a deep structural level: unlike Adorno, Taruskin, and even unlike B-Modernism (with all its calling for 'rebranding' and 'remarketing'), the Event-response model not only operates with three responses instead of the typically modernist 'either/or', but it values all three responses equally. This equal threeness is an element lying dormant deeply in Badiou's theory, but it is not made use of in his own theory or in this clarity by any of his musicological representatives and commentators. Its basis lies in the existence and quality of the Event itself, which, in the case of this modernism, does not 'belong to' one particular group of composers, works, or styles anymore, but has been one degree removed, as it were, from all of these. It is characterized by the existence of plural tonal systems and thereby keeps the deeply A-Modernist feature of pitch structure and harmony as the category of modernist distinction, but unfolding it into a feature which resembles B-Modernism in its inclusivity. If early to mid-twentieth

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<sup>74</sup> Cf. Albrecht Wellmer, 'The Dialectic of Modernism and Postmodernism: The Critique of Reason since Adorno', in idem, *The Persistence of Modernity: Essays on Aesthetics, Ethics and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, c1985), 36–94.

century Western art music is the solar system, then this new idea of modernism is now not a planet anymore, but the sun.

A critic might object, nevertheless, that Réti's three categories in *Tonality*, *Atonality*, *Pantonality* seem to follow this line of thought and still lead to a dichotomy. Réti, however, used the tool of pantonality not in order to end the dialectic approach, but in order to complicate it and have three instead of two contradictory principles music must operate under – not unlike Badiou and Harper-Scott, who keep the opposites of 'good' and 'bad' despite having three options to choose from. The logicalized Event-response model rests on the explicit premise that its three responses are circular, i.e. simultaneous, overlapping, and equal. The description of early twentieth-century music can be lifted (as in the Hegelian sense of synthesis, of the word *Aufhebung*) to a higher level with the help of this model. The discussion, as the following Part 2 shows, returns from the exclusive A-Modernist analysis or the inclusive postmodernist, B-Modernist, cultural networking to close examination of the musical content on all its layers, which is described as modernist with a triadic, an experimental, or an ironic twist (or as responding to modernism triadically, experimentally, or ironically). The claim of B-Modernism to include more music in the canon of modernism and to decentralize the concept and history of modernism altogether is hereby fulfilled. All the while, the kernel of a modernist idea is retained in the centre, thereby satisfying one of the main demands of the more traditional approach.

In a further objection, an imaginary critic might ask if the model is not fundamentally flawed if all responses fall so very neatly into place once the trace of the idea has been picked according to one's taste. At best, this procedure would resemble the inverted hermeneutic circle, in which the result of the enquiry is written into the premises. At worst, it would be an invalid way of gaining wanted results in an empirical study. A response to this objection could firstly state that the Event and its trace have naturally not been picked according to taste, but so as to incorporate and retain the most traditional and hard core signifier of modernism in the game – emancipated dissonance, unfolded into pantonality – with the intention of testing the model's sustainability in as traditionalist an environment as possible in order to avoid a simple positivism. If this logicalized

core can succeed as the centre of these three responses throughout the following three case studies, this is nothing if not proof that the system is functional unless proven otherwise. Secondly, reductive thinking in a model which seeks to aspire to describe potentially large amounts of material is not necessarily proscribed, as long as it remains open to the possibility of accounting for a wide variety of differences in its potential case studies and also allows for the final option of being falsified in the event of a case study refuting the system. It is to be hoped that the following case studies represent but the beginning of the process of stabilizing the Event-response model of musical modernism.

## Part 2. Practice

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## Chapter 4. Holst's *Egdon Heath* and the Power of the Triad

When Gustav Holst wrote *Egdon Heath* in 1927, Continental modernism arguably was in full swing already. It is for this reason as well as those reasons identified by contemporary critics that the piece seemed too tonal, too formally unclear, or perhaps simply too calm for those hysterical, atonal times. The result has been a certain displacement of *Egdon Heath*, which even today adds to the reasons that prevent the piece from being performed frequently. *Egdon Heath's* form is as crucial in this context as its tonality, and this ties it to an article about Holst's connection to formalist modernism by Christopher Scheer, which operates with the relatively open method of advancing the writer Holst as a modernist in the vein of Clive Bell and Roger Fry.<sup>1</sup> In the course of this chapter, Scheer's argument will be critically reviewed and it will be shown that the Event-response model can provide an analytic solution for *Egdon Heath* specifically, where the loose connection with Holst's own aesthetics falls short.

My argument is in essence that, in *Egdon Heath*, as in most of his oeuvre, Holst responds triadically to the idea of modernism. As the previous chapter explained, a triadic response is by no means just the lesser evil between the ideal 'faithful' and the evil 'obscure' type, but it advances modernism within the broad field of contemporary responses that is opened up by pieces by composers as varied as the three in this thesis. In view of this, the chapter utilizes the logicalized version of the Event-response model both in order to obviate judgements of value implied in the designations of the responses and to clarify the work's place in modernist aesthetics. By rejecting the common assumption that 'conservative' music is either good or bad, the model redirects our gaze to what the music actually does and what this in turn means for its own modernism and modernism in a more general sense.

In order to advance this argument, this chapter's core sections examine the triadic response in *Egdon Heath's* dynamic structure, its tonality, themes, and its formal procedures. Some attention must additionally be paid to Holst as the subject of the literature – music historic and critical – which shows once more the two most

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher M. Scheer, "A Direct and Intimate Realization". Holst and Formalism in the 1920s', in Matthew Riley (ed.), *British Music and Modernism. 1895–1960* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 109–24.

common methods of scholarship on British modernism (examined in 2.2.2 and 2.2.3, composer personalities and the pastoral as modernist). In the introductory sections as well as throughout the whole chapter the challenges of pinning down this type of response will surface repeatedly. They can be perceived in the movements of the following argument, which, in exploring several directions simultaneously as it answers questions of value and designation as well as of harmonic vocabulary and form, aims to highlight the insoluble contradictions that characterize the triadic response, instead of seeking to accommodate them into one line of thinking.

#### **4.1 Introduction: Reloading Holst**

Gustav Holst is not usually considered a modernist and his appearance in the context of this thesis may therefore be surprising. Rather, he is generally perceived either as the composer of the suite *The Planets*, his breakthrough and a twentieth-century monument to traditional forms and tonality, or as the increasingly idiosyncratic, even erratic, composer of thematically widely diverse pieces such as *Savitri* (representing his interest in all things Indian), the *First Choral Symphony* (setting various poetic and personal texts of Keats), *A Fugal Overture* and *A Fugal Concerto* (showing his temporary interest in fugal techniques), but also the polytonal *Terzetto*, or *Hammersmith* for brass band.<sup>2</sup> His deep and lifelong interest in different forms of spirituality led Raymond Head to advance a B-Modernist argument *avant la lettre*, as it were, when he brought Holst's theosophism (which connects him not only to its important member G. R. S. Mead, but also to the composer of my second case study, Elisabeth Lutyens), in connection with an esoteric modernity in *The Planets*.<sup>3</sup> None of these interests and commitments however adheres to the common notions of a modernism relying on rigorous innovation in tonal or formal aspects, and the modernism of *Egdon Heath* will therefore be constructed from scratch with the help of the Event-response model in this chapter.

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<sup>2</sup> Not unlike Stravinsky, Holst could be perceived to be in danger of being either too modernist in some pieces or not modernist enough in others (cf. Jonathan Cross, 'Modernism and Tradition, and the Traditions of Modernism', *Muzikologija/Musicology: Journal of the Institute of Musicology of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts*, 6 (2006), 19–42, 27).

<sup>3</sup> Raymond Head, 'Holst – Astrology and Modernism in "The Planets"', *Tempo*, 187 (1993), 15–22.

This introduction will initially answer two preliminary questions that the chapter's opening remarks provoked: firstly, why it is useful to prioritize an examination of *Egdon Heath* and secondly, why this chapter encompasses a detailed examination of the piece's *thematic structure* more than one of the harmonic vocabulary, as one would in Schoenberg or any other established modernist. In answer to the first question, Holst himself thought *Egdon Heath* the best of his works.<sup>4</sup> Others, however, perceived it as difficult, if not as a failure, as I show later in this chapter. This is because three parameters of the piece – dynamic structure, thematic processes, and form – seem unusual and spiky, even for a composer of Holst's predilections, (he was renowned for springing surprises such as odd-numbered metres and exotic topics or tonalities on his audience).<sup>5</sup> In fact it is these three elements – dynamic structures, thematic processes, and form – that call for a consideration of *Egdon Heath* as a modernist work. Analyses of its tonal features have been conducted by Arnold Whittall, Richard Greene, and Guido Heldt, and all rule out A-Modernism's master signifier, atonality, in the piece's overall tonal structure.<sup>6</sup> Yet, *Egdon Heath's* extraordinary interplay between themes and form remain to be examined in depth. For, not unlike Vaughan Williams's Fourth Symphony, *Egdon Heath* made its listeners jump, disappointed them, and challenged them. Its modernism, however, has been too subtle a thing to be explained with the traditional tools.

## Form and Modernism

*Egdon Heath's* interplay between themes (and their tonality) and form, this chapter claims, shows a triadic response to Modernism, which opens the second question this introduction has to answer. To look for modernism in a piece's form

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<sup>4</sup> Imogen Holst, *Gustav Holst. With a Note by R. Vaughan Williams* (London, New York, Toronto: OUP, 1938), 131.

<sup>5</sup> Most famous is probably the 5/4 in 'Mars', but the same meter occurs in 'To Agni' from the *Choral Hymns of the Rig Veda* and *The Hymn of Jesus*. As an intra-musical sign of its exoticism, *Sita* has several asymmetric meters (7/4, 9/4, 5/4, and 15/8). Holst's use of, for example, minor as well as augmented seconds, is described by Michael Short: 'Concentration on such intervals for their own sake led Holst to a type of thematic material in which melody in the usual sense hardly exists at all.' (Michael Short, *Gustav Holst: The Man and his Music* [Oxford, New York: OUP, 1990], 353, 367).

<sup>6</sup> Arnold Whittall, 'Wagner, Schoenberg, Holst. A Centenary Essay', *Soundings. A Music Journal*, 4 (1974), 87–99; Richard Greene, *Gustav Holst and a Rhetoric of Musical Character: Language and Method in Selected Orchestral Works* (New York, London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1994); Guido Heldt, *Das Nationale als Problem in der englischen Musik des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts: Tondichtungen von Granville Bantock, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Edward Elgar, George Butterworth, Gerald Finzi und Gustav Holst* (Hamburg: Verlag für Musikbücher Karl Dieter Wagner, 2007).

does not sit comfortably with the usual ways of identifying modernism. Schoenberg's music is a paradigm for the focus of analysis of modernism on its atonality and the sidelining of form. The reason for this may lie in a perception of Schoenberg himself as principally a (formal) conservative who was 'overtaken by his own innovation'.<sup>7</sup> In his polemic paper 'Schoenberg Is Dead', Pierre Boulez accused Schoenberg of dragging 'romantic formal stereotype' along into his truly innovative serial technique. The deadly blow for all that Schoenberg could have claimed to achieve in serialism comes in the judgement that

Not only does the actual intention fail, since the language is not supported by the architecture, but the very opposite happens: the architecture annuls any possibility of organization that the new language may possess. The two worlds are incompatible; and yet he has tried to justify the one by the other.<sup>8</sup>

Schoenberg's modernism is dead, and Boulez adorns himself with the kill. Translated into semiotics, Boulez seems to say that atonality alone cannot be the master signifier of modernism, that only a combination of form and tonal system can fulfil this crucial role. Boulez's motive behind this assertion was surely to promote his own total serialism as the only valid avant-garde by highlighting this obvious 'weakness' in Schoenberg, but his statement certainly has a point. Schoenberg's – and thereby modernism's – conservatism in form still is an important critical assumption, although musicology has certainly moved on from the very orthodox position about tonal material and form (unless something formally extraordinary takes place, as in Stockhausen's concept of 'moment form').<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, this orthodoxy still seems to hinder the re-evaluation of music which is not already in the musicological canons of modernism (such as the majority of early to mid-twentieth century British music). In this chapter, I take the middle way between an orthodox position and Boulez by considering *Egdon Heath's* form as well as its tonality, but by folding the result back into the structure

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<sup>7</sup> Pierre Boulez, 'Schoenberg is Dead', in Pierre Boulez (ed.), *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship. Collected and Presented by Paule Thévenin, Translated from the French by Stephen Walsh* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 209–14, 211.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>9</sup> Two important compilations of source-reading on modernism, Daniel Albright's (ed.) *Modernism and Music: An Anthology of Sources* (Chicago, London: UoCP, 2004) and Robert P. Morgan's (ed.) *Source Readings in Music History: The Twentieth Century, Volume 7* (Oliver Strunk, Leo Treitler [eds.], New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998) both collect differing statements about modernism in its many facets, but both feature Schoenberg's 'Composition with Twelve Tones' (as one of only nine essays printed in *both* collections). Albright even affords serialism an entire chapter.

of the Event-response model: the triadic response is established with a view to how the form *facilitates* the tonal strategies the piece displays.

This perceived lack of interest in form was transferred to the whole of the Second Viennese School, whose harmonic and tonal innovations are easy to draw out, leading to the implication that form was lagging behind the harmonic language in these composers' pieces, or, even more extreme, that musical form was merely like a baking mould, into which different kinds of dough (the musical content) could be poured.<sup>10</sup> In a recent attempt to correct this picture, Magnar Breivik has shown, however, that Schoenberg thought continuously about the functionality and suitability of form for his serial material – in the first place about its comprehensibility as an indispensable premise for the presentation of new musical ideas. In various places in his writings, Schoenberg compared the essentiality of musical form to the architectural plan of a house and of a functioning living organism.<sup>11</sup> In his early serial works, Breivik maintains, Schoenberg deliberately used 'classical' forms to facilitate the comprehensibility of his innovation.<sup>12</sup> Although this would seem to be strengthening Boulez's criticism, Schoenberg himself seems to have perceived classical forms as a kind of 'significant forms' for his content. And despite all this, he still does not lose out on his claim to a faithful modernism in wider music historical thinking, because his choice of tonal system is distinct.

The reason for this decision can be found by turning back to Badiou's model of the Event. Even the most revolutionary ideas can (and often will) be articulated in readily available forms or, in the case of a whole society, within already existing groups, institutions, clubs, associations, or in fact in existing media. Spartacus created an army just like Crassus's to bolster his claims with the threat of violence, and Copernicus used established geometry to substantiate his groundbreaking

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<sup>10</sup> O. W. Neighbour, 'Schoenberg, Arnold', *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. OUP. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/25024> (8/2/13): 'The reason for Schoenberg's return to Classical forms must be sought in his need to find new scope for his inherently developmental cast of thought.' (about the early serial works of the 1920s). It must be noted, of course, that Schoenberg's use and conception of forms changed vastly over his long career, and did so together with developments on the other levels of musical thought. The German word 'Form' translates both as musical form and as baking mould.

<sup>11</sup> Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea*, 151; idem, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, 1; both quoted from Magnar Breivik, *Musical Functionalism: The Musical Thoughts of Arnold Schoenberg and Paul Hindemith* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2011), 206, 228.

<sup>12</sup> Breivik, *Functionalism*, 220.

heliocentrism. It was the content, the message, which changed the discourse. Boulez's assertion that it takes a combination of two master signifiers to make music modernist can therefore be rejected. However, even if form is not a master signifier of modernism, it is an important signifier and has the power to frame the response in the tonal system crucially, as this chapter will show.

Against this stands the recent enterprise of re-evaluating sonata form, undertaken by Hepokoski and Darcy as a carrier of deformations in music from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards.<sup>13</sup> Even before they made (sonata) form and its deformations the centre of attention in eighteenth-century music in *Elements of Sonata Theory*, Hepokoski had expanded the label 'modernist' to include the music of Sibelius and other early twentieth-century composers such as Elgar, Puccini, Mahler, or Debussy, which would then be called 'early modernists' or 'moderns', because of their specific ways of flagging up sonata form while deforming it.<sup>14</sup> This formal definition of modernism or modernity sprang of course from the lack of a more revolutionary choice of tonal system in these composers' symphonies. Hepokoski thereby upended a pre-Boulezian tacit assumption: where atonality and serialism had been regarded as the only valid signifiers, deformed rotational sonata form was now the criterion for modernism, with the revolutions in the tonal system representing rather an ongoing evolution of tonality into chromaticism and then further into atonality.

This chapter will walk the tightrope between *formal* versus *tonal* innovation. Both labour under the familiar problems of definitions of modernism; defendants of atonal modernism (i.e. A-Modernism) tend to exclude too much music, while defendants of formal modernism (B-Modernism) tend to include too much. The advantage of the Event-response model is that it can utilize both for analysis, but relies rather on the structure of a hard inner kernel and a flexible outer circle of responses to a central idea in an Event. Holst, like any composer, makes certain

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<sup>13</sup> James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (Oxford et al.: OUP, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> James Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge et al.: CUP, 1993), 2–3. Deformation also forms an important aspect of Downes's B-Modernist wave deformation scenario in 'Modern Maritime Pastoral. Wave Deformations in the Music of Frank Bridge', in Matthew Riley (ed.), *British Music and Modernism. 1895–1960* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 93–107, in which the deformation of the romanticist wave enables a modernist reading of Bridge's *The Sea* (cf. chapter 4 of idem, *Music and Decadence in European Modernism: The Case of Central and Eastern Europe* [Cambridge: CUP, 2010]).

choices when he composes *Egdon Heath*, and as I will show, he chooses a tonality in this piece that is drawn towards its own demise. This choice puts him in direct connection with the Event of modernism, but the story does not end here.

In the triadic response to modernism in particular, all these choices of thematic structure, tonal system, and harmonic vocabulary become highly relevant because they continuously negate each other. While the experimental type of modernism may seem easier to locate in its adherence to the master signifier of A-Modernism, atonality or serialism, the triadic type is characterized by its contradictions on several levels of the structure, including form. It opposes the obvious modernist choices, but it is nevertheless connected to the Event. Meanwhile, its underlying structures may in fact be no less avant-garde than the experimental ones, if an analysis focuses its attention on the tonality *and* the form. This explains why triadic modernism is not 'just' tonal (in the sense of being regressive), but has an equal claim to being a response to modernism, yet without it having to give up tonality as its own master signifier and acquire others in tonality's stead (as it had in some cases of B-Modernism in chapter 2).

### **Holst and Form**

The obvious place to start an enquiry into Holst's own analysis of modernism and form is certainly the concept of 'significant form'. A concept from the criticism of fine art which became an academic trend in the 1910s, it was recently resurrected as a free-floating signifier of modernism in the *Choral Symphony* in Christopher Scheer's chapter "A Direct and Intimate Realization". Moreover, however, it was Holst himself who referred to this term, coined by Clive Bell (and, according to Scheer, also referred to in Roger Fry's criticism of Bell) in his essay 'The Mystic, the Philistine and the Artist' to designate the element that distinguishes a true artist from what Holst calls the mystic. For Holst, the mystic encapsulates vision, inspiration, and belief in an idea, but does not possess the artistic means – form – to express the idea in and therefore unsuccessfully reverts to speech to describe the vision.<sup>15</sup> Significant form, according to Holst, is neither the form of *Formenlehre* nor to be confused with a particular genre (sonata, fugue, etc.), but a unique, never

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<sup>15</sup> Gustav Holst, 'The Mystic, The Philistine and the Artist'; reprinted in Imogen Holst, *Gustav Holst*, 184–94.

imitative but always perfectly fitting, individual match for one particular musical idea. It is perhaps not surprising that this opinion, professed in 1920 in the theosophical *The Quest*, would lead him to experiment with such formal procedures that he saw as unique ways to express the thematic content in *Egdon Heath*.<sup>16</sup>

The concept of significant form itself was coined by Clive Bell, a younger colleague and friend of art critic Roger Fry and his cooperator on the second post-impressionist exhibition in the London Grafton Gallery in late 1912. In 1914 Bell advanced the concept in *Art*, a textbook and manifesto of aesthetics in fine art. In this study, Bell credits his discussions and disagreements with Fry as ‘temper[ing]’ and ‘burnish[ing]’ his theory.<sup>17</sup> The theory’s core manifests itself in this definition:

What quality is common to Sta. Sophia and the windows at Chartres, Mexican sculpture, a Persian bowl, Chinese carpets, Giotto’s frescoes at Padua, and the masterpieces of Poussin, Piero della Francesca, and Cézanne? Only one answer seems possible – significant form. In each, lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colours, these aesthetically moving forms, I call ‘Significant Form’; and ‘Significant Form’ is the one quality common to all works of visual art.<sup>18</sup>

Scheer’s loose association between this significant form and modernism operates by showing how Holst set Keats’s *Ode on a Grecian Urn* in the Choral Symphony’s second movement. Scheer interprets this setting as an expression of Holst’s experience of the First World War as an inherently modern experience, similar to the syllogism I criticized in section 2.2.3.<sup>19</sup>

Despite Holst’s own use of the term in connection with his music, this association has one flaw – the fact that significant form was never developed as a signifier of modernism, neither by Fry and Bell nor by Holst. This has as much to do with Fry’s own aesthetics and interests as with Bell’s claim for validity. Roger Fry had only discovered what he called post-impressionists (most prominently Manet, Cézanne, Gauguin, van Gogh, Matisse, and Picasso) on travels to Paris a few years before the

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<sup>16</sup> Its publication in *The Quest* (Mead’s journal) ties Holst’s concepts of form back to theosophism and astrology. Cf. Head, ‘Holst’.

<sup>17</sup> Clive Bell, *Art* (New York, London: Capricorn Books, 1958, c1914), 7.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 17–8.

<sup>19</sup> Scheer, “Intimate Realization”, 120.

exhibition, and had been more interested in 'old Masters' before that.<sup>20</sup> Jacqueline Falkenheim draws the conclusion that Fry 'probably developed his concepts of the way form works with varying artists in chronological order, seeing the modified reassertion of the principles of design he had discovered in Giotto, Masaccio, and Uccello in the work of the moderns.'<sup>21</sup> It is possible to foresee already that significant form or formalist considerations in general were never meant to be a modernist privilege, but that they were developed as a tool to separate good (formally significant) from bad (illustrative, merely technical) art of all times and civilisations.

This becomes clearer in Bell's *Art*. Here, Bell focuses on the issue at hand, which is the polemic concerning the post-impressionists, yet seeks to give his aesthetics a universal twist by applying it from the very start to the aforementioned elements in his definition: 'Sta. Sophia and the windows at Chartres, Mexican sculpture, a Persian bowl, Chinese carpets, Giotto's frescoes at Padua, and the masterpieces of Poussin, Piero della Francesca, and Cézanne'.<sup>22</sup> There is no specifically modernist element in this definition, which is one of the reasons why Scheer's allusions to actual musical modernism are extremely scarce. Even Holst's own mention of significant form confirms this universal outlook of the concept when he speaks of Mozart's, Schubert's, or in fact Beethoven's significant forms.<sup>23</sup> Significant form can of course acquire a modernist content, but the fact that the form of a piece is a significant form does not make the piece modernist *per se*.

It is clear, then, that both Schoenberg and Holst appreciated the significance of form for the presentation of their musical content, despite the contrary outcome of their thinking processes: Holst's significant form for individual material seems far away from Schoenberg's traditional forms for new material. Yet the two composers seem to be connected in their idiosyncratic and characteristic choice of formal

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<sup>20</sup> Jacqueline V. Falkenheim, *Roger Fry and the Beginnings of Formalist Art Criticism* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1980), chapter 'The post-Impressionist Exhibitions of 1910 and 1912' (15–32), 84.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Bell, *Art*, 17.

<sup>23</sup> Holst, 'The Mystic', 191, 192. What Holst seems to be implying is that Beethoven is not using distinctive enough sonata deformation in the overtures *Wellingtons Sieg* or *Namensfeier*. The principle of deformation, like the category of significant form, does not trigger modernism automatically, but sonata deformation is almost certainly the most suitable way to give a piece a significant form.

concepts. Perhaps surprisingly, this is not the only level on which Schoenberg and Holst showed comparable features, as the following section finds.

### **Personal Modernism in the Literature on Holst**

As I argued in 2.2.2, personality is one factor which cannot be overestimated in its importance for our everyday judgements about composers' relevance as well as their modernism. In such a judgement about the premiere of a well-known orchestral piece by a twentieth-century composer, a critic stated about the composer's acid reaction towards the piece's success that he

famously refused to acknowledge the audience's applause, preferring alienation to acclaim. [...]

At the end of a work, when he had to make his bow, he conveyed no sign of gratitude for the rapturous applause he was receiving. He didn't mean to be ungracious about it, but each time he had to return to the platform, his expression would be more distant and resentful than before.<sup>24</sup>

What reads like a coherent description of a modernist composer's alienation are in fact two quotes about Schoenberg and Holst – both are unlikely to be compared by music historians (least of all the authors of the two quotes) in any sense. While the first is Taruskin's characterisation of Schoenberg's attitude towards his Viennese audience of *Gurrelieder*, the latter is Imogen Holst's impression of her father Gustav's inability to cope with the unexpected success of *The Planets* in Britain and elsewhere during the 1920s. The similarity goes even further than one particular occasion on which both composers were not inclined to receive ovations gracefully. At the time of the respective premieres of *Gurrelieder* and *The Planets*, both Schoenberg and Holst had written more advanced music in which they saw their true contribution to the future of music: the success of *Gurrelieder* in 1913 was preceded by the composition of the String Quartet op. 10 no. 2 as well as *Pierrot lunaire*, while Holst's *Planets* came to their first performance of the entire seven movements in 1920 after the composition of the *Hymn of Jesus* (1917) and in the middle of the composition of *The Perfect Fool* (1918–22). In Schoenberg's case, this chronology of events brought forth straight away what Taruskin identifies as the defining characteristic of the 'modernist giant', alienation.<sup>25</sup> In Taruskin's

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<sup>24</sup> Taruskin, *OHWM* 4, 305; I. Holst, *Gustav Holst*, 83.

<sup>25</sup> Taruskin, *OHWM* 4, 305.

narrative Schoenberg could not forgive the applause for *Gurrelieder* by the people who had rejected *Verklärte Nacht* (and pretty much everything else after it). This ‘modernism by personality’ of the type ‘alienation’ is defined by two moments: a misapprehending public and a forward-thinking composer.

The same narrative was applied to Holst’s often decried austerity and bleakness which was rejected by an audience that could not get enough of the *Planets* (but not with such immediate effect as in Schoenberg’s case).<sup>26</sup> Imogen Holst invented this image of her father single-handedly and harshly with remarks such as ‘Holst never managed to resign himself to the role of a popular composer. It was a role for which he was singularly ill-suited. Perhaps it was fortunate for his peace of mind that it did not last long.’<sup>27</sup> She thereby implied that her father delved deeper and deeper into an idiosyncratic composition style, while he was sinking his popular reputation at the same time. What is more, he apparently experienced a feeling of moral superiority about these developments. The ingredients are the same as in the Schoenberg case: well meaning but misapprehending audiences and an offended and misunderstood composer. If these were the actual ingredients of modernism, Holst would doubtlessly be one of its finest exponents.

Schoenberg and Holst’s similarity of behaviour towards their audience is hardly noticed in most literature on both composers, which describes Schoenberg as a ‘modernist giant’ but regards Holst as a minor, conservative one hit wonder, despite the curious, but also obvious, fact of the two composers’ common year of birth, 1874. An exception is Arnold Whittall, who unlocks a specific potential for comparison in his ‘Wagner, Schoenberg, Holst. A Centenary Essay’ by pointing to Holst’s tonality in *Egdon Heath* as just as valid an answer of the ‘martyr to the cause of post-Wagnerian survival’ as Schoenberg’s answers.<sup>28</sup> It must be noted that this essay, in line with the majority of essays on modernism, seeks to trace the piece’s relation to Schoenberg specifically through its harmonic language. In

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<sup>26</sup> According to Holst’s biographer Michael Short, Holst already remarked on the first incomplete public performance in 1919 that ‘It’s all quite nice, except that people seem to dislike Saturn which is my favourite.’ (Short, *Holst*, 170). *The Planets* seem to have found their way even into popular culture, most prominently hearable in John Williams’s soundtrack for *Star Wars*.

<sup>27</sup> I. Holst, *Gustav Holst*, 82.

<sup>28</sup> Whittall, ‘Wagner, Schoenberg, Holst’, 99. It could be inferred from this that *Egdon Heath* is modernist, although Whittall abstains from this claim altogether, possibly for the same reason which I will introduce in this chapter – that Holst did not go far enough in *Egdon Heath* to be an (experimental) modernist.

accordance with Taruskin's argument in *OHWM 4*, it is possible to assume that the harmonic language of both in its quality as a reaction to Wagner led to their alienation from their audience.

Chris Walton's 'Auf der Suche nach der Moderne in England' is a second piece of writing bringing Holst in proximity to Schoenberg. Walton represents the standard reaction of Continental music criticism to British twentieth-century music, when he exhibits fundamental doubts about any sort of participation of this music in the narratives of modernism. In his chapter about the differences between composer personalities in the German-speaking countries and England, he accordingly backs Taruskin's reading of the stereotypical modernist composer by convicting Schoenberg and, even earlier, Strauss, of their arrogance in their own writings.<sup>29</sup> The contrast with the attitude famously attributed to figures like Vaughan Williams and Holst is thus exposed:

For Vaughan Williams the artist is not a leader, but a servant of society; an attitude also characterising Benjamin Britten's aesthetic of music. Already in his student days Vaughan Williams regarded himself as a socialist; his close friend Gustav Holst became a member of a London socialist club when he was 21.<sup>30</sup>

Walton's analysis strikes a familiar tone, as he uses this difference between the character, and especially the quality as a potential 'Führer', of Schoenberg on the one hand and Vaughan Williams/Holst on the other as the strongest reason for his hypothesis that there was no English modernism.<sup>31</sup> Walton's modernism, like Taruskin's, requires not just an elitist character in a composer (which Holst doubtlessly had), but a strong narcissistic element (which he is denied in Walton's essay and most writing about his life and works).

A comparison of the outlines of the three arguments (Scheer, Whittall, and Walton) with Vaughan Williams's claim for Holst's modernism from 2.2.2 shows the particular ambiguity surrounding this composer's status. While Walton's

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<sup>29</sup> Chris Walton, 'Auf der Suche nach der Moderne in England', in Otto Kolleritsch (ed.), *Klischee und Wirklichkeit in der musikalischen Moderne* (Vienna, Graz: Universal Edition, 1994), 256–71.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 263 (my translation).

<sup>31</sup> The others are (1) nationalism and the resulting focus on folk song in England while Austro-Germany was experimenting with modernism, (2) the deaths of young composers in the First World War, and (3) the conservative institution of the Anglican Church, for which many composers worked at some point of time. While these arguments seem to hold a certain intuitive validity, they would be difficult to defend on an empirical basis.

Continental view seeks to exclude the composer from the 'club' on the account of his failure to present the 'correct' personal modernism, the very same personal features are used by Vaughan Williams to stress his modernity, whereas Scheer and Whittall's contextualisation seems to point towards at least a shade of modernism. None of the four essays achieves a comprehensive view of Holst or modernism, however, although some of their strategies – to exclude British music as a whole from or include it in the canon of modernism – are relatively transparent.

The present chapter attempts to cut this Gordian knot. While Holst certainly does not represent the same modernism as Schoenberg does, his responses to a variety of influences from English folk songs to Sanskrit writings and the breadth of his oeuvre from *Savitri* via the *Choral Symphony* to *Brook Green Suite* mirror the most common response given in the musical United Kingdom to the Event of modernism – the triadic response.

### **Gustav Holst, Ambiguous Modernist**

Although Holst's personality and his various associations with influences reaching from Stravinsky to Bell might make him an interesting case for a model like Butler's aforementioned two phases of modernism in *Early Modernism*,<sup>32</sup> Holst can usually be found in the bottom drawer of music criticism and historiography from relatively early on, as can be gleaned from his treatment in Cecil Gray's *Survey of Contemporary Music*, published in the year during which Holst wrote *Egdon Heath*.<sup>33</sup> Apart from one reference to the composer when condemning monotonous rhythmic repetitions,<sup>34</sup> Gray files Holst under the heading 'Minor Composers', followed by a withering attack on his work up to 1927:

While the others are content with one or two continental models, his style is a compendium or *pastiche* of the styles of nearly all representative modern composers, which he has equally failed to make his own. He has no more originality of outlook than any of the composers mentioned above [Stanford, Parry, Scott, Holbrooke, Bantock, Goosens, Bliss, Berners]; if anything he has less. But while they

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<sup>32</sup> Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music, and Painting in Europe, 1900–1916* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). Cf. section 2.2.3.

<sup>33</sup> Cecil Gray, *A Survey of Contemporary Music*. Second Edition (London: OUP, Humphrey Milford, 1927).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

have no particular convictions, one way or another, Holst has many convictions against him. It is largely on account of his undoubted earnestness and sincerity that his art seems the more definitely pernicious. The faults of the others are negative, his are positive. I observed in the Preface that mediocrities can make even the greatest virtues detestable, and Holst is an example of this. Like so many mediocre minds he is attracted by the largest and most grandiose conceptions; nothing but the greatest themes of all art will satisfy him, such as *The Planets*, the *Hymns from the Rig-Veda*, the *Hymn of Jesus*, and so forth.<sup>35</sup>

These hard words are perhaps not so surprising for a critic who concludes the book with the statement that 'only genius matters, whether classic, romantic, or both and neither'.<sup>36</sup> If the nineteenth-century Germanic concept of genius is the only yardstick of success for a composer, then it is perhaps to be expected that Holst has no place among the lucky few.

In Lambert's *Music Ho!*, things look even bleaker for Holst. He is mentioned as an example of the English composer's failed fight against the deeply rooted church-music tradition.<sup>37</sup> And even in a potentially more alternative view of the scene in 1934, composer and author John Foulds affords only *The Planets* one sentence of praise (the work 'well stands comparison with any contemporary composition in the whole world of music to-day') and fails to mention any other piece by Holst.<sup>38</sup>

From these early dismissals onwards, it became a leitmotif in Holst biographies and criticism to stress the composer's technical weaknesses, and this was particularly so in the books by his daughter Imogen Holst. There may have been different reasons for this. Firstly, in the case of the contemporary English establishment Holst may have been perceived as too advanced as well as moody in his choice of topics as well as of lifestyle. Secondly, in a world in which music history either follows the Taruskinian line that modernism was elitist and antidemocratic or else the Adornian line that it offers a form of ideological resistance, Holst's music might nowadays be considered simply not modernist enough to be 'good' or properly 'bad'.

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 251–2.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

<sup>37</sup> Constant Lambert, *Music Ho!: A Study of Music in Decline* (3rd edn., London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1966), 283.

<sup>38</sup> John Foulds, *Music To-day. Its Heritage From the Past, and Legacy to the Future* (n.p.: Nicholson & Watson, 1934), 276.

Nevertheless, he managed to have his works performed continuously, which implies that Holst's position was as not as hopeless as it had been in his early years. Still, his position is hardly comparable to that of Elliott Carter, for example, whose status as a kind of musicians' musician in a closely knit institutional environment enabled his frequent performances, and may have added to Taruskin's criticism of Carter in the fifth volume of the *OHWM*.<sup>39</sup> Rather, Holst had cultivated a circle of loyal supporters early on in his career (among them Vaughan Williams and, probably even more important for getting performed, Adrian Boult) and performances of his works additionally took place throughout the country, carried by the enthusiasm of the musical communities of, for example, Cheltenham and Thaxted, who regarded Holst as their local musical patron saint. *Egdon Heath*, for example, received its premiere in New York on 12 February 1928, being a commission of the New York Symphony Society, but the British premiere took place just one day later in Cheltenham, with the London Royal Philharmonic Society not far behind, which took it up on 23 February. According to Holst's biographer Michael Short, all three performances produced mixed feelings with the audience as well as the composer and his inner circle, but a letter by the composer to Henry Wood did not fail to secure the piece a further hearing at the Proms the same year.<sup>40</sup> Vaughan Williams perhaps gives an explanation for the curious developments when he admits much later that

at first I found [*Egdon Heath*] a hard nut to crack. But I hope that I have now cracked it, and it is certainly well worth cracking. I remember, when he first showed it me, I felt that the very definiteness of his melodies were out of keeping with such an impressionistic conception. But I was wrong. It is only those who have no melodic invention who have to resort to vague twilight.<sup>41</sup>

Both Holst and Elliott Carter may have profited in later life from this interesting attitude of an audience which sought the fault for not liking a piece in themselves first. Of course a judgement such as this one is in this thesis consulted less for its conclusion about the quality of the piece than for the premises of its criticism.

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<sup>39</sup> Taruskin, *OHWM* 5, chapter 6, 261–306.

<sup>40</sup> Short, *Holst*, 264.

<sup>41</sup> R. Vaughan Williams, 'Gustav Holst: A Great Composer', *The Listener*, 3 June 1954, 965–6, 965.

## **4.2 Egdon Heath: 'An Iron Hand in a Glove of Interwoven Satin, Asbestos, and Ectoplasm'<sup>42</sup>**

Holst tended to regard his latest piece as his greatest, but this changed with *Egdon Heath*. He considered it his finest work from its completion in 1927 to his death in 1934, by which time he had written nearly 30 more pieces (including the Double Concerto for two violins and orchestra, Twelve Songs on poems by Humbert Wolfe, the chamber opera *The Wandering Scholar*, the suites *Hammersmith* and *Brook Green Suite*, and his last work, *Scherzo*).<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the piece's frequent early performances were critically reviewed and received by a wide public. It therefore quickly became the battleground for opinions about its composer's quality as well as about the piece's features. Modernism, by contrast, was not a much-discussed issue of contemporary reviews and critiques concerned with *Egdon Heath*. This might perhaps be less surprising if the suspicion is correct that Holst was perceived as one of the moderns anyway (his audience was already used to Holst's inaccessible musical thought in 1927) and criticism of this modernity manifested itself in criticism about his style.<sup>44</sup>

To construct the modernism of *Egdon Heath* therefore is an original attempt this chapter proposes. This will be attempted after a discussion of the piece's two areas which critics were and are most interested in: the piece's connection to its motto from Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* and its use of dynamic features. These features can both be considered responsible to a great degree for the perception of *Egdon Heath* as 'difficult'. The motto's position and structure on the one hand, and *Egdon Heath*'s dynamic structure on the other, form two pieces of evidence for the claim that the music does not follow the plot of *The Return of the Native*, and that again justifies partly the concentration of my analysis in the core sections on thematic and tonal aspects.

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<sup>42</sup> Anon., 'The Unfamiliar Holst. Nine Works at the Festival Hall', *The Times*, 11 December 1956, 5.

<sup>43</sup> I. Holst, *Gustav Holst*, 131. See also Holst's letter to W. G. Whittaker, 26 December 1932, in Michael Short (ed.), *Gustav Holst. Letters to W. G. Whittaker* (n.p.: University of Glasgow Press, 1974), 120: 'It was the first serious work I wrote after my accident ten years ago and it means much to me.'

<sup>44</sup> The aforementioned critique of Holst in general and *Egdon Heath* in particular (Anon., 'The Unfamiliar Holst') creatively described the piece as 'an iron glove in a in a glove of interwoven satin, asbestos, and ectoplasm' and hinted at the uneven quality of Holst's oeuvre.

#### 4.2.1 Hardy: Choice of Text

Thomas Hardy's 1878 novel *The Return of the Native* (hereafter *Return*) is the most important acknowledged influence on the piece, the most prominent response in the music perhaps being its gloomily subdued dynamics and opaque harmonic language. The piece's biographical background – Holst's walking tours through the Heath of Hardy's Wessex, his reading of Hardy's *Return*, his visit of the writer, and subsequent dedication of the piece to his memory – are retold in detail in Short's biography.<sup>45</sup> It is worth briefly examining the role of Hardy's text, however, which found its way into the score in the form of a brief motto from the novel's first chapter, describing the Heath on which the drama takes place. According to Short, Holst was convinced that the omission of the motto from *Return* (which is printed in the full score) in the programme notes of the premiere of *Egdon Heath* led to audiences' negative reception. Short himself claims that knowledge of the motto 'would have been a great help in understanding the music'.<sup>46</sup>

It seems impossible to write about *Egdon Heath* – be it analytically or critically – without first making clear the standpoint on the extent to which the text feeds into the music, because this extent determines the results and judgements about the piece, and my study is no exception. In my opinion, however, it is not the *content* of Hardy's text and of *Egdon Heath* that connects the two, but the formal procedures of the motto (and the motto alone) and the piece. Nor is it the motto's content that gives the piece its triadic-modernist character (this would make my argument a typically expansionist B-Modernism argument that merely replaces its modernism's master signifier for another one). Rather, the *thematic* structure of the motto finds an echo in the music, which uses its structure to display the character of a triadic response to modernism.

Unlike the rhetorical analysis after Laurence Kramer, undertaken by Richard Greene in *Gustav Holst and a Rhetoric of Musical Character* (which also examines the formal effects in the novel and the music),<sup>47</sup> this chapter lifts the motto out of

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<sup>45</sup> Short, *Holst*, 253–4, 256–7, 263–265. Holst intended to dedicate the piece to Hardy, but changed this when the writer died one month before the New York premiere.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 264. Short does not reference this claim, however, and it seems to contradict his emphasis on Holst's belief that his music generally had to speak for itself, i.e. without programmes etc. (346).

<sup>47</sup> Richard Greene, *Gustav Holst and a Rhetoric of Musical Character: Language and Method in Selected Orchestral Works* (New York, London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1994), 148. Here, for

its narrative surroundings in the novel because a connection between any narrative or dramatic content in the novel and the musical structure leads to an oversimplifying conclusion, no matter how elaborate the method of analysis. This can be demonstrated in the case of Greene: he locates seven pairs of contradictions in the novel and the music, which, in their generality, Greene himself characterizes as 'somewhat over-simplified expression of the metaphorical structure of either work'.<sup>48</sup> He does not attempt to solve these contrasts or to give them further meaning beyond their importance for the 'anti-pastoral' of Hardy and Holst.<sup>49</sup> Unlike his method, which struggles to assign function to the insoluble contradictions, the Event-response model will be able to make sense of these in a conclusive and productive way: the contradictions do not just 'happen', but they are the essential characteristic of the triadic response and thereby need to be acknowledged in our judgement on the piece's modernism.

The much-discussed sentence that precedes the score as a motto is from the first chapter of Hardy's seventh novel from 1878.<sup>50</sup> It describes the character of Egdon Heath, where the whole drama of *Return* takes place, in a peculiar way so as to anthropomorphize the Heath itself.

A place perfectly accordant with man's nature – neither ghastly, hateful, nor ugly; neither commonplace, unmeaning, nor tame; but, like man, slighted and enduring; and withal singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony!<sup>51</sup>

The most striking features are this motto's adjectives, but some focus also lies on the way they are ordered: two times three adjectives describing the Heath are

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example, Greene highlights the effect of distrust the reader/listener develops of easy solutions both in the case of Eustacia and Wildeve's drowning in the novel and in *Egdon Heath's* 'Dance' and its 'tonal and generic problem'.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Many critics struggled to connect the motto with their listening experience in a meaningful way. To give merely a few examples: 'It was difficult to feel it to be "perfectly accordant with man's nature," or indeed to attach to it any of the qualities named in the quotation from Thomas Hardy on the title-page of the score. It is clearly accordant with the composer's nature, but that, we feel, is not the same thing.' (Anon., 'Royal Philharmonic Society. Brahms and Holst', *The Times*, 24 Feb 1928, 12); 'Attend to it we must, solve its puzzle we never shall.' (Anon., 'Promenade Concert. Holst's "Egdon Heath"', *The Times*, 21 Sep 1928, 12); interestingly, one critic insisted that the piece took the novel 'not in the least literal' (C., 'Holst's "Egdon Heath". Cheltenham, February 13', *The Musical Times*, 69/1021 (1928), 255). Yet William McNaught argued that 'you simply must read the first chapter of Hardy's *The Return of the Native* before listening to Holst's "Egdon Heath", for there and there alone lies the clue to this dark commentary.' (W. McNaught, 'Critic on the Hearth. Broadcast Music. Egdon Heath', *The Listener*, 12 October 1944, 416-7).

<sup>51</sup> Holst, *Egdon Heath* (score, London: Novello, 1928), p. 0.

preceded by three times two characteristics it does *not* possess. The contrast this structure offers seems in itself to be contradicted by the strongest and final feature of monotony. As Arnold Whittall rightly remarked, had Holst searched for a simpler, positive description of the Heath, he could easily have related to a sentence only slightly earlier in the same chapter, describing the light over the Heath, its impressiveness, grandeur, and 'simplicity'.<sup>52</sup> The specific interplay of contrast and harmonious proportion which the chosen sentence describes, together with the inherent sublimity and alienating effect of a particular site which Holst had discovered for himself as a refuge from his daily London strains years before, would doubtlessly have held a strong appeal for a composer who lived the busy life of a teacher, composer, and conductor in London but fled from all this whenever possible on lonely tours to the English countryside or the Algerian desert.

It should be noted that *Egdon Heath* does not follow the novel's narrative, but, not unlike the first chapter from which its motto is taken, concentrates on a site. Strictly speaking, *Egdon Heath* is therefore not programme music (because there is no narrative or programme). This is confirmed by the fact that Holst did read the book, but only composed the piece after undertaking a walking tour over the Dorchester heath, which was completed by a motoring tour with the Hardys, who showed him the sights and recommended a walk by night-time over Rainbarrow to Puddletown.<sup>53</sup> Like pieces such as Vaughan Williams's *London Symphony*, *Egdon Heath* evokes the different facets of a particular site, but not with an attached narrative of any kind (the love, hate, and faith of the personae in *Return*). For example, the site can of course be enriched by a particular temporal element, such as the Heath at night-time, as Hardy suggested to Holst,<sup>54</sup> or, in the case of the *London Symphony*, Hampstead Heath on an afternoon, which will contain certain noises that are not to be heard at other times on the site. Vaughan Williams claims in his programme note for a 1925 performance of the *Symphony*:

It is in no sense descriptive, and though the introduction of the 'Westminster Chimes' in the first movement, the slight reminiscence of the 'Lavender Cry' in the slow movement, and the very faint suggestion of mouth organs and mechanical pianos in the Scherzo give it a tinge of 'Local colour', yet it is intended to be listened

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<sup>52</sup> Whittall, 'Wagner, Schoenberg, Holst', 96.

<sup>53</sup> Short, *Holst*, 256.

<sup>54</sup> A letter from Holst to his friend Austin Lidbury in 1927, quoted in I. Holst, *Gustav Holst*, 126–7.

to as 'absolute music'. Hearers may, if they like, localize the various themes and movements, but it is hoped that this is not a necessary part of the music.<sup>55</sup>

Both *Egdon Heath* and the *London Symphony* revel in musical stills, to use a technical term from filmmaking. Alternatively, sites can become Evental sites in the Badiouian, political, sense, when they come to stand for a revolutionary Event (Tiananmen Square or Tahrir Square).<sup>56</sup> Holst's *Egdon Heath*, however, is not this kind of site, but one purely contradictory entity.

The fact that the chosen motto characterizes the Heath (and the piece) not negatively at all but rather as dialectical, rich in oppositions that define themselves through mutual negation, is often overlooked by commentators and led to harsh verdicts about the piece. Critics quickly adopted a preference for strong adjectives to describe the piece whenever it was performed,<sup>57</sup> and in the 1960s began to use *Egdon Heath* as a reference work for newer pieces that they considered difficult to comprehend.<sup>58</sup> But the actual antagonism of characteristics in the motto and the music, as I will show, is of a Hegelian kind, as both opposites promote one higher perspective, a synthesis, in the character of the Heath and the formal structure of the music. This behaviour is typical for the triadic response, in that it is divided between conservative and revolutionary impulses, leading to a position of compromise which will eventually help establish a new present.

It is unclear what relevance Holst was prepared to give the motto. As the history of *Egdon Heath's* reception developed, however, its critics' attitude towards the piece softened to the same degree that the text – and the reference to Hardy more

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<sup>55</sup> Quoted from Michael Kennedy, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: OUP, 1964), 467–8.

<sup>56</sup> Alain Badiou, *The Rebirth of History*, tr. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2012, published in French 2011), 95.

<sup>57</sup> In critiques, *Egdon Heath* has been called 'bleak' (Anon., 'Musicians' Tribute', *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 10 February 1928, 4; Alan Blyth, 'Music', *The Listener*, 22 July 1965, 140–1), 'bare' and 'austere' (Anon., "'Egdon Heath". Holst's New Work at Cheltenham', *The Times*, 14 Feb 1928, 12), 'grim' (Anon., 'Promenade Concert', 12), 'frigid' (Marion M. Scott, 'Holst: Cotswold Man and Mystic', *The Listener*, 18 May 1944, 561), 'icy' (John Warrack, 'Elgar and After', *The Listener*, 26 December 1963, 1084), and 'chilly' (Donald Mitchell, 'London Music. A Concert of Music by Holst', *The Musical Times*, 98/1368 (1957), 90–3), to quote just a few.

<sup>58</sup> Callum MacDonald, 'Music', *The Listener*, 4 September 1980, 316: 'In other words, [*Egdon Heath* is] one of those slow-moving, vaguely landscapey, unsymphonic poems which have become rather a sub-genre of British music in the past decade, and whose distant ancestors include such scores as *Egdon Heath*.'

generally – began to take a back seat. Thus the critic of the *New York Times*, present at the premiere, decreed:

To attempt to embody in tones the thoughts so eloquently revealed by Hardy's prose is a risky proceeding under most circumstances, and it might have been better for the composer if Mr. Leyssac [reading out snippets of the chapter at the premiere] had not reminded the audience of the music of the original text. Under the circumstances the new score seemed long and rather undistinguished.<sup>59</sup>

Several decades later, critic Scott Goddard had made his peace with Holst's Hardy, yet found the literary reference still necessary to understanding the music:

It is completely uncompromising music that is indeed 'colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony', to quote from Hardy's visionary account. Holst prints these lines as a foreword to his score, and although it is perhaps possible to take the music purely at its own valuation it certainly cannot be adequately understood or fully savoured without Hardy's famous paragraph at the back of the listener's mind.<sup>60</sup>

In the 1980s, finally, the work was usually accompanied by matter-of-fact reviews which did not mention Hardy – Holst had finally become the one person to be associated with the place, the name, and the piece. In what follows, I will strike a balance between hermeneutic and Hanslickian positions and refer back to the motto while refuting the claim that it is *the* decisive factor in the piece's modernism. This is not so much because Holst himself believed in the ability of his music to stand on its own, but because I want to suggest that a text does not transfer its own aesthetic, cultural, or historical situation, or 'meaning', onto the music that utilizes it.

#### **4.2.2 Monotony: Choice of Dynamics**

The most obvious influence of *Return on Egdon Heath* seems to be present in the use of dynamics and tempi. It may have been a mistake of Holst to let the *New York Times* quote him on the character of the piece in September 1927, announcing that 'the prevailing character of the work is slow and subdued, depending largely on the stringed instruments'<sup>61</sup> – a statement which maybe dulled expectations early on through its use of the word 'subdued'. Olin Downes took to the typewriter after

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<sup>59</sup> Olin Downes, 'Music', *New York Times*, 13 February 1928, 16.

<sup>60</sup> Scott Goddard, 'Music. The Return of a Native', *The Listener*, 22 January 1959, 185–6, 185.

<sup>61</sup> Holst quoted in Anon., 'To Play New Holst Work. New York Symphony Orchestra Hears It Is Named "Egdon Heath"', *New York Times*, 20 September 1927, 33.

the New York premiere to complain that ‘a composer, inspired by a literary subject, has often produced music quite inappropriate to the subject, but good music. It must be admitted that the hearing of yesterday afternoon did not give the impression of a significant composition.’<sup>62</sup> In other words, Hardy was perceived to be a master, Holst was not, and the piece’s quietness and slowness lacked the drama which unfolds on Hardy’s Egdon Heath, killing an old lady and two lovers, and turning a third persona, a talented former Parisian jeweller, into a scarred lay preacher on his native heath soil.

Critics were more careful in their verdicts on the Cheltenham and London premieres than Olin Downes, but they nevertheless judged it by the impression of its dynamics and speed:

It is a very bare piece of writing, sombre in colour, with very little animation, full of grinding dissonances, not defiant, but uncompromising. It makes no concessions to the ear and no attempts to be attractive, but it grips. Its sub-title is ‘Homage to Thomas Hardy,’ but that seems too emotional for a work so austere in feeling.<sup>63</sup>

It was difficult to feel it to be ‘perfectly accordant with man’s nature,’ or indeed to attach to it any of the qualities named in the quotation from Thomas Hardy on the title-page of the score. It is clearly accordant with the composer’s nature, but that, we feel, is not the same thing. There seems to be something left out, something which is essential in order that the music may be a communication from man to man.<sup>64</sup>

The uncompromising austerity, even bleakness, of *Egdon Heath* seems to have been baffling, if not irritating to its first audiences, as yet another critic admits:

The mood of it is severe – neither dispirited, nor exuberant, but steady, attentive, stoical. It will take time for this music to sink into the English music public’s consciousness. There is nothing in it to arrest an idle ear.<sup>65</sup>

Yet there is not very much to sustain these impressions in the music itself unless one spends its duration waiting (in vain) for any kind of Hardyian dramatic culmination to arrive. Indeed a climax *shortly before the ending* is lacking, but not any changes whatsoever of tempo or dynamic expression within the piece. The *Poco Allegro* between bb. 31 and 56 delivers the gathering of suspended forces up to the piece’s main summit of b. 52, in order, as Whittall points out, to ‘provide

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<sup>62</sup> O. Downes, ‘Music’, 16.

<sup>63</sup> Anon., “‘Egdon Heath’”. Holst’s New Work at Cheltenham’, *The Times*, 14 February 1928, 12.

<sup>64</sup> Anon., ‘Royal Philharmonic Society’, 12.

<sup>65</sup> C., ‘Holst’s “Egdon Heath”’, 255.

sufficient momentum for the rest of the work to be able to “subside” gradually on to its final *Molto Adagio*.<sup>66</sup> Problems for listeners’ expectations only arise when this ‘stormiest music in the work’ is heard as merely a foretaste of what refuses to follow, as Whittall implies.<sup>67</sup> This is the second piece of evidence (the first being the position of the motto itself) for the claim that the music does not follow the plot of *Return*, as listeners seemed to expect, but stood still, as it were, in its description of a site. Additionally, however, *Egdon Heath* brought its own formal challenges with it.

#### 4.2.3 The Triadic: Choice of Tonality, Themes, and Form

*Egdon Heath*’s challenges in its form haunt its criticism in a curious manner as they are mostly noticed at the margins and with reservations. Only Short advances an argument about the development of form over Holst’s entire career, and his argument encompasses a complex structural plan of the piece, which will be discussed later. Other work and comments on *Egdon Heath*, prominently by Imogen Holst, Edmund Rubbra, Arnold Whittall, Erik Dremel, Richard Greene, and Guido Heldt, give some consideration to the piece’s form, but do not allow these aspects to take centre stage; be this because of the form’s ambiguity or because of their perception that greater potential lies in a close programmatic reading of the harmonic vocabulary.<sup>68</sup> They thereby position themselves in the established tradition of modernist critics’ focus on the latter.

As I established that the concept of significant form cannot help connect *Egdon Heath* to modernism directly, a different argument will be able to prove that Holst’s form is the paradigm of a triadic response to modernism. This means that I do not play the expansionist game to widen the concept of modernism in order to encompass Holst’s particular vocabulary, but that I analyse his formal vocabulary in its inextricable oscillation between revolutionary and conservative, as it facilitates the thematic development, which, in its turn, determines its harmonic

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<sup>66</sup> Whittall, ‘Wagner, Schoenberg, Holst’, 97.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Cf. I. Holst, *Gustav Holst*, 1938; Stephen Lloyd, Edmund Rubbra (eds.), *Gustav Holst: Collected Essays* (London: Triad Press, 1974); Whittall, ‘Wagner, Schoenberg, Holst’; Erik Dremel, *Pastorale Träume. Die Idealisierung von Natur in der englischen Musik 1900–1950* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2005); Greene, *Holst*; Heldt, *Das Nationale*.

outline. This oscillation between such opposites in an ambiguous manner is what characterizes the triadic position.

#### 4.2.3.1 Tonalities

The ambiguous identity of the piece begins with its tonality, which has formed the topic of examinations by Whittall and, in particular detail, by Heldt, both of which have good analytic arguments on their respective side. Whittall hears *Egdon Heath* in G minor. He remarks that ‘the best musical language for such an enterprise would be atonality, but that would not do for *Egdon Heath*. It needed the slight but definite atmosphere of nationality which could only be provided by modal melody [...]’.<sup>69</sup> This modality enters on two secondary levels: in what Whittall characterizes as the ‘second subject’ (the scare quotes are his own) and the modal expansion within the first section, which serves as a litmus test for what is to follow. This helps Whittall to – correctly, I would say – identify the ‘basic linguistic character of the work, tonality expanded by the functional behaviour of notes which are conventionally chromatic but here “modally diatonic”’.<sup>70</sup> He refers to what I call themes 1 and 2 in the following section (cf. ex. 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 below), the first of which is a solemn tone row oscillating around G minor (but with modal, presumably phrygian, bending such as the inclusion of A<sub>b</sub> and D<sub>b</sub>), the second is what Imogen Holst calls a ‘sad procession’,<sup>71</sup> a theme which, ‘though modal rather than conventionally diatonic, has always seemed destined to yield ultimately to a blaze of almost Elgarian triadic assertion.’<sup>72</sup> Confronting its beginning, a rising fourth, Whittall reasonably wonders whether its ‘first note or the second note [is] the “true” tonal centre’.<sup>73</sup> Ambiguity reins.

Heldt detects yet another perspective which again takes theme 1 as a starting point. He takes much trouble to exclude any strictly tonal possibilities and then discusses what he regards as the most likely system – the octatonic scale (ex. 4.1).<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Whittall, ‘Wagner, Schoenberg, Holst’, 97.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Imogen Holst, *The Music of Gustav Holst and Holst’s Music Reconsidered*, 3<sup>rd</sup> rev. ed (Oxford et al.: OUP, 1986), 81.

<sup>72</sup> Whittall, ‘Wagner, Schoenberg, Holst’, 98.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Heldt, *Das Nationale*, 796–807.



Ex. 4.1: Octatonic scale from G (half step – whole step).

Although the theme itself misses B and E from this scale, Heldt reasonably points to the frequency of this scale type in Stravinsky, Bartók, Debussy, Ravel, and Scriabin as potential contemporary references for Holst.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, the missing pitch classes stand in the interval of a fourth, one of the composer's favourite intervals. Holst's 'dealing with the diatonic implications and conflicts, which his octatonic structures permit him to construct, is based on the superposition of two explanatory models [framed by the beginning and end]'.<sup>76</sup> Where Whittall sees a diatonic structure with modal oscillations, Heldt finds an octatonic structure with diatonic oscillations, while both recognize the ambiguity of either attempt to describe the tonality. Both seek to explain this ambiguity with Holst's attitude towards modernism: Heldt in a section about Holst's interest in Stravinsky and the Viennese School, Whittall with the question about the modern-ness of the form.<sup>77</sup>

There are equally good reasons for both arguments, i.e. for a diatonic or an octatonic organization in *Egdon Heath*. The remarkable conclusion is just this: that both can hold, and that neither is entirely unaffected by the other. This position is exactly that of the triadic subject in response to the idea of modernism, which perceives the idea in all clarity but refuses to be swept away by it entirely. Both Heldt and Whittall acknowledge this, without possessing the terminology to bring their observations into a *distinct* relation to modernism: 'The experience of the cultural *Moderne* is inscribed in Holst's music.' And: 'In 1927 [...] the best musical language for [portraying an 'immediate, unavoidable, truly mundane bleakness'] would be atonality, but that would not do for *Egdon Heath*.'<sup>78</sup> This is not all, however. The irresolvable ambiguity continues on more than one further structural parameter of the piece, as the following sections show, and enforces not

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 797.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 805 (my translation).

<sup>77</sup> Heldt, *Das Nationale*, section 'Holst und der Kontinent', 806–7, Whittall, 'Wagner, Schoenberg, Holst', 97.

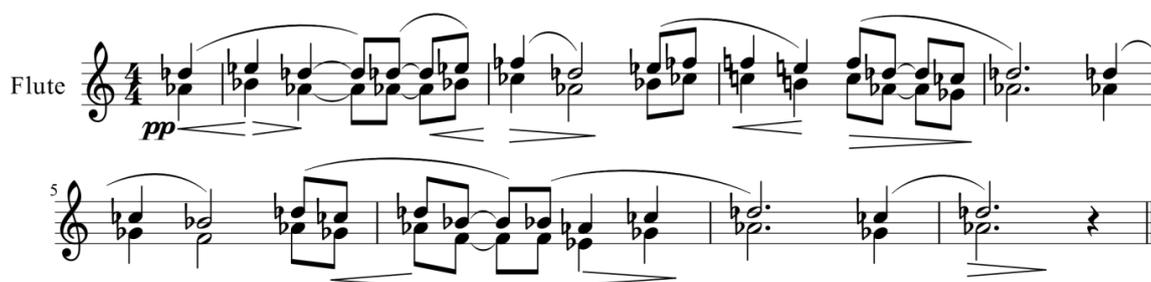
<sup>78</sup> Heldt, *Das Nationale*, 842; Whittall, 'Wagner, Schoenberg, Holst', 96–7.

so much a decision for or against one reading or another, but the admittance of defeat in the face of Holst's refusal to take sides.

#### 4.2.3.2 Developing Themes

The themes of *Egdon Heath* and their development have rarely been remarked upon. As the previous section established, the piece's tonality is ambiguous in its response to the possibility of pantonality. The way *Egdon Heath* distributes its thematic development can shine even more light on this ambiguity and couch the observations about tonality in a deeper structure which shows how responding to modernism affects all musical parameters.

*Egdon Heath* has six themes (ex. 4.2.1 to 4.2.6), of which the first three pervade the piece and are truly original, whereas the last three have the character rather of larger units of motives and are derived in part from more or less characteristic elements of the previous three.

Ex. 4.2.5: Holst, *Egdon Heath*, theme 5, bb. 104–11.Ex. 4.2.6: Holst, *Egdon Heath*, theme 6, bb. 120–7.

Themes 1 and 6, for example, share the ascending or descending G and F. The opening rise of a fourth, and respectively a third, of themes 2 and 4, or the fundamental interval of the fourth of themes 4 and 5 is another point. What is more, in their opposition to each other all six hover between what could be interpreted as octatonic and strongly chromatic, yet diatonic, systems throughout the piece, which Heldt and Whittall draw particular attention to. It is possible to understand the overall form through *Egdon Heath's* thematic structure and through the development of these themes throughout the piece. While there is by no means a complete lack of development as early critiques would imply, each theme has its own way of developing, according to their distinct qualities. This quality generates the larger-scale formal ambiguities which have made writers on the subject reluctant to engage with *Egdon Heath's* form.

Two exceptions are Richard Greene and Michael Short. The former distinguishes two 'landscape themes' (corresponding to my theme 1 and the afterthought of theme 3), two 'processional themes' (two versions of my theme 2), and one 'dance' (corresponding approximately to my theme 6).<sup>79</sup> In the distinction of six themes I however follow Short's brief structural analysis.<sup>80</sup> Greene's 'paradigm' for one reason designates motives (which are part of the themes) as themes themselves (e.g. his L2, which in fact belongs to the larger theme 3); and, for another, builds his scheme upon a rhetorical analysis of the content of *Return*, which already involves

<sup>79</sup> Greene, *Holst*, 307, ex. 7–8.

<sup>80</sup> Short, *Holst*, 417.

an interpretation of the novel. This leads to him designating themes and motives as 'landscape' or 'dance', and thereby to attribute meaning to them *a priori*. If an analysis starts out with six formally distinct themes, however, it can be observed very well how the first three function as pillars and signposts, as it were, for the form. Beyond that, they provide hints of their music-historical 'belonging', as I argue in the rest of this chapter. Themes 1 to 3 respectively sound like a serial, a medieval, and a common-practice theme.

In what follows, each of the first three, original, themes receives an analysis of its structure and internal contradictions as well as a brief overview of its development throughout the piece. With the help of this examination, the triadic response to modernism within as well as between the themes can be shown.

### **Theme 1: Protoserialism**

The first theme (ex. 4.3) is stated in bb. 1–23 in the string section, beginning in the basses' uncomfortably high register in *p* and causing a commotion during the London premiere.<sup>81</sup> It sounds and looks like the pitch-class sketch of a serial row, or – perhaps more adequately formulated – a *Grundgestalt* in the sense of Josef Rufer's definition of a serial or atonal 'surface figure composed of specific pitches and rhythms'.<sup>82</sup>



Ex. 4.3: Gustav Holst, Egdon Heath, theme 1.

It consists of 19 notes in two phrases of 13+6 (indicated by Holst's slur and the resting minim A<sub>b</sub>). The impression of serialism is however shattered early on by the repetition of the very first G as only the third note in the row. While occasional repetitions of pitch classes in general could be considered standard in the early serial pieces such as Schoenberg's *Variationen* from the Serenade op 24, which

<sup>81</sup> Apparently, latecomers to the concert were being admitted into the hall while Václav Talich had already begun to conduct the London Philharmonic, and the quietness of the music meant that many people started to attempt to silence the newcomers or their hissing neighbours (I. Holst, *The Music of Gustav Holst*, 153).

<sup>82</sup> Quoted from Michael J. Schiano, 'Grundgestalt', *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. OUP. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/11868> (19/2/13).

uses a 14-note row, the Holst 'row' is distinct by only using six pitch classes in the first instance, and, throughout the 19 notes of the melody, repeating all of these between two (D) and four (G and F) times. It is also different from another early serial Schoenberg such as the second of the *Fünf Klavierstücke* op. 23, which uses a 9-note row, in that it repeats all of its pitch-classes right from the start and several times. Contrasting these repetitions is the complete omission not only of six pitches (A, B $\flat$ , C, E $\flat$ , E $\sharp$ , and F $\sharp$ ), but also possible intervals. There are no sixths or sevenths (minor or major) among the intervals of the melody. Instead, it is made up of minor and major seconds and minor thirds (which appear four times each), major thirds and fifths (appearing twice each), and one fourth and one tritone.

The six pitch classes G, A $\flat$ , B $\flat$ , D $\flat$ , D $\sharp$ , and F do not establish a traditional hexachord or belong obviously to any minor, major, or modal key. They do form part of the octatonic (or diminished [half-tone-whole-tone]) scale (which, if it started from G, would lack only B $\sharp$  and E $\sharp$ ). Nevertheless, the choice of these particular pitch classes makes the melody look deliberately *not* tonal, especially if G is seen as a starting point, which lends itself to consideration because of its frequent repetition and its role as a starting note. What Whittall said about Holst's choice of motto also applies to this theme: had Holst wished to find a positive (in this case unambiguous) tonality, he could easily have chosen many other combinations of pitch classes.<sup>83</sup> Against these seemingly random, yet, without doubt, carefully chosen and repeated intervals and pitch classes, the theme consolidates its richness in melody through an even level of crotchets with only one resting minim to highlight the end of the first phrase. It is doubtful if these rudimentary durations constitute what one would call a rhythm at all. In sharp contrast to these two classes of duration, it is the six pitch classes and seven intervals (minor and major seconds, minor and major thirds, fourths, the tritone, and fifths) that constitute the theme, making it seem extraordinarily sketchy and at the same time contemporary through its (though incomplete) allusion to the *Grundgestalt* of a serial tone row.

The next time the theme appears it is set in an almost completely opposite contextual situation, in wind and brass and in *ff* and *f* between bb. 47 and 51, before the strings reclaim its opening changing note in 52 over a pedal on G. This

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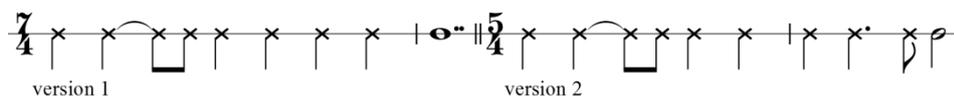
<sup>83</sup> Whittall, 'Wagner, Schoenberg, Holst', 96.

constitutes the first major development of this theme, which represents a negation of many of its original features such as instrumentation, tempo, and dynamics. At the same time, it is reduced to its essence – to the characteristic pitch G and initial changing note motif.

The theme then vanishes until the upbeat to b. 131, when it reappears in its original pitch and context: *ppp* in the strings with snippets of the theme next to the full line, *adagio*, and with the original accompanying fourths in the wind section. Soon after, a second development follows – the contraction of the theme into a repetition of its first third one octave lower, using G as a pivot (ex. 4.4). This is a development which was inherent in the theme from the beginning.



four different and, again, partly internally ambiguous keys (C# minor/F# major, C# minor, C minor, F minor–E). Theme 2 relies less on melodic identifiers (mostly on its opening ascending fourth) and its key is very loosely controlled, but it is strongly identifiable via its memorable rhythmic pattern, which in the course of *Egdon Heath* is given two distinct endings (ex. 4.5) and was described by Imogen Holst as a ‘sad procession’.<sup>84</sup>



Ex. 4.5: Gustav Holst, *Egdon Heath*, theme 2, two versions (rhythm only).

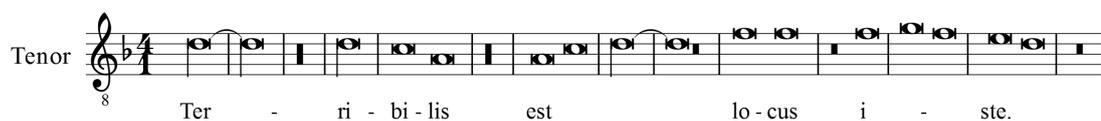
Its dotted rhythm defines it, together with a more flexible crotchet basis for different meters. This overbalance of rhythmic definition gives the impression that the theme, even in its very first brief section (bb. 24–30) has the feel of the talea of a medieval isorhythm that would be structured in ever recurring small patterns. Adding to this premodern atmosphere is the fact that the theme’s first statement is conducted in an imitation of six parts (celli, bassoons, horns, clarinet, flute, trombone) that seems to be conceived as entirely horizontally or contrapuntally, not vertically or harmonically. The characteristic rhythm itself, however, would of course not have appeared in isorhythms of the kind of early music it alludes to. These would often take a basic figure such as in Guillaume de Machaut’s *Fons tocius superbie/O livoris feritas/Fera pessima* (ex. 4.6):

Ex. 4.6: Guillaume de Machaut, *Fons tocius superbie/O livoris feritas/Fera pessima* (three talea statements, making up one color statement).

And even a much more complex tenor structure like the one in Guillaume Dufay’s famous *Nuper rosarum flores* of 1436 comes no closer to Holst’s structure, although it in fact surpasses it in complexity by far (ex. 4.7). Nevertheless, *Nuper* springs to

<sup>84</sup> I. Holst, *The Music of Gustav Holst*, 81.

mind because it resembles *Egdon Heath* in that they are both too complicated to be identified as simple patterns: in *Nuper*, the tenor's homographic part is not just long, but, depending on the tempus, its occurrences stand in the proportion 6:4:2:3 to each other.<sup>85</sup>



Ex. 4.7: Guillaume Dufay, *Nuper rosarum flores, cantus firmus (in simplified tempus)*.

Margaret Bent has shown that after its invention in 1904, the concept of isorhythm became fashionable in the writings of Friedrich Ludwig and his student Heinrich Bessler to such an extent that it came to be portrayed as the sonata form of the fourteenth century.<sup>86</sup> Yet by the 1920s, it had already become frayed in these two writers' work (not unlike the concept of modernism itself does nowadays).<sup>87</sup> Still, before it finally fell from musicological favour as 'outworn, cerebral, bloodless' in the mid-twentieth century,<sup>88</sup> it may still have carried the fascination of a newly discovered (or at least newly described) technique for Holst and his contemporaries, a technique well suited for experimentation in pieces that sought to depict contents within a significant form.

After its compressed exposition through a six-part imitation, which contrasts theme 1 by its shortness, brassy instrumentation, and contrapuntal texture, theme 2 disappears only for a little while until its triumphant return as the first of two adjacent climaxes in b. 43 and b. 52. In b. 43, it bursts in with its usual verve and ambivalence between B $\flat$  minor and E $\flat$  major, again in four parts (with seven others providing a rhythmically similar background movement). But it is quickly superseded by the return of elements and soon the entirety of 1, which even brings its originally accompanying figure in the wind with it (b. 47 with upbeat) and which is granted the second, main climax in b. 52.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. the discussion of the correspondence of this proportion to that of the parts of the Florentine Cathedral in Marvin Trachtenberg, 'Architecture and Music Reunited: A New Reading of Dufay's "Nuper Rosarum Flores" and the Cathedral of Florence', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 54/3 (Autumn 2001), 740–75.

<sup>86</sup> Margaret Bent, 'What is Isorhythm?', in David Butler Cannata, Gabriela Ilnitchi Currie, Rena Charnin Mueller, and John Louis Nádas (eds.), *Quomodo cantabimus canticum? Studies in Honor of Edward H. Roesner* (Middleton, Wisconsin: American Institute of Musicology, 2008), 121–43, 123–9.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, particularly 127.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

Theme 2 retaliates with several statements in the long developmental section between bb. 57 and 130. Occurrences in b. 57 (trombone), b. 64 (horns), b. 78 (celli), b. 82 (flute and clarinet), b. 93 (horns), and b. 95 (oboe) are all characterized by the new ending the theme had gained in b. 43, making it a development of the original thought (ex. 4.8):



Ex. 4.8: Gustav Holst, *Egdon Heath*, theme 2, bb. 43–4.

The reappearance of theme 1 in b. 131 (Whittall's 'recapitulation') provides the preparation for the expected return also of theme 2 in b. 147. Here the trombones interrupt the strings' shortened version of theme 1. Only two more statements of theme 2 (in b. 154 [clarinet, bassoon, contrabasses] and b. 156 [first violins]) appear, but at crucial moments – they serve to smoothen the boundary in b. 155/6 between the ensuing 13-bar long coda and the prior recapitulatory section.

As with theme 1, theme 2 operates with a structure that carries the feel of a particular epoch of music history, but which, on closer inspection, refuses to satisfy the expectations it sets up. Nor is Holst alone in this behaviour. In both cases, prominent representatives of the cited technique (Schoenberg and Dufay) frequently refused to bow to the expectations themselves. For Holst the composer, however, this refusal fulfils a particular function in the piece, which will become even clearer after the following consideration of theme 3: the theme relies on its ambivalence, directing the gaze to the rough edges instead of the smooth surface, as it were. The themes contribute to a structure which permanently contradicts what it seemed to want to say, in accordance with the piece's complex and contradictory motto.

### **Theme 3: Neo-Classicism**

The last word in *Egdon Heath* is given to theme 3, which possesses the highest level of internal contradictions. It is defined neither by its pitch and intervallic

order alone like theme 1, nor by its rhythm like 2, but rather combines a set of highly memorable intervals with a flexible, yet recognisable rhythm (ex. 4.9).



Ex. 4.9: Gustav Holst, *Egdon Heath*, theme 3 (antecedent, 2 phrases), bb. 33–7.

Its original form is set against nervous triplet quavers in the violins, initially without a bass line to support them. This theme has the most common-practice outline of the three main themes in that it consists of a four-bar antecedent, made up of two phrases of two bars each, and a corresponding consequent, consisting of the rhythmically changed phrases. The phrases are easily distinguishable by their harmonic and rhythmic differences. While the first phrase is in G minor and consists of an even rhythmical character, the second phrase is made up from the interval of the fourth, the minor second, and the tritone and leads nowhere harmonically. Even rhythmically, this second phrase makes for an uneven contrast to its predecessor, with its unmediated succession of semiquavers together with crotchets and quavers followed by minims.

This four-bar antecedent is repeated in a four-bar long consequent, which however diminishes the characteristic dotted crotchets of the first phrase to quavers, and the ascending fourths of the second to semiquavers. All in all, theme 3 is the only one of the six themes that actually deserves the characterisation as a theme in the textbook sense.

Its characteristic ascending fourth motif has another connotation, however. It is closely related to a highly prominent motif in Vaughan Williams's *London Symphony* (ex. 4.10):



Ex. 4.10: Ralph Vaughan Williams, *A London Symphony* (1<sup>st</sup> movement, bb. 1–3).

In this symphony, the motif is made up of two fourths (D–G and A–D), which thereby span the octave, having a major second between them. Seen the other way

round, it consists of two overlapping fifths (D–A and G–D). The motif is so important because it frames the work by opening and closing it upon its return in the Epilogue.<sup>89</sup> In *Egdon Heath*, this particularly spacious and open motif is squashed in pitch and duration (ex. 4.11), to become



Ex. 4.11: Gustav Holst, *Egdon Heath*, theme 3 (fourths in the consequent).

While the durations are reduced to quavers, and later even semiquavers, the interval of the fourth is kept. Nevertheless, the gap between the two fourths is reduced to a minor second, thereby squashing the spacious octave to a major seventh and the overlapping open fifths into two tritones (G–D $\flat$  and C–G $\flat$ ). Despite these changes it is justifiable to regard the two motives as related. Holst knew the *London Symphony* as intimately as any work by his friend Vaughan Williams and both works are about a specific site – London and the Heath – without telling a story about it.<sup>90</sup> But in the latter vision, the picture is tainted. The motif is bent, even ‘askew’, perhaps most likely earning it the characterisation ‘neoclassical’ (here describing the bending of traditional structures as a means of parody, which corresponds to what Hermann Danuser in the *Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*, has termed ‘formalist neo-classicism’).<sup>91</sup>

Theme 3 does not have many appearances in what follows, but it is stated with its two characteristic features, the dotted thirds and ascending fourths, in bb. 97–103, before it returns in partly augmented, partly diminished, form in the coda’s last eight bars. Here it even manages to keep its initial structure of eight bars intact, albeit divided by three bars for the thirds versus five bars for the fourths. The piece ends with the tonic G minor, which is the key of the first phrase of theme 3 as well as the defining pitch class of theme 1.

Were this chapter a normal B-Modernist argument, my identification of a neoclassical outline to theme 3 might be enough to prompt an argument à la

<sup>89</sup> Solo Violin I, four bars before rehearsal letter X in the revised edition by Stainer&Bell Ltd., 1920.

<sup>90</sup> Kennedy, *Vaughan Williams*, 241.

<sup>91</sup> Hermann Danuser, ‘Rewriting the Past: Classicisms of the Inter-War Period’, in Nicolas Cook, Anthony Pople (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 260–285, particularly 262, 263.

pastoral modernism by attributing the difference between the fourth motif in Vaughan Williams and Holst to the two pieces' respective positions before (*A London Symphony*, 1912–3) and after (*Egdon Heath*, 1927) the First World War to point out what would be called the 'hard' pastoralism stemming from the trauma of scorched earth of Flanders. Instead of going in this direction, which would utilize the War as a master signifier again, I argue that this squashed motif is in line with Holst's overall purpose for the logical contradictions and negations of this theme and the three main themes in *Egdon Heath*.

This is so because the squashing, or tainting, of a part of this neoclassical theme constitutes merely one among further and significant flaws to the theme's character. Firstly, the nervous triadic accompaniment in the violins seems to clash with the initially serene rhythm of the theme itself. Secondly, this first, serene, phrase clashes with its unmediated and uneven second phrase, which encompasses the squashed fourth motif, which in itself is internally flawed, as I just argued. Finally, the motif's structure leads to the theme ending on G<sub>b</sub>, when it seemed to begin on a relatively stable G minor. This theme, which seemed to present an internal balance after two deficient initial themes, the classical middle ground after pseudo-serial and pseudo-medieval contradictions, is thereby unmasked as perhaps the greatest 'fraud' of them all. Nevertheless, in its complexity and its reliance on pitch structure *and* rhythm it can claim more depth than the previous two and seems to be balancing out their deficiencies.

### ***Triadic Negations***

The contradictions of the piece's themes sit in all perceivable layers: within all three themes individually (all of which are 'damaged' or 'tainted' in some way), between the first two themes (modernist versus medieval, pitch class versus rhythm), and finally even between these and their synthesis in the third one (clear recognition by pitch or rhythm versus a more complicated, mixed structure).

These manifold negations and contradictions of the themes mirror the various 'nors' of Hardy's motto. Even the game with sets of three times two negative versus two times three positive adjectives is alluded to in the number of themes: three all in all, they stand theme 1 versus 2, and both against theme 3. The real semblance

between themes and motto can be traced back to this abstract, logical level, in crucial numbers and their relations, as well as internal and external negations of features. In the motto as in the piece, there is a highly significant negation present at all times, yet with an overall positive effect. The motto's strong negative features are brushed aside in the final exclamation 'singularly colossal and mysterious in their swarthy monotony!', just as the piece swings round in the last eight bars of its Coda to bring theme 3's most flawed fourths motif to an end in an unexpectedly 'clean' G minor of the strings. Moreover, the reference to 'monotony' disturbs the perfect, final, peace, in the motto just as the motif's inherent tritones do, but the harm is overbalanced by the sense of a Hegelian synthesis.

This abstract reading of the motto and the thematic structure scores in several ways over narrative readings of themes as personas from the book or characteristics or features of the Heath. The chosen motto itself with its deliberate focus on general features of the Heath and not the protagonists' stories supports this abstract reading, as does the contradictory interplay between three themes or groups of adjectives. Together, these three themes flag up a first piece of evidence for *Egdon Heath's* relation to modernism: they allude to established techniques and structures of Western art music, but are reluctant to comply with the latter's rules. The themes of *Egdon Heath* thereby show the ambiguity of the triadic response. They cling to a past – or common tradition, practice, or understanding – which at the same time is claimed as a tool to help carve out forward-looking aspects and to help reveal the weaknesses of this established past.

Not unlike Badiou's reactive slaves, who were hoping to improve their circumstances by continuing in their (doubtless highly precarious) present position and revolutionizing the system's flaws from the inside and in their present organizations and social structures (forms), the three themes find themselves in a precarious position which they seek to balance by leaning towards certain textbook ideas of epochs of music history. While the historical outcome of the Spartacus revolt itself and with it the fate of the slaves who stayed at home has limits as a comparison to musical responses to modernism, the intention of the reactively responding group in the social revolt is similar to that in modernism – that progress should be achieved by rethinking tradition, not breaking with it. In

this realization lies the crucial ambiguous centre of the triadic response: the individual piece seems to allow itself to be confined in the interplay of events of a history it might be interested in opposing, while it fosters something new and exciting at the same time.

This argument about the triadic response's ambiguity with its contradictory and historically imprinted themes has perhaps not yet enough power to supplant the usual B-Modernist arguments, since it rests so far only on one of many possible readings of the three themes. By adding an examination of the role of *Egdon Heath's* formal layout to this reading of its themes, we can achieve a sufficiently firm hold on the piece's structure to be able to confirm its response to modernism as a triadic one.

#### **4.2.3.3 Sonata, Sections, Patterns**

With themes 1 to 3 developing in the course of the piece and 4 to 6 existing in a derivative relation to them, the overarching question of form poses itself with greater urgency. The most detailed analyses of *Egdon Heath* come to different conclusions, while less detailed reports tend to shy away from the question altogether. Both results are perhaps not too surprising, given what has so far emerged about the piece's central topic, ambiguity.

Imogen Holst's consideration of *Egdon Heath* runs along a free line of thematic associations but avoids any consideration of its formal structure. This may have been due to the fact that Imogen believed in the importance of Gustav's idea of significant form and did not want to let rigid form get in the way of her inspired associative chain between landscape and music.<sup>92</sup> For her, this association doubtlessly felt necessary to rescue the piece from accusations of monotony. Heldt arrives at the same outcome – a silence about form – because of his extremely close attention to tonal structure, which would have been obscured or complicated by the formal ambiguities. Greene's analysis divides the piece into five sections of roughly 30 bars each and mentions that it 'appears to be constructed on the basis

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<sup>92</sup> I. Holst, *The Music of Gustav Holst*, 80–5.

of sonata form', an opinion which is not, however, referenced or explained.<sup>93</sup> Michael Short and Arnold Whittall provide more detailed suggestions as to *Egdon Heath's* form, Short in a general survey of Holst's approach to form, Whittall in regard to *Egdon Heath's* specific answer to the post-Wagnerian tonal challenge. They come to tellingly different conclusions.

Short, whose overall intention in his monumental biography it is not to underline Holst's modernism but his singular and idiosyncratic approach to all categories of composition as proof of the composer's relevance, argues in favour of a complex 19-part form without references to established textbook types (fig. 4.1).

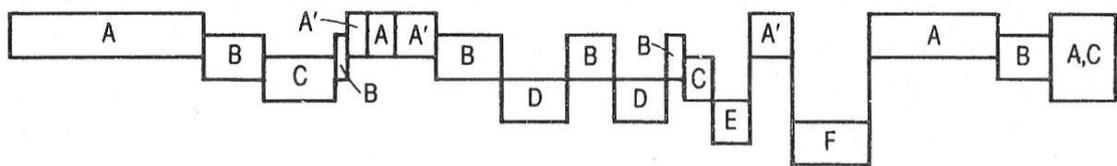


Fig. 4.1: Michael Short's formal structure of *Egdon Heath* (Short, Holst, 417).

This outline depicts the appearances of all six themes (theme 1=A, theme 2=B, etc.), with theme 1 on a principal, 'highest' level from which all other themes 'descend' one respective step further. What this model shows very well is the power and presence of all themes' occurrences. Themes 4, 5, and 6 account for no more than four short blocks, while 1, 2, and 3 and their – however short – derivatives are *Egdon Heath's* foundation and also frame the few occurrences of themes 4, 5, and 6. Short's A' is nothing more than the theme's characteristic beginning, G – F – G. The complexity of the outline becomes comprehensible if it is seen as a counterargument to Imogen Holst's accusation that Gustav could not cope with larger forms. Even late in life, according to Imogen, 'he was still unable to grapple with the difficulties of writing a symphony.'<sup>94</sup> Short, on the other hand, insists that

Holst evaded this problem [the use of development techniques 'destroying some of its original character, and breaking the atmospheric unity of a piece'] to a certain extent by his techniques of patterning, whereby repetition of phrases and slightly changing patterns provide variation and push the music forward, while retaining the essence of an idea. [...] The way in which Holst carried this out was by creating sectional patterns of contrasting material which are held together by cross-

<sup>93</sup> Greene, *Holst*, 131.

<sup>94</sup> I. Holst, *The Music of Gustav Holst*, 32.

references and thematic relationships, a technique in which organic growth plays little part, and which has more in common with the structures of later twentieth-century music than those of his contemporaries.<sup>95</sup>

In comparison with well-established practices like developing variation, Holst's sections seem chunky. While the motives of developing variation are carried smoothly through the piece and in their turn effectively carry the piece at the same time, the patternistic approach imposes clear borders between sections and as a result patterns have more influence on the overall form than the motives in developing variation and stick out more. A problem in *Egdon Heath* arises only insofar as these strict borders, overly visible in fig. 4.1 and also implied in Short's statement, do not become audible in the piece at all. On the contrary, early reviews perceived the piece as a slowly floating plain rather than a succession of 19 clearly cut sections: Olin Downes apparently was not sure about its form at all ('The form is naturally free rather than classic, except in general outlines'),<sup>96</sup> Scott Goddard merely joked that Holst was himself responsible for the impression of monotony by choosing the motto ('It is completely uncompromising music that is indeed 'colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony'),<sup>97</sup> while Francis Toye dismissed any vague possibility of movement in the piece in a damning review ('The First Choral Symphony [...] must be reckoned as still-born, while "Egdon Heath" can scarcely be said to have been born at all, so deficient was it in vitality').<sup>98</sup> Clearly, critics did not hear *Egdon Heath* as a complex 19-section form, and it is perhaps doubtful if it is possible to *hear* such a 19-section structure at all. What *is* very well detectable are the strongly hewn themes 1 to 3 and their unmistakable characteristic intervals, rhythms, or motives. It is these that hold the piece together and, like lighthouses with rotating flashlights in all directions, create a sense of logical succession though their changing appearance and reappearance in sections.

This chimes better with what Arnold Whittall reads as the piece's form. According to him, allusions to sonata form are not hard to find, especially if the perspective is based on developments of theme 1. The theme opens the piece and reappears in a

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<sup>95</sup> Short, *Gustav Holst*, 412–3.

<sup>96</sup> O. Downes, 'Music', 16.

<sup>97</sup> Goddard, 'Music', 185.

<sup>98</sup> Francis Toye, 'Studies in English Music VII. Arnold Bax and Gustav Holst', *The Listener*, 29 July 1931, 184.

much louder, more confident, situation in bb. 47–51. These two events could in effect be the frame of an exposition by its first subject. By this point, themes 1 to 3 have all been given an exposition. After what would constitute a development section between bb. 57 and 130, the first theme reappears in its initial tonality, G, and with an anticlimactic return to *Adagio* and *ppp* to sound the bell for the recapitulation and, in its final statement together with themes 2 and 3, forms a very brief coda, starting in b. 156, which compresses these three main themes from the exposition into just 13 intense bars. A basic outline for this sonata based on six themes would therefore be:

1–23	INTRODUCTION <u>OR</u> EXPOSITION	Theme 1
24–30	Transition	Theme 2
31–56	EXPOSITION	Themes 3, 2, 1
57–130	DEVELOPMENT	Themes 2, 4, 2, 4, 2, 3, 5, 1, 6
131–146	RECAPITULATION	Theme 1
147–155	Transition	Theme 2
156–168	CODA	Themes 2, 1, 3

Fig. 4.2: Table of sonata form corresponding to bars and themes in Egdon Heath.

Whittall himself introduces this reading of a sonata form step by step in the process of writing his analysis, it seems – almost as an organic development of his formal observations. In the beginning he writes of a ‘transition’, but without embedding the term into an overarching formal framework. Next, he states about theme 3, ‘if Holst had been attempting to conform to conventional sonata principles, it would presumably have functioned as an exposition following the slow introduction.’<sup>99</sup> Here, readers are still led to think that Holst did *not* ‘attempt to conform to conventional sonata principles’. But then, he characterizes bb. 57–130 as ‘a kind of development section, though it *would perhaps* be too episodic to serve in a *proper* sonata-form movement.’<sup>100</sup> In this next step, the form is implied to be not a proper sonata form, but still a sonata form after all. Two sentences later, theme 2 is presented as ‘the “second subject”, as we may now call it.’<sup>101</sup> Finally and again only one paragraph on, the development section is named as such in

<sup>99</sup> Whittall, ‘Wagner, Schoenberg, Holst’, 97 (my emphasis).

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 98 (my emphasis).

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

quotation marks and then the last section is branded recapitulation *without* quotation marks. The transformation *en passant* from free form to sonata form is now complete, its casual introduction owed presumably to the fact that, like most critics and authors on the subject of *Egdon Heath* since its premiere, Whittall is preoccupied with the piece's ambiguous tonality.

The real difficulties with *Egdon Heath's* form, especially with regard to its partial adherence to sonata form, primarily concern the role of what could be termed the development section between 57 and 130. This section is, as Whittall rightly remarks, 'perhaps [...] too episodic to serve in a "proper" sonata-form movement' for two main reasons.<sup>102</sup> Firstly, the relation between this section and the ones around it (exposition and recapitulation+coda) seems an uncomfortable one, as it composes 74 of the 168 bars and thereby roughly 44%. But the allocation of tempi means that, depending on the recording or performance, the impression of the listener is that of three more or less equally long sections of more or less four minutes (the exposition being the longest with nearly five minutes owing to the overbalance of theme 1's *adagio*), partly soothing concerns over an overbalance of the long middle section. Secondly, the 'episodic' character of the section means that among modulations, variations, and reconfigurations of two of the three themes, three further themes are deployed and alternated with the themes, so that within 74 bars, it is possible to distinguish up to nine episodes of Short's 19-section structure in this section.

Theme 1's role similarly posits a problem for a 'proper' sonata form. As shown in fig. 4.2, its first occurrence would suit a slow introduction very well, but the marked brevity of the following section (theme 2) confines this one to the role of a transition, leaving the opening section floating midway between two central functions. The recapitulation, by contrast, seems relatively unproblematic. All three main themes reappear in this section, and its coda ends with theme 3.

Both objections to the application of sonata form ('development' and theme 1) stand to reason, but it is equally sensible to ask what a 'proper' sonata form could have looked like in 1927. The temptation is to answer 'just like this one' and force a

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<sup>102</sup> Whittall, 'Wagner, Schoenberg, Holst', 98.

simplistic reading of a sonata form by sidelining the two objections. Yet this response would disregard a very fruitful new option. Between Short's 19-section structure and Whittall's 'improper' sonata form, I want to suggest that we retain and highlight the ambivalences that inevitably emerge. These are: (a) a very prominent first theme which, despite pervading the whole piece and defining its main sections to a good deal, cannot make a bold enough initial statement to remove doubts about its function as an introduction or an exposition, (b) a third theme with the strength and complexity to function as a first subject, which is nevertheless confined to a status of post-transitional afterthought, and (c) a development section which is too long, too episodic, too complex, and too fond of new material to remain in its proper place. Many more could doubtlessly be added, yet these objections suffice to show that the overall form does something similar to what the themes do: it uncovers Holst's apparent unwillingness to give so much as an inch of complete clarity about his intentions for his themes, his form, and, as Whittall and Heldt experienced, his tonality.

Ambivalence reigns in *Egdon Heath* to an extent that is unimaginable in pieces responding experimentally or ironically, as the following chapters will show. It is not, then, merely the lack of atonality in *Egdon Heath* that separates it from being an experimental response to modernism, but its total refusal to comply sufficiently with any side in the ideological aesthetic battles of the early twentieth century. In *Egdon Heath*, Holst puts his music through its paces in order to showcase many of the 'grey zones' between regressive and progressive music, which have proven so difficult to deal with for scholars of A-Modernism as well as those of B-Modernism. *Egdon Heath's* most 'progressive' element is perhaps the fact that neither of these ambiguities can be resolved without obscuring the substance of the piece's essence.

This is by no means a deficit in the music or its conception, but it proves right the attitude that Holst's friends like Vaughan Williams or his pupils like Edmund Rubbra famously attributed to Holst from the start. The composer was highly interested in the musical innovations of Schoenberg as well as of Stravinsky, but his idiosyncratic aesthetics (some might say, his stubbornness) forbade falling into one or the other idiom. For *Egdon Heath*, this meant that a rich variety of

seemingly contradictory materials and thoughts were incorporated into a structure which itself hovers between the modernist and the traditional. It is therefore not only the structural surface, the piece's intellectual background, or the tonality that could be said to be modernist, but it is all of these together that respond triadically to modernism – not least in its triad of historically allusive themes. Only this triadic response possesses the flexibility to encompass a mixture of ideological contradictions as in *Egdon Heath*. I would even go further to suggest that triadic responses to modernism possess the thrust to turn these contradictions into a representation of modernism itself.

### ***4.3 Conclusion: The Power of the Triad***

The claim of the representation of modernism by the triadic response may seem daring. Unlike the more straightforward experimental response, the triadic type might seem to lead to a dead end at best – a half-hearted attempt perhaps to rescue tradition, vanishing among the stronger line of experimental responses that carry the spirit of modernism forward. This understanding would suggest itself particularly strongly in the wake of Badiou's own reading of the model and of Adorno's thinking.

In my argument, however, the triadic response operates under the exact same terms as the experimental and ironic responses, which makes it neither half-hearted nor inferior to either of these. On the contrary, the application of the Event-response model can solve the dilemma of tonal early twentieth-century music that until now was caught between being labelled regressive and needing alternative master signifiers, causing puzzlement among critics and problems for the scholarship of modernism.

Holst's *Egdon Heath* is such a piece of music, and its balance act between tradition and innovation is perhaps epitomized in the aforementioned judgement that the piece resembles 'an iron hand in a glove of interwoven satin, asbestos, and ectoplasm'. The Event-response model has shown that this kind of music can now be described in normal analytic terms and that its tonal as well as thematic and formal ambiguities can be acknowledged without it losing its claim to be a

modernist piece of music adhering to a rigorous concept of modernism. The model can help to correct the assumption that Holst (as well as many other British composers in a similar situation) is only ever a minor regressive composer or that his output is out of touch with contemporary composition. More specifically, it allows to see *Egdon Heath* as the complex and contradictory piece of music it is, and to identify the various contradictions on the levels of tonal material (octatonic vs. tonality), form (sonata vs. rondo), themes ('modernist', 'early', and 'classical'), and even motto as its *defining feature*. This feature determines its response to modernism and helps to understand Holst as a composer who was by no means out of touch with modernism, but who chose to deploy traditional, yet challenging structures to discuss modernism. *Egdon Heath* is perhaps a forerunner in spirit of much tonal music of the later twentieth century. If Kenneth Smith is right to assert that 'the true gift of twentieth-century music is ambiguity, which analysts try desperately to suppress',<sup>103</sup> then the triadic response is one effective way of making sure this gift is not overlooked in composers who seem to make marginal modernists at first glance.

Turning the perspective around, as it were, and asking what this chapter has done, not for one particular composer, but for modernism itself, the benefits are equally visible. It has been demonstrated that modernism can be expanded without sacrificing the principle of having one master signifier in place and therefore without letting go of the idea that modernism is a concise and consistent concept. Yet the model acknowledges that a response to this idea of modernism can be given in different ways, and not necessarily in a particular chronological order (which will be confirmed in the following case studies on experimental and ironic responses). This provides music history with a more flexible (and realistic) tool of describing modernism, and at the same time helps to expand the modernist canon beyond its current limits. From the logicalized Event-response model, modernism gains a greater claim to capturing an image of musical reality, whereas tonal music gains the seal 'modernist'.

Different responses engage within one level *field* without chronological or ethical order. In such a field, the triadic response is not characterized by its complete lack

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<sup>103</sup> Kenneth M. Smith, "'A Science of Tonal Love'? Drive and Desire in Twentieth-Century Harmony: the Erotics of Skryabin', *Music Analysis*, 29/i-ii-iii (2010), 234-63, 256.

of modernist elements, but by its ambiguity between modernist and traditional elements – a mixture which was typical for British music before the 1950s and proved enormously seminal in the music of the country – it is the response of much music by Vaughan Williams as well as Britten.

Triadic and more experimental responses engage in an argument, as it were, which means that the actual musical present is defined by the push for the new and equally by reservations against it. This represents musical composition and music making much better than an exclusive modernism. This means, for example, that a triadic response such as *Egdon Heath* may appear nearly 20 years earlier than an experimental response such as the piece which is examined in the following chapter, Elisabeth Lutyens's serial cantata *O saisons, ô châteaux!* from 1946. Both pieces, together with many more different responses in music, constitute the 'present' of modernism and should be seen together in one field.

*Egdon Heath* even shares some curious similarities with Lutyens's cantata, and to view the two (and finally, in the last chapter, an ironic response) together can perhaps even throw some new light on British music history. Both pieces deal with pagan magic to a certain degree, Holst by linking his music to the motto drawn from Hardy's *The Return of the Native* (although the narrative components of the latter do not directly feed into *Egdon Heath* itself, as I argued), Lutyens by choosing as a set text a poem about magic by Rimbaud. Both composers were criticized as difficult and dissonant, Holst because of the piece's alleged monotony and bleakness, Lutyens because of the sounds her composition technique, serialism, produced.<sup>104</sup> Yet while both positions hold validity when viewed as equally valid responses to the Event of modernism, Lutyens seems to have tried to get as far away as possible from everything Holst stood for in *Egdon Heath*. Where Holst intended to develop what was left of tonality, Lutyens engaged with serialism. While Holst sought out the 'national' figure Thomas Hardy to provide the scene for *Egdon Heath*, Lutyens set a text by a French *enfant terrible* in *O saisons*. And furthermore, where Hardy stands for a critical English perspective on rural

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<sup>104</sup> Holst was attacked for his 'grinding dissonances' and 'dissonances as concords' (Anon., "Egdon Heath", 12); 'Attend to it we must, solve its puzzle we never shall. So Mr. Holst's grinding, but never jarring, discords propel the music forward, but are not resolved.' (Anon., 'Promenade Concert', 12). Lutyens had to put up with comments such as 'a rather meagre effect' and 'difficult vocal part' (Anon., 'Gerald Cooper Concert', *The Western Morning News*, 13 February 1947, 2).

realities, Rimbaud perhaps represents his highly strung, urban, decadent opposite. Without therefore directly engaging with *Egdon Heath* in particular, the following chapter shows how Lutyens pulls music in the exact opposite direction from the triadic position and thus contradicts and at the same time validates the triadic response. A further, final, comfort for this triadic response may have been the fact that *Egdon Heath* enjoyed several hearings when it was new, a luxury Lutyens often hoped for in vain for her pieces.

## Chapter 5. Lutyens's *O saisons, ô châteaux!* and the Experimental Female

Elisabeth Lutyens's gender played an important role in her autobiographical self-assessment and has also been central to the secondary literature on her life and works.<sup>1</sup> While it is easy to remark on the specific (and additional) difficulties that women composers have faced (and still face) on the path to recognition, discussing the case of a woman *modernist* is more challenging, since modernism as a style seems to be mostly a matter of masculine-gendered language and interest. A contradictory figure like Lutyens, the socially conventional mother of four children yet a serialist composer, the wife of culturally luminary Edward Clark yet in reality often their family's only breadwinner, is bound to be difficult to place biographically as well as stylistically and music-historically.

This chapter analyzes Lutyens's cantata *O saisons, ô châteaux!* as an experimental response to modernism. Lutyens is perhaps unusual in that her turn to serialism in 1939 was permanent and she might hence be expected to be an easy, perhaps overly easy, choice of modernist. But the opposite is the case. While the Event-response model on its own is able to describe Elisabeth Lutyens's Cantata as modernist, an additional piece of theory will be added in this chapter to help overcome the specific issues with a dominant masculinist gendering of modernism. This is Lacan's concept of the quilting point, which was introduced briefly in 2.3, and which will aid, in this chapter, with the identification of and solution to Lutyens's particular problem: her gender. Thus modified, the Event-response model can help to break the old link between modernism and masculinism and open up a clearer view of the experimental character of Lutyens's response to modernism in *O saisons*.

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<sup>1</sup> Elisabeth Lutyens, *A Goldfish Bowl* (London: Cassell London, England, 1972); Meirion and Susie Harries, *A Pilgrim Soul. The Life and Works of Elisabeth Lutyens* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1989); and Rhiannon Mathias, *Lutyens, Maconchy, Williams and Twentieth-Century British Music. A Blest Trio of Sirens* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

### **5.1 Introduction: Logicalizing an Exceptional Composer**

The link between modernism and masculinism is best introduced through some examples in the language of analytical and historiographical studies. Taruskin's reading of modernism as 'maximalization', which itself supposedly serves to throw up problems of modernism, is a first example and sums up a tendency in music criticism of Lutyens's works.<sup>2</sup> It successfully demonstrates the issues of existing approaches and highlights the necessity to rethink the standard quilting points. In an obituary on April 1983, *The Observer* paid tribute to Lutyens in these words:

'O saisons, O Chateaux,' the Wittgenstein cantata, 'And suddenly it's evening' are all works sustained by an individual vein of poetry that will keep alive the memory of a remarkable miniaturist.<sup>3</sup>

In what was certainly kindly meant, the author marks the composer as a female minor composer, a lyrical, romantic, outsider among an assumed larger group of less poetic, rationalized, maximalist modernists. This notion of modernism as maximalization contrasts with the critic's idea that Lutyens was a 'miniaturist' with an œuvre of mostly chamber sized and uneven quality. To associate miniaturism with women composers and maximalism with their male counterparts seems to be part of the traditional perspective, at least since the explosion of the genre of small pieces for voice and/or piano for the household use for and by women in the nineteenth century – reflecting, perhaps, the presumption that the natural space for a woman is domestic and amateurish, the natural space for a man global and professional. Yet, these problematic categories endanger even modernists like Webern with his œuvre of many tiny pieces of music. In the *OHWM*, Taruskin therefore rescues the composer by pointing to Webern's Alberichian character, as it were. Alberich of course demonstrates his power in Scene 3 of *Das Rheingold* not so much by becoming a huge serpent, but by turning into a tiny toad.<sup>4</sup> Transferred onto Webern, the massive masculine force remains in Webern's work and is expressed not by the ability to write very big and loud music but rather to apply force sufficient, as it were, to crush rock into diamonds. In his case, the exclusivity

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<sup>2</sup> Taruskin, *OHWM 4*, beginning in 'Preface'.

<sup>3</sup> Anon., 'Obituary', *The Observer*, 17 April 1983, in Elisabeth Lutyens, *Letters to Brian Elias*, with related material; 1965–1983, GB-Lbl, Add MS 71114, fol. 211.

<sup>4</sup> It should perhaps not be forgotten, though, that even Wagner himself was dubbed a miniaturist by Nietzsche in *Der Fall Wagner* (quoted from Carl Dahlhaus, *Between Romanticism and Modernism: Four Studies in the Music of the Later Nineteenth Century*, tr. Mary Whittall [Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1980], 41).

of the masculine characteristic of modernism is inflected, so that instead of maintaining an exclusive focus on big orchestral forces and forms, it mutates into a preference of intransigent extremes either way. Both growth and shrinking turn out to be masculinist displays of unlimited power: size itself is perhaps less important than the superlative of the change in size. Webern's maximalism therefore is a negative one, for example when he strives for the most compressed structure possible in the Bagatelles for piano.<sup>5</sup> This concept of Taruskin's maximalization attempts to skirt round the problem of classification of modernist music, but it could be criticized both for its introduction of a further modernist dualism that was not even continuously pursued by the composers it is attributed to, and for the inaptness of the term itself to describe the phenomenon.

For an understanding of Lutyens, this inherent masculinity of maximalist modernism is a crucial problem, but a defence of the composer can move in two directions. Firstly, her catalogue of works includes pieces of either extreme and can therefore easily meet this Janus-faced maximalist claim. Taruskin mentions the brevity of a mere 13 bars of Webern's Bagatelle op. 9 no. 5 (as if that were in itself a mark of quality), which is met by Lutyens's own Bagatelle op. 48 no. 5 (composed in December 1962), which has 12 bars, lasts approximately 37 seconds and sounds no less 'difficult' than the Webern (ex. 5.1).<sup>6</sup>

Ex. 5.1: Elisabeth Lutyens, *Bagatelle op. 48 no. 5*, bb. 9–12.

<sup>5</sup> Taruskin, *OHWM 4*, chapter 'At the Opposite Extreme'.

<sup>6</sup> Taruskin, *OHWM 4*, chapter 'Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)'. A recording of Lutyens's Five Bagatelles op. 48 is available on [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RY4IvI\\_2KMM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RY4IvI_2KMM) (11/02/2014, interpreter unknown, presumably Katharina Wolpe).

It is characterized by its strongly contrasting dynamics, building up to a loud pivot before the piece subsides into the near silence of D–C#–B<sub>♭</sub>–B.

On the other extreme, works such as *Quincunx* or the operas *Isis and Osiris*, *The Numbered*, and *Time Off? Not a Ghost of a Chance* – all three large-scale vocal-orchestral pieces of durations between 25 and 135 minutes – give evidence to the falsity of the simplistic claim that the composer was a miniaturist. In any case, it is questionable whether the label ‘maximalist’ is very helpful for the valuation of composers. Despite the existence of larger pieces by Lutyens, she could hardly find the same acceptance as Webern within a strictly maximalist narrative. After all, her pieces do not strive for structural or formal extremes – although one might ask whether Webern’s do – but achieve them in passing whenever an extreme form suits the compositional concept, while her focus is on an exploration of related sounds and acoustic structures (such as the possibilities of string sounds in opposition to a highly versatile soprano in *O saisons, ô châteaux!*). It is even possible to detect a masculinist trope in this differentiation between masculine striving for structural extremes, and what is implied as feminine contentment with beautiful sounds in the initial quote. In fact, however, the structures may be similar, as I will explain later in this chapter.

The second argument against modernism as maximalism is that the maximalist claim itself can be shown to be of a limited relevance to the claim for a piece’s modernism since it, as it were, describes Alberich as both serpent and toad at the same time: the term is so loose that it is difficult to be certain what, if anything, it describes. This makes it unsuited as the master signifier it is supposed to be for Taruskin’s concept of early twentieth-century modernism. The decision to let go of atonality as the master signifier of modernism and instead to identify the pursuit of maximalism, i.e. formal extremes, as signifier merely substitutes one masculinist stereotype for another, although it must be added in defence of Taruskin that, whatever his critical tools for doing so, he shares with many feminist musicologists the desire to discredit what he evidently considers to be the machismo of modernist composers. Nevertheless, neither Lutyens, nor, interestingly, Schoenberg or Webern themselves can be pressed into this scheme. This is because Taruskin does not countenance the possibility that modernism or

maximalism could be a positive aesthetic category, even when the music is not obviously masculinist. This has the unfortunate effect of making modernism more difficult to rescue for a feminist discourse.

The way out is what this chapter suggests: to leave the master signifier and central idea of modernism, the existence of plural tonal systems, in place, but to question and challenge its masculinist implications, which can be found in abundance in reviews of Lutyens's serialism. Again, the problem lies not with the signifiers of modernism, but in how we 'quilt' (or in this case, 'gender') them.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, this is not intended to just pull some pieces by a female composer across the divide and into the modernist canon, but an attempt to complicate the picture of the canon itself by rejecting some of its more problematic quilting points.

Nevertheless it is not only the language of modernist criticism that carries this masculinist burden: modernist music too can be understood as a male enterprise in the broadest terms. Susan McClary's suspicion that 'the turn from late Romantic hysteria and popular music to the refuge of rigorous Modernism is a gesture partly informed by the desire to remasculinize the discourse'<sup>8</sup> surely supports this notion. However, she attacks modernism further, particularly its serialist branch, to which Lutyens subscribes. McClary assumes that, after giving the madwoman's voice more freedom in the works of his atonal phase, Schoenberg forced a purely masculine intellectual system onto his serial music in order to stifle the suspicions about atonality's feminine, hysterical, and illogical qualities.<sup>9</sup> In her examination of Lutyens, Sally Macarthur observes on the same topic 'that while Schoenberg's music sounds like the ravings of a madwoman, it is legitimized in the academy because of the intellect involved in its compositional process.'<sup>10</sup> As a woman *and* a serialist, Lutyens already threatens to throw this critical context into confusion if serialism really is nothing but a covering up of feminine traces (nor is she alone in this, as Hisama's examination of atonal and serial works by Crawford, Bauer, and

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<sup>7</sup> I agree with Ellie M. Hisama, who claims in *Gendering Musical Modernism: The Music of Ruth Crawford, Marion Bauer, and Miriam Gideon* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001) that 'the aesthetic and techniques of modernism are not inherently misogynist, but [...] modernism indeed provides a space for forms of expression by women' (11).

<sup>8</sup> Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 18.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 107–8, cf. Hisama, *Gendering Musical Modernism*.

<sup>10</sup> Sally Macarthur, *Feminist Aesthetics in Music* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 97.

Gideon have shown).<sup>11</sup> Yet, the nature of her subjective response to modernism in the cantata *O saisons, ô châteaux!* also has the potential to challenge not only this traditional idea of serialist modernism, but also to further knock the Event-response model into shape.

If Lutyens is established as such a complicating factor, the next step must be to question the Event-response model about its own gendering. Even for the two (principally) feminist authors Badiou and Harper-Scott, the male-centred perspective plays an important role, as can be gleaned from Badiou's exclusively male-staffed scenarios of Spartacus or Schoenberg's martial worlds, in which composers are judged by their taking sides as either 'terrorists' or reactive cowards. Despite itself, Harper-Scott's explicitly feminist political language rests on Lacanian theory and thereby holds associations regarded critically by feminists.<sup>12</sup> All in all, the model itself certainly rests on problematic foundations, which its logicalization and particularly this chapter has to take care of.

When Lutyens is labelled an experimental modernist she seems to be placed on what Badiou and his musicological followers consider the politically and morally 'correct' side of the Event, but what marks this approach out from theirs is that it does not share their adamant insistence on taking sides in the first place (which is to say that they consider being in the correct group a matter of highest political importance). For Badiou as well as most respondents of *The Opera Quarterly* to *Five Lessons on Wagner*, the faithful response is the only one even worth mentioning, as chapter 3 explained. Even Harper-Scott's focus on the 'conservative', reactive response in *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism* is a way of insisting on the predominance of the political dimension, since it is the conservative's unwitting advancement of the Truth claims of modernism that makes that subjective figure so fascinating for him. To obviate the difficulties here,

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<sup>11</sup> If this assumption were to hold, then Lutyens, by adhering to serialism, would take part in the masculinist enterprise of purging music of its feminine characteristic. This, one might argue, would make her even more inferior compared to her male colleagues and would justify the lack of appreciation her music has experienced.

<sup>12</sup> Lacan's problem with women lies not just on a theoretical level, but also on a practical one, as the following quote from 'On Feminine Sexuality', in *ibid.*, *Seminars Book XX, Encore 1972–1973*, tr. Bruce Fink (New York, London: W W Norton & Company, 1998, c1975), 7, 75, shows: 'that woman knows nothing of that jouissance [...] is underscored by the fact that in all the time people have been begging them, begging them on their hands and knees – I spoke last time of women psychoanalysts – to try to tell us, not a word! We've never been able to get anything out of them.'

my move to logicalize is therefore necessary to open up a more commodious space for the relevant works by this particular composer as well as others to move around in.

I eliminated the aforementioned problem that faithful responses have a presumed moral superiority over reactive and obscure ones by stripping their origin, the Event, of its political and moral charge. This must be taken further to stopping one particular group of composers from occupying a dominant and defining position *within* one subjective direction (i.e. the Viennese School within the experimental response) in this chapter. It has the further consequence that in essence, my model is characterized by the different language introduced in chapter 3, thereby allowing for a less masculinist tone (the logicalized responses do not, for example, *enter* or *penetrate* the present, but they *form a field*). It is not desirable that the greatest praise for a piece of music or its composer is how masculine they sound, nor for the model how much force it applies. Rather, its crucial idea is to keep a traditional core signifier of modernism and to level out the playing field around it, through the analysis of language as well as of music.

Being attentive, then, both to gendered language and to the implicit masculinist conceptions of modernism, the main part of this chapter examines Lutyens's cantata *O saisons, ô châteaux!* as it gives an experimental response to modernism within a logicalized Evental context. Her construction of the piece's genre and attitude to her chosen text, her position between the poles of miniaturism and maximalism, and her application of serialism all point to Lutyens's experimentalist choices about modernism on several layers of the composition of *O saisons, ô châteaux!* – a modernism that transcends its masculinist limits, while retaining the 'faithful' attitude that is specifically bound up with the masculine in existing studies. The piece's relatively early position in the serial part of her oeuvre makes it particularly interesting for this examination: composed during the Second World War's aftershocks, it forms a crucial link between her first serial Chamber Concertos and the later works.

## 5.2 Elisabeth Lutyens, *Female Modernist*

To go back to the beginning, this section briefly introduces the context of Lutyens's early career up to the post-WWII years and addresses the riddle of her 'invention' of serialism, as this point in her biography can illustrate the first difference between A-Modernism and the experimental response. Elisabeth Lutyens certainly is one of the many underestimated women composers in Western art music, but she is also one of the many underestimated *British* composers in Western art music. And as if these two impediments were not enough, she did not take the easy route to recognition or enjoy a private life that would have stimulated her creative powers instead of constantly threatening to stifle them, as she was keen to point out in her autobiography *A Goldfish Bowl*.<sup>13</sup> After composition lessons at the École normale in Paris, privately with the composer John Foulds, and finally at the RCM with Harold Darke between 1926 and 1930, Lutyens's musical development crystallized slowly, compared to the more steady rise of her colleagues at the RCM Elizabeth Maconchy, Imogen Holst, and Grace Williams, who kept sharing the College's composition prizes between them.<sup>14</sup> In 1931 she co-founded the Macnaghten–Lemare concerts together with conductor Iris Lemare and violinist Anne Macnaghten in order to rectify what she perceived as the lack of performance opportunities for young, London-based, composers. A promising start in the world of professional composition in the 1930s, granted by the unique performance space these concerts offered, was perhaps crowned by the premiere of her *Three Orchestral Pieces* at the Proms 1940. (This happened to be the last 1940 Promenade concert in the Queen's Hall. The audience, composer, and musicians spent its aftermath in the basements because of an air raid, and the venue was destroyed by bombs soon after.)

By this time, however, Lutyens had not only separated from her husband of five years, the tenor Ian Glennie, with whom she had three children, and embarked on a relationship with former BBC producer, ISCM honorary secretary, Germanophile,

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<sup>13</sup> Compare, for example, her account of the abortion she underwent in autumn 1946, around the same time as she was composing *O saisons*. It seems that her decision to terminate the pregnancy was driven by financial calculations as well as by fears for her health (Lutyens, *Goldfish Bowl*, 175–6).

<sup>14</sup> Holst won the Cobbett Composition Prize in 1928 (Williams came second), as well as the Sullivan Prize and the Octavia Travelling Scholarship in 1929. Maconchy won the Octavia Scholarship one year later, with Williams again on second position.

and Schoenberg-pupil Edward Clark in 1938, but also withdrawn most of the pieces from the Macnaghten–Lemare period. Her fourth child Conrad, the only one with Clark, was born in 1941 and the couple married in 1942.

Like many people, Lutyens emerged from the hardships of the Second World War, spent partly away from her children in Newcastle and composing music for propaganda films, in a creative crisis, but also as an alcoholic and with empty pockets (Clark had not held a full-time job since before they had met and would not for the rest of his life).<sup>15</sup> Consequently, the post-WWII years saw increasing engagement with what she called ‘journalistic’ works for film and radio, and relatively few ‘concert’ compositions. Nevertheless, the list of the latter impressively consists of the Chamber Concerti nos. 3 to 5 with *O saisons* between them, as well as the opera *The Pit* and the Viola Concerto.<sup>16</sup> By this time, her slowly developing personal usage of tone rows had stabilized since her first exploration of these in her Chamber Concerto no. 1 in 1939.

Premiered in 1943, this first in a series of 5 chamber concertos (Lutyens scrapped a sixth) bears striking similarities to Webern’s Concerto op. 24 from 1934, and Lutyens therefore felt under pains to stress her originality, which she perceived as endangered by possible comparisons.<sup>17</sup> Not only are both pieces serial, but both feature nine instruments, sharing seven of those in common: oboe, clarinet, horn, trumpet, trombone, violin, and viola. (Webern’s Concerto uses a flute and the piano instead of Lutyens’s bassoon and cello). Lutyens claimed that she did not know the Webern Concerto: ‘[the chamber concerto] was, of course, before Webern’s Concerto of the same name, of which we knew nothing as it only became available to us in 1946.’<sup>18</sup> Her biographers additionally tried to defend her by stating that Webern’s op 24 was only published in Britain in 1942, but this statement represents merely one of the many contradictions and doubts that have

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<sup>15</sup> Mathias, *Sirens*, 75–80, most importantly the music for the documentary *The Jungle Mariners*.

<sup>16</sup> Between 1944 and the end of 1947, Lutyens wrote 19 works for radio, theatre, and film, and 12 ‘serious’ and ‘light’ non-incidentals compositions (not counting arrangements, scrapped, or doubtful works). Of the latter, none lasts for longer than 15 minutes (with the exception of *The Pit*, whose 30 minutes, however, make it a relatively short opera).

<sup>17</sup> A tempting speculation would of course concern itself with the question if Webern himself would have been accused of imitating Schoenberg, had he been a woman, or if Lutyens would have felt as she did, had she been a man.

<sup>18</sup> Lutyens, *Goldfish Bowl*, 99.

surrounded Lutyens's claim to 'creating' her own serialism.<sup>19</sup> For example, Alan Bush reviewed the Concerto's premiere at the ISCM Festival in Prague in 1935 in *The Musical Times*, pointing out its structural play with the figure three (three movements, three times three instruments, the row consisting of four groups of three notes), its dodecaphony, and its 'rigid consistency and great sensibility'.<sup>20</sup> It is very likely that Lutyens read this article, as she was generally interested in the ISCM festivals. Additionally, her colleague Maconchy's Prelude, Interlude, and Fugue for two violins were played in the same concert and reviewed in the same article. Nevertheless, it is impossible to establish how well Lutyens actually knew Webern's Concerto or to what extent she was aware of its serial principles (via reports such as Bush's or possibly through Edward Clark's explanation, or one or several hearings, to the possession of a score from the Continent) by the time of the composition of her Chamber Concerto.

This is merely one example of the greatest mystery surrounding her serialism: the question whether she did or did not 'invent' serialism entirely independently of the Viennese School. The availability of reviews such as Bush's, together with Lutyens's exchange with Edward Clark, lead me to assume that while she may not have been familiar with the details of serial construction as used by the Viennese over the last decade, as she insisted, she would nevertheless have known very well the basic rules of serialism and how it is characterized (it is, of course, not necessary to own the score of Webern's Concerto to understand the basic rules of serialism).<sup>21</sup> Whatever the truth, the Chamber Concerto became, if not her trademark piece, at least the root from which her critics have felt her claim to have invented serialism spring.<sup>22</sup> Her 'ownership' of serialism is a crucial issue,

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<sup>19</sup> Harries, *Pilgrim Soul*, 90.

<sup>20</sup> Alan Bush, 'The I. S. C. M. Festival at Prague', *The Musical Times*, 76/1112 (October 1935), 941.

<sup>21</sup> Lutyens met Edward Clark (1888–1962) in 1938, while still being married to Ian Glennie. Clark had been a pupil of Schoenberg in Berlin between 1911 and the outbreak of the First World War, when he was interned at Ruhleben until 1917. Returning to England, he worked in different positions for the BBC and as a conductor. His 'passion for new music, innovatory programming schemes, and positions in leading new music organizations, particularly the BBC during its formative years, had a profound impact in shaping British music-making of the twentieth century', although his influence on Lutyens and modernism in Britain remains entirely unresearched. (Jennifer Doctor, 'Clark, [Thomas] Edward [1888–1962]', in Lawrence Goldman [ed.] *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online ed., OUP. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/40709> [12/2/14]).

<sup>22</sup> Anthony Payne and Toni Calam, 'Lutyens, Elisabeth', *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. OUP. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/17227> (18/7/12), calling the concerto 'one of the most innovatory British works of the period' and encompassing the

however, because in her case British music gets closest to an ideal of Jenny Doctor's 'continental modernism'. Yet it still seems to miss the mark, as the following sections will address, because of modernism's gendering. Only by the following displacement of the Viennese School composers as the sole, masculine, owners of the development of serialism can the Event-response model create a clean slate for the assessment of the experimental response in women and men composers' pieces of music.

### 5.2.1 *O saisons, ô châteaux!*

*O saisons, ô châteaux!* on a poem by Arthur Rimbaud is one of Lutyens's few serial concert pieces of the late 1940s among a flurry of journalistic works, and indeed the only major composition of her otherwise eventful year 1946:<sup>23</sup> she travelled to Paris to hear a concert with her pieces organized by the British Council and heard and was performed in several successful private concerts in London, organized by Clark; yet in autumn Lutyens was forced to have an abortion, returning home from which she finished *O saisons*, a commission from Gerald Cooper for his concert series in the Wigmore Hall, where it was premiered the following February. It is a short and intense piece for soprano with an all-string ensemble of mandolin, guitar, harp, solo violin, and small string orchestra. Lutyens remembered the piece's conception in her autobiography in much more detail than for example the genesis of the Chamber Concerto no. 1:

I had conceived the piece, even heard the complete sound – in form and timbre – and begun the writing whilst still searching for the right words. I was hearing a soprano voice, of the calibre of Oda Slobodskaya's,<sup>24</sup> in a soaring lyrical lament, supported by all variety of string sounds – like an enlarged, amplified guitar. Accidentally meeting John Davenport [the piece's dedicatee] in the Gin and Gumboot and telling him of my word-search, he immediately, with his intuitive understanding, suggested the short Rimbaud poem *O Saisons, O Châteaux!* ... I was enthusiastic and the piece began to take its final shape: a short Cantata for Soprano, String Orchestra, Harp, Guitar and Mandoline.<sup>25</sup>

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roots for her completely original rhythmic style. See also Laurel Parsons, 'Early Music and the Ambivalent Origins of Elisabeth Lutyens's Modernism', in Matthew Riley (ed.), *British Music and Modernism. 1895–1960* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 269–92.

<sup>23</sup> Chamber concertos nos. IV and V are variously dated around 1946/7, but are not mentioned by Lutyens in the corresponding chapter of *A Goldfish Bowl*.

<sup>24</sup> Slobodskaya was an acquaintance of Lutyens's, who, by 1946, had possibly lost her top register. The singer celebrated her 58<sup>th</sup> birthday in November 1946.

<sup>25</sup> Lutyens, *Goldfish Bowl*, 168.

It appears from this memory that Lutyens understood the piece in terms of its distinctive sound, and much less of surrounding influences like text or even her emotional situation at the time (as could have been expected, given her situation in autumn 1946). Not only did the music come before the words in this case, but the sounds were taking shape in such precision that she envisaged not any soprano, but one particular soprano voice, whose exceptional range she considered in the part.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the instruments were not just contrived as sounding together as one ‘enlarged’ guitar, but at the same time being distinct in their sound production – plucking, strumming, and bowing.<sup>27</sup>

### 5.2.1.1 Transparency: Choice of Genre

In her reminiscence, Lutyens remembered her intention to create a ‘soaring lyrical lament’, which is supported from the strings’ deeper base. It is, as Lutyens’s own initial aural focus seems to point to, a serial work to be *heard* at least as much as to be *read*. Throughout the history of its conception, *O saisons* gained three characterizations – a lament, a serenade, and finally and definitely, a cantata – which say more about Lutyens’s intentions for the piece than about its final shape. A lament, sometimes also functioning as a movement of a cantata, usually is a piece for voice and accompanying instruments, often over a descending tetrachord ostinato. It is associated with the female voice, probably owing to the different traditions of female lamenting at funerals or weddings.<sup>28</sup> In this context Sarah Jane Tenant-Flowers has correctly pointed to Lutyens’s studies of Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*, containing arguably the most famous lament in art music, in 1946.<sup>29</sup> The prominence of descending semitones in the original row of *O saisons* (ex. 5.2.1) as well as in the first burst of soprano melody (ex. 5.2.2) confirms this connection. In one of Lutyens’s later and more well-known pieces, the *Lament of Isis on the Death of Osiris* (originally from the opera *Isis and Osiris* of 1969/70), the characteristic

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<sup>26</sup> Oda Slobodskaya was a Russian born soprano, trained at the St Petersburg Conservatoire, who lived in London since 1930 and sang dramatic roles from Wagner to Shostakovich and Moussorgsky as well as Lieder (cf. Maurice Leonard, *Slobodskaya. A Biography of Oda Slobodskaya* [London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1979]).

<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, however, no other than these three standard techniques are employed. *Col legno* for the strings, or the various guitar techniques (e.g. strumming with nails, thumb, or plectra) are not used.

<sup>28</sup> Ellen Rosand, ‘Lamento’. *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. OUP.

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/15904> (25/7/12).

<sup>29</sup> Sarah Jane Tenant-Flowers, ‘A Study of Style and Technique in the Music of Elisabeth Lutyens’, PhD dissertation (Durham, University of Durham, 1991), 165.

initial rise and fall of this line also reappears (ex. 5.2.3). However, descending chromatic steps or, more generally, the interval class 1,11,<sup>30</sup> are not only a signifier of the lament, but, in the nineteenth century and the operatic tradition, characterize the feminine in music, as a whole list from Carmen's 'Habanera' to Isolde's 'Liebestod' to the Sirens' Chorus in *Tannhäuser* and onwards to Scriabin's gendered Ur-motives could demonstrate.<sup>31</sup>



Ex.5.2.1: Elisabeth Lutyens, *O saisons, ô châteaux!*, Pº.



Ex. 5.2.2: Elisabeth Lutyens, *O saisons, ô châteaux!*, soprano, bb. 42-5.



Ex. 5.2.3: Elisabeth Lutyens, *Lament of Isis on the Death of Osiris*, bb. 1-2.

The composer's first intuition in pencil on manuscript paper, however, imagined the piece as a serenade, which could be justified easily with its instrumentation and texture, which are in the style of the Viennese Classical serenade (plucked submerged strings with a voice rising above them).<sup>32</sup> Although one of Schoenberg's earliest serial works was a piece of that genre, too (the *Serenade* op. 24 of 1923), Lutyens's final decision to avoid this characterization might have something to do with the different levels of seriousness attributed to the genres of serenade and cantata.

<sup>30</sup> According to Joel Lester, *Analytic Approaches to Twentieth-Century Music* (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989), 72.

<sup>31</sup> McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 57-8; Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* (London: Tauris, 1997), 56-7; Stephen Downes, *Szymanowski, Eroticism and the Voices of Mythology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 22-3; Kenneth M. Smith, *Skryabin, Philosophy and the Music of Desire* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 16-9.

<sup>32</sup> Elisabeth Lutyens, *Cantata for soprano and strings opus 13: O saisons, ô châteaux!* (MS, November 1946), GB-Lbl, Add MS 64639, 2v.

The cantata is certainly the most elevated and structurally complex of the three genres, but also the most surprising to be connected with this piece. *O saisons* makes an unusual cantata in that it is not a choral work, and rather leans towards the pre-1800 cantata with its combination of solo voice and instrumental, often chamber, accompaniment. Before 1800, an English type of cantata split from the dominant Italian form, preferring less Arcadian and more profane texts and a freer, usually binary, form with instrumental ritornellos, which may be guided by the chosen text – features which can all be found in *O saisons*.<sup>33</sup> The piece combines aspects of all three genres, but by calling it cantata, Lutyens positioned it beyond vocal chamber music aspirations – much like Schoenberg's contemporary cantata *A Survivor From Warsaw*, op. 46 (1947), which, however, features a choir and a very contemporary text.

Seriousness, or rather the yearning to be taken seriously, were a constant in Lutyens's professional life, and may partly explain why she changed her mind about the genre of *O saisons*. This change of mind, however, found its way neither onto the back page of her pencilled manuscript nor into the article of *The Listener's* critic John S. Weissmann in 1950, who referred to the wrong genre when he called the piece a serenade. He went on to praise the piece's 'transparency of texture and a conspicuous lightness of touch' to stress its feminine qualities.<sup>34</sup> The key word *transparency* can of course be found in reviews of male serialists too, as in this one about Webern's op. 24:

In its glorification of the interval, its crystalline *transparency* [...], its utter and final renunciation of nineteenth century subjectivism, its extremely subtle dynamic and color (Klangfarben) differentiations, its unequivocal formal definition, all embraced by Webern's innate, highly personal lyricism, the Concerto has become one of the important points of departure for a whole new generation of composers.<sup>35</sup>

Both reviews make statements about how the pieces are made. But where Weismann writes about *O saisons's* haptic qualities, Schuller praises Webern's genius of construction – feminine corporeality versus masculine mind. In the Webern, every aspect glistens with innovation, rationality, and clarity, pointing to

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<sup>33</sup> Colin Timms, et al. 'Cantata', *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. OUP.

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/04748pg6> (26/7/12).

<sup>34</sup> John S. Weissmann, 'The Music of Elisabeth Lutyens', *The Listener*, 3 August 1950, 177.

<sup>35</sup> Gunther Schuller, 'Review: Konzert, Op. 24. Für Flöte, Oboe, Klarinette in B, Horn in F, Trompete in C, Posaune, Geige, Bratsche, & Klavier by Anton von Webern'. *Notes*, Second Series, 17/1 (1959), 136–137, my emphasis.

the future of composition. In the Lutyens, the critic seems to imply, there is a woman stretching her feminine strengths to the invention of a luxurious song, as so many have done before her.

It is not necessary to set up an experiment under laboratory conditions to arrive at the conclusion that the fact that the listener *knows* that the composer is a woman can make a lot of difference in how they hear the music. In serialist music, the old move to patronize or unfavourably compare female composing may be more unexpected, as serialism supposedly abolishes some prominent, traditionally gendered, levels in music, such as melody as a potential carrier of sweetness and simplicity in tonal music or raving hysteria in atonal music. This does not hinder a new charging of serialism, however, with masculinist rationality, which would criticize a serialism that does not adhere to this ideal. The fact that both Webern and Schoenberg had written in similar textures and genres as Lutyens, but are still judged on different grounds provides a first pointer towards the necessary logicalization of modernism. Displacing this gendered charging further and in the other parameters of *O saisons* is the goal of the following sections, and it will be achieved by taking away not only the superiority of serialism over the other ways of organizing pitch class, but the superiority of Viennese serialism over other forms of serialism, which is what the Event-response model suggests.

### 5.2.1.2 Magic: Choice of Text

With a cantata set to a text by a young and brilliant (and we might add: scandalous) Frenchman, Lutyens seems to take a large step to set the piece apart from such stereotypical feminine topicality as her chromatic row and texture seem to promise. Despite a considerable number of settings of Rimbaud poems in twentieth-century music, Lutyens stands alone with her choice of *O saisons, ô châteaux!*<sup>36</sup> Unlike the more common candidates, *O saisons* is a poem without a clear dating or affiliation to a collection. It is known in four substantially differing versions, one of which does appear in the collection of poems *Une saison en enfer*. Therein, *O saisons* is the last of five poems in 'Délires II. Alchimie du verbe', a brief

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<sup>36</sup> Composers seems to have concentrated on texts from the collections *Illuminations* (set by Britten, in Henze's cantata *Being Beauteous* [1963], or in Rihm's *Départ* [1988]) and *Une saison en enfer* (examples include Harold Blumenfeld's opera *Seasons in Hell. The Lives of Arthur Rimbaud* [1994] or Matthias Pintscher's opera *L'espace dernier* [2003]).

part of prose with embedded poems about madness overwhelming the gracefully succumbing persona. Following *O saisons*, the persona states: 'But that's over with. Now I know how to greet beauty.'<sup>37</sup> This version, however, is not the one Lutyens sets. Her *O saisons* is a separate one, which differs from the *Une saison en enfer* version in several details, but most importantly in the distribution of the crucial line 'O saisons, ô châteaux'. As with many Rimbaud poems, it is not clear which version counts as final, nor indeed is it clear where Lutyens's advisor on the matter, John Davenport, had this version from.

At a first glance, Lutyens's goes to some lengths in *A Goldfish Bowl* in order to downplay the importance of the text (she claimed to have come across the text when the music had already been conceived of). Despite this and the difficulties with the discovery of a message or meaning in Rimbaud's poetry,<sup>38</sup> it is still rewarding to take a closer look at Lutyens's choice, which, I shall argue, is not random at all.

O saisons, ô châteaux  
Quelle âme est sans défauts?  
  
O saisons, ô châteaux!  
  
J'ai fait la magique étude  
Du Bonheur, que nul [n']élude.  
  
O vive lui, chaque fois  
Que chante le [son] coq Gaulois.  
  
Mais je n'aurais plus d'envie  
Il s'est chargé de ma vie.  
  
Ce Charme! Il prit âme et corps  
Et dispersa tous efforts.  
  
Que comprendre à ma parole?  
Il fait qu'elle fuie et vole!  
  
O saisons, ô châteaux

Fig.5.1: Arthur Rimbaud, *O saisons, ô châteaux!*, differences to Lutyens's text in brackets.

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<sup>37</sup> Translation in: Arthur Rimbaud, *Rimbaud Complete. Volume 1: Poetry and Prose*, tr. Wyatt Mason (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 214. Four versions of the poem on 356–60.

<sup>38</sup> Dee Reynolds, *Symbolist Aesthetics and Early Abstract Art. Sites of Imaginary Space* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), 41. Connecting the topic of hallucination and madness surrounding the poem in *USEE* and Lutyens's choice of this text for her serialism might make a rewarding essay however.

The text is a sonnet split into seven + seven lines – an overall structure which Lutyens follows. Most lines contain around seven syllables (a marked exception being ‘O saisons, ô châteaux’ itself), thereby breaking with the traditional Alexandrine metric scheme of six + six syllables per line in a sonnet. The sounds of the French ‘o’, ‘on’, and ‘au’ clearly dominate the poem and strongly contrast with lighter vowels like ‘é’ or ‘i’. This may have chimed with Lutyens’s idea for the extraordinarily wide range of the soprano, reaching from G below centre C to an optional E<sub>5</sub> more than three octaves higher.

The key to the poem, or at least to what it may have meant for Lutyens, can be found in the words ‘magique’, ‘Gaulois’, and ‘Charme’ in the central verses. They point to the topic of magic, which is also pointed out as a central Rimbaudian issue in a prominent English Rimbaud biography of 1947. Here, Enid Starkie quotes *O saisons* in her chapter about the poet’s disappointment after his stay in Paris and focuses on the elements of alchemy and magic in the poems of 1872.<sup>39</sup> It is extremely unlikely that Davenport and Lutyens found the poem and this interpretation in this biography, as the first edition of 1938 does not contain these remarks and the revised edition was not published before 1947, when the piece had already been written. However, the focus on themes of magic had doubtlessly been in the air for a while.<sup>40</sup> Many years later in her autobiography, Lutyens would still claim that ‘music and art are more allied to religion and magic, meaning neither creed nor voodoo, than elementary arithmetic or science (so often inaccurately aped by composers) [...]’.<sup>41</sup>

In the poem, the persona claims to have executed the ‘magic exercise of happiness/bliss’, celebrates the ‘Gallic rooster’ (Gaul being the French centre of pagan magic), and praises the ‘spell’ that takes soul and body, obliterating all efforts. The especially prominent line ‘O saisons, ô châteaux’, appearing as opening, closing, and third line, could itself be read as a spell or incantation. The last verse

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<sup>39</sup> Enid Starkie, *Arthur Rimbaud* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1947, c1938), 206–7.

<sup>40</sup> Raymond Head has argued that theosophy in Britain also held a fascination for Gustav Holst (Raymond Head, ‘Holst – Astrology and Modernism in “The Planets”’, *Tempo: A Quarterly Review of Modern Music*, 187 [1993], 15–22); Constant Lambert was experimenting with the occult in the 1930s (Andrew Motion, *The Lamberts: George, Constant & Kit* [London: Chatto & Windus, 1986], 164–5) and Lutyens’s own theosophical upbringing (her mother, Lady Emily Lytton, was an ardent follower of Jiddu Krishnamurti and pulled her daughters, particularly Elisabeth and Mary, into her beliefs) would rear its head again as a topic in her opera *Isis and Osiris* of 1969–70.

<sup>41</sup> Lutyens, *Goldfish Bowl*, 305.

not so much questions the usefulness of words or speech (which of course has a special resonance in the last line of a poem), but hints at the secrecy of magical practices. Uninitiated people simply cannot understand the magician, who is thus singled out as a tragic, lonely, but also superior figure. Numerology could also be said to play a role in the poem's obsession with the number 7 (two times seven lines with mostly seven syllables). 7 may stand for the planets and spheres, the sciences in *quadrivium* and *trivium*, the seven modes and the strings on the lyre, and of course the seven notes in a tonal scale.

Unlike mysticism, the exercise of magic is not based on uncontrollable visions (like Holst's mystic's experiences), but on alchemy, learning, and rituals. Lutyens may have known about some rudimentary rules and features of magic from W. B. Yeats, whose poetry she greatly admired and who visited her father in her presence in the 1920s.<sup>42</sup> The poet was obsessed with magic and went so far as to declare his belief in a sort of magical *credo*: 'I believe in the practice and philosophy of what we have agreed to call magic, in what I must call the evocation of spirits [...], in the power of creating magical illusions, in the visions of truth in the depths of the mind when the eyes are closed.'<sup>43</sup>

If Lutyens was only half as bitter in 1946 as she would claim in *A Goldfish Bowl*, she would have identified with the figure of the magician. Like such a learned one, Lutyens imagined herself in a superior position because she used dodecaphony; a position, however, which made her (and her husband Edward Clark) vulnerable to derision and lack of comprehension by colleagues and critics:

I was soon to realize that in spite of the success of Edward's concerts, my comparative success in Paris and the London Festival we were both to be classified 'OUT' by the musical Establishment for backing the wrong horses – such as Schoenberg and Webern – and thereby setting ourselves outside the musical pale in the climate of musical England. [...] To adopt a technique, like the 12-tone, associated with a German, Schoenberg (albeit that, earlier, I had thought I had 'discovered' it myself, from my study of Purcell), was '*mittel-European*', un-English and iconoclastic. I was soon made to feel like a Communist before the Committee for Un-American Activities. [...] I have no objection to a composer changing styles, but I don't forget those many who sneered and jeered over the years, only to change their tune and quickly jump on the band-wagon when the climate changed in England – even the critics realizing that being able to count to twelve – instead of seven (as in

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>43</sup> W. B. Yeats, 'Ideas of Good and Evil', in idem, *Essays and Introductions* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), 28.

classical music) – was not an insuperable difficulty. The adoption of serial techniques by so many young composers – even in England – obliged them to do a spot of homework, and they can now burble about ‘parameters’ with the best, and are prepared to accept the dottiest gimmickry. But as Dallapiccola said to me, ‘It is not a risk today.’ *Then*, it most certainly was.<sup>44</sup>

The comparison of the twelve-tone composer with the communist is telling, but at the same time a Freudian *nachträglich* quilting of the situation. Moreover, however, Lutyens seems to criticize the necessity to ‘take sides’ in musical modernism, which I attributed to the (Badiouian) masculinist reading of modernism earlier in this chapter. Fittingly, the poem’s last verse (‘Que comprendre à ma parole? Il fait qu’elle fuie et vole!’)<sup>45</sup> seems to celebrate the superior loneliness in the face of an uncomprehending environment which Lutyens claimed to experience. This experience certainly encapsulates the psychological state typical for the experimental response to modernism.

Nevertheless, another, equally strong but more triadic, reading is the possible connection between serial technique and magical numerology. Despite the common understanding of dodecaphony as *disenchantment* of music, its obsession with the possibilities of series of numbers, their transpositions, and their inversions as well as retrograde inversions could just as well be interpreted as a *re-enchantment* of music, as the return to Pythagorean experiments with numbers and notes. This re-enchantment is only open to the initiated, those that have ‘carried out the magic study of happiness’ (again, similarities with *Isis and Osiris* spring to mind, in which Thoth, Egyptian god of magic and writing, is the one who brings Osiris back from the dead). Without much doubt, Lutyens would have understood herself as one of those, and even the foremost in her country, if which her reminiscence of a visit to Paris for a concert of her works by the British Council in Spring 1946 reads like a confirmation:

Among the young composers in Paris, 12-tone music was, by then, completely accepted so that I lost the sense of utter isolation I had felt in musical England. However, I amicably disagreed with Leibowitz for making an academicism of a language still being formed. The implications to be derived from the music of

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<sup>44</sup> Lutyens, *Goldfish Bowl*, 167–8. Lutyens had first met Dallapiccola in person at the ISCM Festival in London in 1946, which was organized by Edward Clark.

<sup>45</sup> ‘What can be understood from my words? | It makes them escape and fly off!’

Translation by Wallace Fowlie in Arthur Rimbaud, *Complete Works, Selected Letters. A Bilingual Edition. Translated with an Introduction by Wallace Fowlie. Updated, Revised, and with a Foreword by Seth Widdén* (Chicago, London: UoCP, 2005, c1966), 210–1.

Webern had hardly begun, and I felt it was much too early to write a lexicon of grammar, as he was doing.

Certainly that professional trip to Paris was like a shot of adrenalin, renewing my health, restoring my confidence and morale, and infecting me with new hope and optimism for the future. I have always felt England to be part of Europe, especially musically, and now felt re-joined to the cultural past with new allies for the future.<sup>46</sup>

Lutyens's dismissal of a 'grammar' of serialism as premature presumably refers to Leibowitz's writings of the time, which were concerned with Schoenberg and his circle (in particular Schoenberg's op. 31 and, again, Webern's op. 24);<sup>47</sup> but her dismissal also points out her doubts about spelling out serialism in a systematic form, comprehensible and available to all, as if she had wanted to keep it within a secretive little circle of the initiated. This, again, connects her to Adorno, who criticizes young composers using dodecaphony as a given in 'The Aging of the New Music'.<sup>48</sup>

In the critical reception, opinions about Lutyens's choice of this text vary. Nevertheless, there exists a consensus that the poem is 'highly charged', which could be read as praise of its masculinity rubbing off on Lutyens's music. In his introduction to a broadcast of works shortly after Lutyens's death, Brian Elias stated that

the work completely transcends its brief time span, & by its extreme economy and taut control it transports the listener into a richly emotional world expressive of nothing but itself and the highly charged Rimbaud poem.<sup>49</sup>

The masculine attributes of 'economy', 'control', and, not least, the piece's autonomous structure ('expressive of nothing but itself') are here credited as the marks of quality (as well as A-Modernism). The key characterisation of the text

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<sup>46</sup> Lutyens, *Goldfish Bowl*, 165. Although no 'lexicon of grammar' by Leibowitz exists, Lutyens may be pointing to his treaty *Qu'est-ce que la musique de douze sons? Le Concerto Pour Neuf Instruments op. 24 d'Anton Webern* (Liège: Editions Dynamo, 1948) or his *Introduction à la musique de douze sons. Les Variations Pour Orchestre op. 31, d'Arnold Schoenberg*, (Paris: L'Arche, 1949). Note, in this context, Badiou's dismissal of 'those who in the 1940s thought that victory was assured, and that dodecaphonism could be "academicized". Only the delicate crossing, through non-negotiable decisions, of some strategic points testifies to novelty. It does so by breaking apart what academicization misrepresented as an established result.' (Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event*, 2, tr. Alberto Toscano [London, New York: Continuum, 2009, published in French 2006], 84).

<sup>47</sup> René Leibowitz, *Schoenberg et son école. L'étape contemporaine du langage musical* (Paris: J. B. Janin, 1947), especially chapter XIII, 'Le langage musical actuel', 266–87.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. section 2.1.2.

<sup>49</sup> Brian Elias, 'Introduction to *O saisons, ô châteaux!*' (for a memorial broadcast of Lutyens works, 08/12/1983), in Lutyens, *Letters to Brian Elias*, GB-Lbl, Add MS 71114: 1965–1983, fol. 215–6.

was taken up by Malcolm Hayes, but distinctly changed towards a feminine characterisation of Lutyens's setting of it: the piece

subtly recalled Britten in its choice of text and scoring (the lady herself would have had something to say in reply to that remark, I do *not* doubt) but effortlessly met the claims made for it by Brian Elias in his introduction: the music perfectly caught the acute sense of beauty conveyed by Rimbaud's brand of highly-charged disembodied ecstasy.<sup>50</sup>

In short: where the poem is highly charged and disembodied, Lutyens's setting of it is beautiful (corporeal) and reminiscent of Britten. Hence, what remains is an unoriginal, but beautiful setting – there can be no doubt that Lutyens would indeed 'have had something to say in reply'.

An earlier review by Gerald Larner connects the texts of this Cantata, the motet 'Excerpta tractatus logico-philosophici', and *The Country of the Stars* in the observation that 'all three texts inspired music of constructional unity, music of a self-sufficient system or absolute singularity of mood, rather than sustained conflict and dialectical progress.'<sup>51</sup> This author implies a lack of masculine striving ('conflict', 'progress'), but admits to an equally masculine single-mindedness in construction and mood.

Compared to the text of Schoenberg's equally short, contemporary, cantata *A Survivor from Warsaw* op. 46, the choice of Rimbaud might seem fallen out of its time, even naïve. Despite this and the rumours about John Davenport's late supply of the text, however, the setting of this text sends a strong message. Lutyens chooses the outlandish with a French text by a prodigious *enfant terrible* and the technique of Austro-German emigrants and melts them together into one single statement. Her complaint of backing 'the wrong horses' resembles the continental modernist composer's complaint in hindsight (if this brief judgement à la 'modernism by personality' is permitted here). Nevertheless, Lutyens bore the revolutionary's burden with pride and stylized herself as an English Schoenberg.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Malcolm Hayes, 'Music', *The Listener*, 5 January 1984, 27–8, 28.

<sup>51</sup> Gerald Larner, 'Frozen Music. Elisabeth Lutyens at Sixty', *The Listener*, 24 Nov 1966, 784.

<sup>52</sup> Lutyens, *Goldfish Bowl*, 168.

In her determination to swim against the English current with a foreign text as well as a foreign compositional technique Lutyens claimed a place as England's personified experimental response to the idea of modernism. She considered her serial technique not a feminine imitation of a great man's achievement, but an independent stream of re-enchanting musical force, conceived by an outsider (a British woman serialist) in a moment of desperation. This clearly characterizes her response as an experimental one, facilitated by the Event-response model's ability to acknowledge experimental tendencies beyond Schoenberg's own. Her choice of text, then, has provided valuable insight into her mindset and is moreover necessary for the analysis of the musical structure. Nevertheless, the argument about Lutyens's response to modernism in *O saisons* must dig deeper and find its type in the analysis of the music, as the theoretical part of this thesis has set out.

### 5.2.1.3 Breaking the Rules: Choice of Textbook

Lutyens worked the text into the four-part structure and serialism of her piece and thereby kept the poem's division in two times seven lines (see fig. 5.2). The first half ends with the Gallic rooster's song; the second picks up on the incantation to kill off all desires. An instrumental exposition **A** opens the piece (for a prelude this part is too long and important) and recedes into the first vocal part **B**. It is followed by an instrumental interlude **C** and the final vocal part with postlude **A'** (18 bars vocal main part + 14 bars postlude, including the last line 'O saisons, ô châteaux' in five bars with soprano and nine instrumental bars). This means that the voice can be heard in less than a third of the piece. Lutyens neither repeated nor changed parts of the text (apart from minor spelling errors), nor did she make use of extensive melismas; the only true melisma appears at one of the text's emotional peaks and seems a bit old-fashioned: it is placed on the word 'to fly' ('Il fait qu'elle fuie et vole!'). All in all, the ratio between the four parts is 4:2:2:3, to which the time in performance roughly corresponds.

<b>A</b>	bb. 1–41	Instrumental exposition
<b>B</b>	bb. 42–64	O saisons, ô châteaux   Quelle âme est sans défauts?   O saisons, ô châteaux!   J'ai fait la magique étude   Du Bonheur, que nul élude.   O vive lui, chaque fois   Que chante le coq Gaulois.

- C** bb. 65–90 Instrumental interlude
- A'** bb. 91–122 Mais je n'aurais plus d'envie | Il s'est chargé de ma vie. | Ce  
Charme! Il prit âme et corps | Et dispersa tous efforts. | Que  
comprendre à ma parole? | Il fait qu'elle fuie et vole! | O  
saisons, ô châteaux  
+ instrumental postlude

Fig. 5.2: Lutyens, *O saisons, ô châteaux!*, formal structure.

In what is probably the earliest analysis proper of a Lutyens piece, Vivienne Olive detects a five-part structure (**A–B–C–D–E**) in *O saisons*, and the slightly later analysis by Sarah Jane Tenant-Flowers opts for a ternary structure that is however made up only of two types of material (**A–B–A'–A''**).<sup>53</sup> The use of row variants leads me to suggest a basic structure of three groups of material with a near recapitulation of **A** in the last part. **A** mostly uses material from the original row (it begins with three statements of the primary version *P*) and its variants, together with *I* (inversion) variants (ex. 5.3.1 to 5.3.4). In **B** – and **B** only – *P* constitutes the exclusive material and the soprano is deployed for the first time. **C** only uses material from variants of *RI* (retrograde inversion) and *R* (retrograde), which suffices to award it the status of an independent part. **A'** mirrors **A** in its use of *P* and *I* variants and it closes with three statements of *P*, as in the beginning of the piece. Although the texture is distinctively different because of the added soprano in **A'**, the dominance of the orchestral voice (of which the soprano becomes a part in **A'**) and the formal connections justify the labelling.





Ex. 5.3.4: Elisabeth Lutyens, *O saisons, ô châteaux!*, retrograde inversion of primary row ( $RI^0$ ).

As Tenant-Flowers points out, this was the first time that Lutyens had used as many variants of all three permutations of the original row,<sup>54</sup> and she thereby showed her technical mastery of the material. Yet this is where the challenges for her as an A-Modernist begin, because Lutyens's independence endangers her position as a 'proper' serialist by using certain characteristic serial idiosyncrasies.

For example, she connects consecutive row statements by using those variants that share end and start notes (ex. 5.4, in the cello in b. 84, E<sub>4</sub> and D<sub>4</sub> are 11 and 12 of  $RI^V$  as well as 1 and 2 of  $RI^{VII}$ ).

Ex. 5.4: Elisabeth Lutyens, *O saisons, ô châteaux!*, bb. 84–5, overlapping of last and first two notes of row permutations.

A second device is the synchronic statement of rows (ex. 5.5):

Ex. 5.5: Elisabeth Lutyens, *O saisons, ô châteaux!*, parallel rows in bb. 73–8:  $RI^VI$  (1<sup>st</sup> vln. div.),  $RI^{VIII}$  (2<sup>nd</sup> vln., vla.),  $RI^III$  (cello).

<sup>54</sup> Tenant-Flowers, 'Elisabeth Lutyens', 171–2.

Thirdly, it has been noted by Olive that Lutyens goes as far as to break rules of Viennese serialism by occasionally setting one note of the row in octave.<sup>55</sup> This will not surprise if Lutyens can be believed to have developed her serialism with a certain degree of independence from the Viennese – their practice would not have been a necessary basis for hers *per se*. Of course, the two differing approaches of the Viennese on the one and Lutyens on the other side could be ‘quilted’ as relatively masculine (the Viennese preference for rules and formal rationality, for example in the golden ratio) and relatively feminine (Lutyens’s ‘feeling’ and formal anarchy), although these restrictions are unhelpful both for Schoenberg and Berg’s frequent distortions of the row as for Lutyens’s adherence to a logical procedure and serial consistency. However, such a reading would indeliberately be backed by Sally Macarthur’s observation that *O saisons*’s ‘high point’ (what would be called climax in traditional analysis) does not obey the principally male ideal of the golden ratio. Instead, the most elevated moment in dynamics, texture, and density, together with the beginning of a statement of the original row on a pedal point in the strings (another ‘forbidden’ means in serialism, belying the equality of all 12 notes), comes as early as b. 42, the beginning of **B**.<sup>56</sup> This distances the piece from what McClary scolds as the image of the male orgasm in music – prolongation with a climax in the last third that subsides into calmness,<sup>57</sup> but I will turn later to the question whether it is helpful to characterize the piece as a ‘feminized’ version of serialism because of this. Here, it is perhaps enough to say that incidences such as the overlapping and simultaneity of row variants as well as pedal points and octaves establish her freedom with regard to textbook rules of serialism (if there ever were those) and loyalties to one particular technique in passing.

The evidence suggests that Lutyens uses the technique in as strictly organized a structure as could be expected from a Viennese serialist, but she achieves a unique accessibility. She may not have known certain rules or chosen to disregard them, but had she composed like a good Schoenberg pupil, she would have been subject to the accusation of imitation or of that of being more masculine than Schoenberg himself – both not desirable options for her. The structuring of the piece with the help of ‘forbidden’ effects is part and parcel of her project of re-enchantment,

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<sup>55</sup> Olive, ‘Lutyens’, 44.

<sup>56</sup> Macarthur, *Feminist Aesthetics*, 122.

<sup>57</sup> McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 112, 114.

which Lutyens uses to wrest serialism from a Schoenbergian dominance, and it is complemented by a structure whose parts flow into each other uninterruptedly (achieved by overlapping row variants). Within the framework of a logicalized Event-response model, this development finds a secure space, because it responds in an experimental way to an Event of modernism, which is represented by the existence of plural tonal systems and not by a Viennese serialism; whereas an A-Modernist reading would have to place *O saisons* awkwardly between Berg and some shade of regression because of its 'rule breakings'.

#### 5.2.1.4 A Woman as a Serialist

Of Elisabeth Lutyens's setting for strings, harp, mandoline, and guitar of a poem by Arthur Rimbaud, one felt that a maximum of means was used to produce a rather meagre effect.<sup>58</sup>

The critic of the *Western Morning News* in this short review falls in line with the maximalist perspective and attests Lutyens with a feminine and therefore failed attempt at maximalism in *O saisons*. Although the anonymous reviewer provides no information as to precisely which means (perhaps texture or serialism) failed to produce which effect (possibly bombastic loudness), the critic was not the only to doubt Lutyens's general ability to compose. *The Listener's* critic, Stephen Walsh, launched an attack on occasion of the celebration of Lutyens's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1966:

Lutyens's music is among the least obviously appealing of any currently being written by leading composers of her generation. To my ears there has always been an element of dryness about her music, and it doesn't take an anti-feminist to suggest that it may have something to do with her sex. [...] And with Lutyens, even in maturity, it remains true that her music often makes structural points which are hamstrung by the ordinariness of her creative thought.<sup>59</sup>

Here, femininity is in the lack of creative thought, which, if forced, produces only 'dry' music. In response to this, Susan Bradshaw and Richard Rodney Bennett flew to Lutyens's aid 20 days later, to be replied to by Walsh, who stressed that 'the gist of my argument was that although women made excellent artist-technicians (at least as good as men), there was a certain quality of femininity which made it

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<sup>58</sup> Anon., 'Gerald Cooper Concert', *The Western Morning News*, 13 February 1947, 2.

<sup>59</sup> Stephen Walsh, 'Music Last Week', *The Listener*, 8 December 1966, 869.

unsuited to creative art at the highest level.’<sup>60</sup> Of course this seems an old-fashioned argument, but its consequences for Lutyens were very real. In the latter reply, Walsh concluded that he had ‘landed in hot water’ and ceased to write reviews of Lutyens pieces for *The Listener*. This in turn led to the absence of normal reviews of her pieces in this magazine until 1972. Therefore it can indeed be taken as an example of how even such petty fights about gender confirmed Lutyens’s fears about her position in music life.

In fact, both critics wanted to point out an extreme A-Modernist argument: that women cannot be modernists, because they cannot compose serially. The given reasons are naturally vague, even obscure, and it seems futile to speculate what stereotype might have been the foremost: that women lack imaginative power or genius, or that they lack technical/mathematical/logical ability. As became clear in previous sections, it might be the mere knowledge that the composer is a woman that starts speculations about features of a piece that would go unnoticed or would possibly even be taken as specifically innovative in a man’s work. This differentiation seems unavoidable but it says more about our idea of serialism than of the skills of women composers. A-Modernism can make this connection between technique and gender because of its fixation on a male line of innovators. It is, however, a line which the logicalized Event-response model rejects owing to its new concentration on the notion that modernism, whether by a man or woman, always depends on the individual piece’s response to an *idea* of modernism, not the ownership of a dominant technique.

Owing to the predominance of A-Modernism, McClary still needs to quilt serialism in the standard masculinist way as a rationalized, rule-ridden, formally extreme enterprise, for whose execution genius is needed. Women composers could develop several strategies to cope with this – and it is important to note that strategies would have to be found because serialism may be a detested, but highly prestigious technique. They could ignore it altogether (and risk being pushed to the margins), or use it embedded in other techniques (and risk being deemed too feeble to use it ‘properly’), or use it exclusively in a piece or even a whole *œuvre* (and risk exposing this music to direct comparison with the great male inventor).

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<sup>60</sup> Idem, ‘Music Last Week’, *The Listener*, 29 December 1966, 977; Susan Bradshaw and Richard Rodney Bennett, ‘Elisabeth Lutyens. Letter to the Editor’, *The Listener*, 29 December 1966, 969.

On a first glance, the latter is what Lutyens does, thereby situating herself on the edge between charges of imitation (if she obeyed the rules) and feminine inability (if she didn't).

*O saisons* has enough of both rules and disregard for them to put its composer in a tight spot in an A-Modernist reading. In what follows, an analysis of Lutyens's serial structure in *O saisons* shows her mastery of the rules, but also demonstrates how she counters these with idiosyncratic features in her serialism and a specific texture and dynamics, which can be used as arguments for her independence of masculinist serialism. This makes the removal of the masculinist quilting point even more urgent and clearly shows the advantages of the Event-response model.

As Tenant-Flowers's 'neutral' (i.e. masculinist) analysis of *O saisons* shows, the piece is constructed serially throughout.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, there is not one note without a clear role in a row in **A**, an outlook that however quickly changes in the following sections, where a note's belonging to a row is sometimes ambiguous. With the soprano's deployment in b. 42, 'irregularities' of this sort begin to occur. To start with, the first statement of *P*, for example (bb. 42–4, ex. 5.6), sees a mixing up of the row order in an unprecedented way. Guitar, harp, and strings hold a pedal of 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 already, while the soprano just begins her melodic line.

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<sup>61</sup> Tenant-Flowers, 'Elisabeth Lutyens', 173.

Ex. 5.6: Elisabeth Lutyens, *O saisons, ô châteaux!*, b. 42.

This soprano line, additionally, omits row pitch class 7, which is played in the right moment (but hardly heard, due to its *pp*) in cello and bass over nearly four bars, which include another variant from bb. 46–7 (the cellis' 7 then becomes the 10 of the new row) in the soprano.<sup>62</sup>

B. 45 again demonstrates Lutyens's technique of overlapping, which generates the fluent passages between the four parts. It ends the soprano's phrase from bb. 42–4 with A and A<sub>b</sub>, pitch classes 1 and 2 from the b. 42 row, but b. 46 begins the next variant, and in this row A and A<sub>b</sub> are 11 and 12. The same overlapping technique had already been applied in a cello tremolo in bb. 23–4. Another important development is Lutyens's mixture of parts and their respective rows. Olive describes what happens in bb. 51–3 as 'breaking the series's logic',<sup>63</sup> when, in fact, Lutyens does the exact opposite of what Olive suggests: she lets two variants run

<sup>62</sup> This complication and 'irregularity' toys with a 'hidden' number 7, which plays a role in the poem's structure as well and could be read as a nod towards its structural importance in the context of the poem's magic.

<sup>63</sup> Olive, 'Lutyens', 42 (my translation).

parallel through the four string parts. The impression that this is a ‘free’ phrase merely arises from the spreading of the notes through several parts (ex. 5.7).

The image shows a musical score for four string parts: 1st Violin, 2nd Violin, Viola, and Cello. The music is in 3/4 time. The notes are spread across the parts, with some notes underlined in red and italicized to indicate a specific row (P<sup>V</sup>). The notes are numbered 1 through 12, corresponding to the twelve notes of the chromatic scale.

Ex. 5.7: Elisabeth Lutyens, *O saisons, ô châteaux!*, bb. 51–3, rows P<sup>III</sup> (in black roman type) and P<sup>V</sup> (in red, italic, underlined type).

Even where a consistent application of the row is not as obvious as in these bars, it is still present and defies the idea that Lutyens allowed her row consistency to ‘lapse’. Together with the overlapping of last and first pitch classes of different rows this technique is well within the boundaries of ‘normal’ serialism. Lutyens achieves a good deal of her specific melodic soundscape through the aforementioned spreading of row notes through different parts, and she can thus produce melodic lines that consist of extraserial intervals such as major seconds, fourths, and generally tonally progressing lines, as in this example (ex. 5.8):

The image shows a musical score for soprano in 3/4 time. The melody is written on a single staff. The lyrics are: "Que com - prendre à ma pa - rol - e? Il fait qu'el - le fuie - et vo - le!". The music features a melodic line with various intervals, including major seconds and fourths. The final note is marked with a forte (f) dynamic and a tenuto (ten.) marking.

Ex. 5.8: Elisabeth Lutyens, *O saisons, ô châteaux!*, bb. 101–8, soprano.

However, a third feature of *O saisons*, its near-diatonic repetitions, certainly is not (ex. 5.9).

The image shows a musical score for solo violin in 3/4 time. The melody is written on a single staff. The lyrics are: "Que com - prendre à ma pa - rol - e? Il fait qu'el - le fuie - et vo - le!". The music features a melodic line with near-diatonic repetitions, marked with a forte (f) dynamic and a piano (pp) dynamic.

Ex. 5.9: Elisabeth Lutyens, *O saisons, ô châteaux!*, solo violin bb. 59–63.

It seems difficult to defend this kind of ‘transgression’, because at this point, the traditional quilting point finally turns decisively against *O saisons*: this seems a piece by a regressive composer who wanted to hold on to a nineteenth-century

sound while pretending to be avant-garde. Macarthur has attempted to defend Lutyens by calling this her 'personal brand' of serialism, used to achieve the lamenting sound which the composer had identified as characteristic for the piece before anything else.<sup>64</sup>

However, to call those means which create this specific listening impression a 'personal style' overlooks the fact that women can be creative in dealing with rules, too. If Lutyens has to be protected from making a 'mistake' by having to retreat into a 'domestic' serialism, then the masculinist quilting point is reinforced, not displaced. Rather, Lutyens hereby claims her freedom to make her own rules whenever these serve her compositional purposes – just as any male composer would be expected to do. In order to acknowledge this feature as such a freedom, we must let go of the idea – the quilting point – that it takes a man to develop serialism in another direction. What it does take, in fact, is an experimental response to modernism, which can be given in a completely different way from Webern or Schoenberg's responses; it can even be given by pulling serialism back into an enchanted soundscape, as occurs in *O saisons*. Despite, or perhaps because of, the tonal appearance, this is a truly experimental response: Lutyens's chromaticism is not a feminization, but an experiment in serialism. As the following sections show, this claim can be – and must be – bolstered, however, by examining the music further.

#### **5.2.1.5 Webern: Choice of Quilting Point**

The question of how much Webern (row intervals, serial technique, and texture) there is in *O saisons* has been one which has occupied critics frequently. Taking sides on this issue is crucial to them because, in a masculinist world, too close a relationship with pieces by Webern would undermine Lutyens's claim to compositional originality. On the other hand, an association with Webern of any kind whatsoever can guarantee membership in the modernist club and must therefore seem desirable for commentators defending Lutyens's position from an A-Modernist perspective. This also touches on the question whether Britain takes

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<sup>64</sup> Macarthur, *Feminist Aesthetics*, 99.

part in the musical innovations and developments of the Continent and it thereby functions as an additional complication of the already gendered discourse.

In accordance with this, opinions vary. Bradshaw, pianist and so-called 'conscience of composers' aimed for a balance in her celebration of the composer on the occasion of Lutyens's 65<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>65</sup> Bradshaw's first observation is that

The very size and scope of her output [makes] her the opposite of composers like Berg and Webern, and much more akin (in her attitude to work) to the salaried, court-based composers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>66</sup>

On the other hand,

The formal design of all Miss Lutyens's music seems to derive from a basically harmonic inspiration, and to progress by means of vertical relationships: that is to say, the harmony is functional, in the Austro-German sense, rather than primarily colouristic, in the French.<sup>67</sup>

If the old national gendered stereotypes of the virile, rational, German style contrasting the emotional, sensuous, French were applied, then Lutyens would be on the masculine, German side. Yet, Bradshaw defends an individual approach to composing in general from getting mixed up with a specifically modernist composition technique, as she seeks to reconcile originality and independence with her claim for Lutyens's membership in the crucial club.

Lutyens herself aimed for a similar balance when she insisted on just the right amount of independence from the Viennese in an interview with Robert Saxton: 'R.S.: You feel part of the European tradition, then? E.L.: Yes. I feel part of European culture, but it was the Purcell fantasias which started me off on the idea of serial music, rather than Schoenberg.'<sup>68</sup>

A noticeable influence of Webern would usually count as a good sign for the modernism of a piece, as can be seen by strong protests against Lutyens's status by Searle-pupil David Wright, who defends his teacher's claim to being Britain's first

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<sup>65</sup> Gerard McBurney, 'Susan Bradshaw. Pianist, Champion of Modern Music and "Conscience of Composers"', *The Independent*, 01 February 2005, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/susan-bradshaw-6153451.html> (10/08/2012).

<sup>66</sup> Susan Bradshaw, 'The Music of Elisabeth Lutyens', *The Musical Times* 112/1541 (July 1971), 653+655-656, 653.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 655.

<sup>68</sup> Elisabeth Lutyens and Robert Saxton, 'Elisabeth Lutyens at 75. An Interview with Robert Saxton', *The Musical Times*, 122/1660 (June 1981), 368-9, 368.

serialist on the grounds of Searle's studies with Webern and Lutyens's alleged admittance of not composing in a properly serial manner.<sup>69</sup> Lutyens herself, on the contrary, would deny not just her proximity, but even her knowledge of Webern's serialism at the time of composing her Chamber Concerto no. 1 (cf. section 5.2) and thereby seems to set herself apart from associations with the Viennese.

In the attempt to mediate, Anthony Payne relates Lutyens to Webern and then credits her with solving a Webernian problem:

It was Webern who seems to us now to have discovered the most characteristic serial properties [...]. But Webern was a miniaturist who discovered a style and technique ideally suited to his severely limited conceptions of exquisite sound frozen in isolation. What is the composer to do who would write expansively in the twelve-note style yet sees in Webern's rather than in Schoenberg's (or Berg's) methods the more genuinely realistic attitude to the series and all it implies?

This problem, and its solution, has been the most important stylistic factor in the development of Elisabeth Lutyens, the pioneer of twelve-note writing in this country and one of the few British composers to have adopted the method before the second world war.<sup>70</sup>

Naturally, matters complicate when this balance between too little and too much Webern is to be translated into an actual analysis, as can be seen in Olive's study. The outcome of her traditional analysis in the masculinist tradition of pitch-class analysis, category measurement, feature counting, or syntax formulation, which has been criticized by both McClary and Macarthur,<sup>71</sup> necessarily leads to the sort of 'bafflement' with which Olive concludes her analysis of *O saisons*.<sup>72</sup> Olive notes the similarity of row intervals with Webern's, of overlapping last and first row notes, and of orchestral texture.<sup>73</sup> Her bafflement results from the contrast of these features, which are used 'correctly', with 'forbidden' features like row notes being played *coll-ottava* or bars that present 'seemingly "irrational" insertions which elude a "proper" analysis.'<sup>74</sup> This type of analysis can only reach the conclusion that this type of music with its oscillation between German serialism, French poetry, and English idiosyncrasy is too difficult to find a firm place in English music

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<sup>69</sup> David C. F. Wright, 'Elisabeth Lutyens', *Women of Note Quarterly: The Magazine of Historical and Contemporary Women Composers*, 8/2 (2000), 1–5, 3–4.

<sup>70</sup> Anthony Payne, 'Lutyens's Solution to Serial Problems', *The Listener*, 5 December 1963, 961.

<sup>71</sup> Macarthur, *Feminist Aesthetics*, 87–8.

<sup>72</sup> Olive, 'Lutyens', 46 (my translation).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 44, 45.

life; Olive's guiding question about the origin of Lutyens's difficulties on the English music market is thereby answered, although she points to the composer's gender and circumstances as further reasons for the lacking appreciation.<sup>75</sup> It is doubtful whether an analysis operating under these two parameters can ever escape their dialectics.

With the Event-response model, there is no need to find a balance for Lutyens between too much or too little a Weberian outline; if one discards that set of scales (as the Event-response model does by making Webern and the Viennese one of three responses to, and not the centre of, modernism), then one can appreciate her piece without bafflement. According to the logicalized model, all composers in the first half of the twentieth century see themselves confronted with a choice between a plurality of harmonic systems – serialism, free atonality, tonality (diatonic as well as modal or octatonic), and of course mixtures of the three. Every response to this choice in a piece of music is a response to the new possibilities modernism offers and accounts for cases such as Holst's in *Egdon Heath* as well as Lutyens's in *O saisons*. The latter chose to adopt a technique for her concert pieces which she had derived at least partly from old English roots while at the same time maintaining strong bonds with the Austro-German avant-garde via Edward Clark and acquaintances like Leibowitz (and later Stravinsky). Not only did she thereby go against the traditions of an older composer generation in Britain (personified perhaps in Vaughan Williams), but she refined her serialism further and further and thus moved away from foreign serialist models as well. In the early serialist pieces such as the Chamber Concerto no. 1, she made no attempt to soften the sound at the cost of consistency, and only when she had finally acquired the means to have both in *O saisons* did she allow a more appealing surface.

*O saisons* therefore is an advanced experiment in British serialism. The problem seems to be that it was attempted by a woman, whose response to modernism would be received in the light of a powerful master signifier of masculinist maximalism. Once this has been removed from the collection of signifiers, the view is free for the musical signifiers which have remained unchanged in *O saisons* and make it an experimental response.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 46.

### 5.2.2 Serialism as Feminine

When the masculinist quilting point of serialism is thus set aside, the new position of women serialists could raise the question whether serialism has a feminine or even feminist side in itself. Sally Macarthur tentatively points in this direction when she attempts a defence of Lutyens, which bears some similarities to mine. Her overall aim in *Feminist Aesthetics in Music* is to suspend the masculinist reading of music, which is why she does not just point to the masculinism of serialism or free atonality itself, but also to the masculinism of music analysis.<sup>76</sup> The consequence of this analysis is a canon of music composed by men, analysed by men, and declared worthy of preserving by men, and, implicitly, thereby shaping the next generation of male composers' work. I agree with Macarthur to this point. Her conclusion, however, is the claim that Lutyens breaks apart from this vicious circle by feminizing her music:

Far from sounding irrational and chaotic, then, as McClary implies is the case with Schoenberg's music, this work sounds coherent as if it has been logically organized. [...] It could even be the case that at a subconscious level Lutyens has made a deliberate choice to feminize her music, while Schoenberg's main project was to defeminize his music by shifting focus away from the sound of the music to the written particularities of the score.<sup>77</sup>

The sign of this feminized serialism is its sound, which is claimed to be coherent, logical, and to fit the chosen text. Macarthur adds that a Schoenberg or Webern setting of Rimbaud would not achieve the same quality as Lutyens's, which sprinkles the serialism with tonal elements to gain its particular sound.<sup>78</sup> While this observation may be correct, the conclusion is not necessarily that Lutyens feminizes or, as Macarthur even puts it, 'tames', her music. Lutyens herself probably would have rejected the idea that serialism needed feminine taming at all. In *A Goldfish Bowl*, she describes not serialism itself as a problem for her recognition, but fights with the conservative sections of the BBC, whom she accused of sensing something alien and unpopular in serialism, and her situation as a wage earner and mother. When Macarthur claims that Lutyens feminizes her serialism, then she leaves the masculinist quilting point of serialism in its place, and in fact enforces it, which is no more her goal than mine. Rather, I want to

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<sup>76</sup> Macarthur, *Feminist Aesthetics*, 84.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

suggest that serialism does not need to have its features tamed or feminized to enable Lutyens to step out of the shadow of the Viennese modernist giants, because it is first and foremost our perception of serialism that is gendered.

At first, however, *O saisons*'s embedded tonal elements, its texture of string sounds, its dynamics, and its flowing transitions between sections and phrases are strong arguments in favour of readings such as Macarthur's, which claims that Lutyens deliberately feminized her piece. This chapter's analysis of the music as well as of the text has shown that tonal sprinkles, as well as the particularities of the other parameters, do not necessarily serve to soften the usual hysterical appearance of serialism, but to introduce the technique as creating a spellbinding sound, which connects the music once more to the context of magic in Rimbaud's poem. An example: *O saisons* has its Mahlerian moments – quasi-tonal cadences which connect the four parts. In fact, each of the four parts has at least one near-tonal occurrence, with an accumulation in the instrumental **A** and **C**, and at the ends of parts in general. In **A**, these are in bb. 12–6, 27–8, and 37–41, each time consisting of strongly chromatic development, rich in appoggiaturas. They centre on C# major (b. 12), F major (b. 16), B major (b. 28), and E $\flat$  major (b. 38), sometimes involving the lamenting (falling) minor second appoggiatura. In the shorter **B**, these moments are scarce because of the angular and dominating soprano line, yet by the end of this section, bb. 60–3 see an inverted B minor chord in the solo violin compete with E (2<sup>nd</sup> vlns.) and E $\flat$  (1<sup>st</sup> vlns.) oscillating around B $\flat$  (viola, celli). This is continued in **C** in bb. 75–6, and finally in **A'** with a short glimpse of B major/minor (b. 95) and of a seventh chord on G (b. 108). Despite themselves, all these occurrences are situated within a strictly serial structure. In the case of, say, Berg's Violin Concerto, this kind of tonal serialism is embraced much more, even to the point at which the Concerto has been described as adhering not to tonality *or* atonality, but to Schoenberg's own concept of floating tonality.<sup>79</sup> Yet, what is deemed distinctive for him would be deemed feminine for her.

The feminization argument rests on a second column: the piece's restriction to string instruments. Maybe *O saisons* would indeed sound much more masculine if the solo violin were a trumpet. It is not the case, however, that the instrumentation

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<sup>79</sup> Anthony Pople, *Berg: Violin Concerto* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), particularly 70–1.

and texture leads to a sweet and quiet sound. Even upon a superficial listening, the impression of tonality and stringed softness is at least balanced, if not overturned, by fast changing dynamic waves, which spell out ‘drama’ rather than ‘lament’. A closer look reveals the dynamic centre to be *p*, with wide variations in both directions. The piece starts and ends in *pp*, and at times soars to *fff* (b. 26, strings; repeated *sfz* in b. 59 upper strings) or retreats to *ppp* (b. 90, guitar, strings *al niente*; b. 101, strings). The least common dynamic indication in the piece is the exact middle between these extremes – *mf*. Instead, *crescendi* and *decrescendi* dominate the scene, as in bb. 1–7, which see a compressed escalation from *pp* to *ff* (paralleled in the texture’s density) and back. All in all, only 25 bars of the whole piece have *no* (de)crescendo in at least one part, most of these in phrases which prominently feature the soprano, as for example bb. 48–50 (‘J’ai fait la magique etude du bonheur’), which stands in *p subito*. Lutyens is able to weave this dense dynamic layer because she imposes it onto a flowing harmonic layer of longer duration values, thereby distancing the piece from Webern’s preference for the shortest duration values. This allows *O saisons* to sound dramatic and restless as well as tender and transparent at the same time. It does not, however, point to a feminization of serialism *per se*.

Rather, Lutyens does what Berg and Webern did as well, by using serialism to her own ends. This is only a problem if the listener thinks in A-Modernist categories of ‘proper’ serialism and ‘derivative’ serialism. This position might criticize *O saisons* on the grounds that its serialism does not ‘go deep enough’, that it does not ‘penetrate’ some perceived core of the piece and that the work therefore is not on the same level as its Viennese equivalent. In fact, of course, these categories never existed in the first place, which the Event-response model assumes as a given. That this is in fact so can be seen at a glance in the works of the Viennese school, including Schoenberg’s. Christian Martin Schmidt has remarked on this imaginary distinction:

A ‘law of the row’, as it was frequently hypostatized by post-WWII analysts, has never been issued; and such a normative predefinition against the freedom of compositional praxis would have been strange for Schoenberg, who not only possesses the priority of developing it but also has exercised a formative impact on the technique’s theoretical fundamentals.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Christian Martin Schmidt, ‘Schönberg, Arnold’, in *MGG2*. Personenteil 14, cols. 1580–1646, 1626 (my translation).

In praxis, a glance at Schoenberg's Piano Concerto op. 42 of 1942 suffices to see how akin the Concerto is to Lutyens's Cantata in its illusion of tonality on the surface of a strict serialism (incidentally, Schoenberg repeats row tones as well in order to create a flowing melodic impression, ex. 5.10).



Ex. 5.10: Arnold Schoenberg, *Piano Concerto op. 42*, bb. 1–7.

On the same note, Boulez claims about Webern's opp. 5 and 6:

Each time they are performed, they win their audience, however prejudiced it may have been in the beginning. In fact, Webern never had been so *seductive* before and perhaps never would be again. For the baroque charm – in the stylistic sense of the word – emanating from these pieces proved completely transitory in Webern's work. He was to bend his effort toward a rigor that is no less *beautiful* but is less directly intelligible.<sup>81</sup>

The reason for these pieces' beauty is that they 'consist of a melody – if one will give a large meaning to the term – accompanied by chords that although they no longer have any tonal function, nonetheless are in close relation (chromatically) with that melody.'<sup>82</sup> It would hardly be doubted that the Schoenberg and the Webern represent 'proper' serialism and still apparently manage to sound beautiful or melodically tonal when it suits their purpose. The differences between Lutyens's serialism and the two Viennese composers' hence begin to melt away.

What is more, the Event-response model can accommodate changes of technique within the tradition of modernism without constructing actual new musical signifiers or relying on persona or biographical circumstances. In the case of Lutyens, this means that her doubtlessly modernist serial technique merely needs to be looked at and listened to with eyes and ears free from masculine modernist agendas and impediments in order to validate it as an experimental response to modernism. This response is not 'reactive' (in the Badiouian, more regressive

<sup>81</sup> Pierre Boulez, 'Debussy and the Dawn of Modernism, Webern's Rarified Beauty, Stravinsky's Sacre: The Cornerstone of Modern Music', in Jack Sullivan (ed.), *Words on Music. From Addison to Barzun* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1990), 273–81, 276–7, my emphasis.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

sense), as the feminization argument might imply, because it insists on a strict and unambiguous serial structure and also develops serialism's particular strand of pantonality idiosyncratically and against what it perceived of as the tonal as well as serial mainstream. Lutyens's position of *O saisons* is that of justice (to return to Badiou's musical variant) in that she may indeed arrive late at the experimental response, but she appropriates it and turns it into something which can in fact help provide a paradigm for a British modernism. The effect is twofold. *O saisons*, along with Lutyens's other serial compositions, confirms the existence of British musical modernism in the form of an experimental response, and in turn it evacuates its composer from what still must be admitted to be a bottom drawer of music historiography (labelled 'women composers') into one of the top drawers ('modernist composers').<sup>83</sup>

### ***5.3 Conclusion: The Experimental Modernist***

That Elisabeth Lutyens is an interesting and unjustifiably underexposed composer has been shown by some 20 years of music-biographical and analytical research. Still, in this research the composer appears as an outsider or, more recently, as a member of an outsider group of women composers.<sup>84</sup> At the same time, she has remained strangely distanced from the strong modernist currents of the twentieth century despite her 'conversion' to (or invention of) serialism as one of the first, arguably *the* first British composer to use tone rows continuously. Most likely, a combination of issues – her gender, her location, and even her own decisions not just in music but also in her private and public life – added to this situation, although her pieces of music might be among the most interesting objects of study for scholars of British modernism. Lutyens's music therefore found itself in an equally difficult, if different, situation as Holst's did at the beginning of chapter 4: where Holst's music did not seem unequivocally modernist or conservative enough to be categorized in the traditional modernist either/or, Lutyens seemed to make too many 'mistakes' in her serialism, or to want too much beautiful sound, or to write too small or short pieces, to deserve a space in the canons of modernism.

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<sup>83</sup> It is important to state again that there is nothing wrong with the drawer 'women composers' apart from the fact that in an ideal world, it would not be necessary.

<sup>84</sup> Jennifer Doctor, 'Intersecting Circles: The Early Careers of Elizabeth Maconchy, Elisabeth Lutyens and Grace Williams', *Women & Music 2* (1998), 90–109; Mathias, *Sirens*.

This chapter has suggested that *O saisons* responds to modernism experimentally with its strict and yet melodious serialism. By analyzing this piece, I have established that this type of response can, perhaps paradoxically, be characterized by experiments *beyond* or *against* what is considered experimental in the early twentieth century. The signifier of the experimental response is atonality, and Lutyens pushes her atonality in *O saisons* to its limits, that is, to the point at which it nearly sounds tonal again. *O saisons's* response is nevertheless experimental, because the piece dares to break even the 'rules' of experimentalism with its dramatic melodies and pitch class repetitions. Like Badiou's *Spartacus*, who established the contradictory position that a slave can be free, this piece of music frames a provocative idea: that music is free to transcend its composition technique in its soundscape.

In order to arrive at this conclusion, however, the masculinist gendering of modernism had to be suspended. Only then can Lutyens become more than a woman composer searching for artistic expression of femininity in beautiful sounds or looking for a way to make a difficult and rational technique more 'approachable'. Once this knot of modernism and masculinism is cut, it may be possible to revise judgements of Lutyens as an outsider, a miniaturist, or a composer of a feminine serialism in order to assess her work as a central experimental response to modernism. The advantage of the Event-response model for the assessment of a composer such as Lutyens is that its strict network of a technical master signifier of the Event of modernism and, also technical, signifiers of each response type, prevents the accumulation of gendered signifiers of modernism. Unlike the approach to use the implicitly gendered maximalism or a strictly Schoenbergian technique and affiliation as master signifiers, the logicalized Event-response model keeps these signifiers out of the analysis and thereby helps to examine pieces of music, and not their composers' gender.

Finally, Lutyens's *O saisons, ô châteaux!* provides an opportunity to rethink the possibilities of serialism, which is afforded a new context in Lutyens's *Cantata*. Her serialism could perhaps be called magical serialism. Where the technique usually tends to be regarded as an obsessive counting and organizing of numbered pitch classes – a disenchantment of music – this new serialism seeks to re-enchant music

by using serialism as a magician would use alchemy. It thereby seems to reconnect with a Pythagorean understanding of music as elements in mathematical connection with an effect on the human mind. The pitch classes, the rows they form, and the rows' variants are not the object of the piece, but the syllables of spells and incantations, which the magician (the composer) works into the end product, a lump of gold (or a piece of music with a claim to archaic rituals as well as to modernism). As this chapter's reading has shown, it is possible to dissolve the connection between serialism on the one hand and formalism and masculinism on the other, and to provide alternatives that expand the canon of serialist modernism and open serialism up at the same time. This dissolving of old ties has not led, however, to a B-Modernist loose association of biography or topic to musical modernism. The text Lutyens sets in *O saisons* is no more the reason that the piece is modernist than her biography. Rather, the serialism and its development is the reason that the piece is modernist, but *O saisons's* magic lies in its post-tonal tonal illusions, which have been freed from being associated with feminine chromaticism and, with the help of the Event-response model, been attributed to an experimental response to modernism itself.

The following and final case study of William Walton's 'Said King Pompey' from *Façade* will strike a different note by comparing another, older, experimental response to modernism and its younger, ironic, revision. Unlike Lutyens, who would use serialism in all her works after 1939, Walton made several transitions between different types of responses throughout his lifetime and is therefore featured with two versions of one piece of music in the following chapter.

## Chapter 6. Walton's *Façade* on the Path to Irony

If Holst and Lutyens's music may be labelled triadic and experimental throughout much of their respective careers, this chapter finds that the same cannot be said of William Walton. His collection of jazzy, humorous, and mostly miniature, pieces for reciter and instrumental ensemble, *Façade*, promises valuable insights into the development of its response to modernism because Walton worked on it between 1921 and 1979 – even if only 'on and off', as the composer reminisced in an interview in 1973.<sup>1</sup> Close observers such as the composer's biographer Michael Kennedy found this unusual history of composition particularly interesting because of the changes *Façade* underwent, be it changes to existing pieces of the cycle, the insertion of new pieces, or the withdrawal of others. Naturally, music historians have not told this history neutrally: Kennedy quotes Constant Lambert's comment about the development of the collection from modernist to 'true Walton':

[The period of 1925–6] also produced the second version of *Façade*. [...] In the original version, which dates from his Central European period, the instruments were mainly occupied by complicated arabesques and the melodic interest was slight – the second version, however, is one good tune after another and each number is a gem of stylisation and parody.<sup>2</sup>

The 'original version' is said to be modernist but bad, the second version good, but not necessarily modernist, music.

This narrative serves to explain the failure of *Façade*'s 1923 public premiere in the Aeolian Hall, with its badly fitting 'Central European' modernism, while its later versions were a success because of their melodic richness and wit – it is the battle of Continental modernism versus Britishness all over again, of 'difficulty' versus 'good tunes'. Translated into the idiom of the Event-response model, however, Lambert seems to say that the change from an experimental response to modernism to another type of response (of the triadic or ironic kind) brought the work into its own and revealed its true character. This is the thesis that the core sections of this chapter examine.

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<sup>1</sup> William Walton in the BBC feature *The Façade Affair*. 12 June 1973, BBC Radio Three.

<sup>2</sup> Constant Lambert, quoted in Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Walton* (Oxford, New York: OUP, 1989), 33. This claim is repeated in David Lloyd-Jones' 'Introductory Notes', in *ibid.*, Stewart R. Craggs (eds.), *William Walton Edition. Façade Entertainments* (vol. 7, Oxford: OUP, 2000), xiv.

Yet any detailed enquiry into *Façade* unavoidably has to start with a few remarks on its composer's no less remarkable situation at the time of composition; not so much in order to repeat the notorious anecdotes about his lodging with the illustrious Sitwell brothers, but to highlight the entirely new facet that Walton's inclusion brings to the group of modernist composers in this thesis. The question 'which *Façade*?' demands an answer as well, as the name of the collection does not only stand for several different versions of the *Entertainment*, but additionally for two suites, several ballet choreographies, and numerous piano reductions. The multiplicity of available versions facilitates the main argument of this chapter: that *Façade* – or at least some of its parts – metamorphosed over time from an experimental response to modernism to an ironic one.

This chapter features a critical review of existing attempts at categorizing and analyzing *Façade* and my own analysis of the ironic character of *Façade*'s later version. Between these two parts sits a brief mediating section about the ironic subject in concert music, which establishes the grid for the following analysis.

## **6.1 Introduction: William Walton and Edith Sitwell**

### **Young Walton's Flawed Biography**

My choice of Walton as a subject of one of the 'negative' responses to Badiou's modernism brings Harper-Scott's recent monograph once more in close proximity, since it deals extensively with Walton's *Troilus and Cressida*. Needless to say, the opera is situated more than half a lifetime away from *Façade*, which might be labelled a student work, had Walton been a proper student. This chapter seeks to examine a powerful aspect of this composer's development which Harper-Scott's argument has overlooked, despite the common philosophical background of this and his study. *The Quilting Points* claims, wrongly I suggest, that the early *Façade* was not on the faithful side of Badiou's calculation.<sup>3</sup> As this chapter demonstrates, Walton may be the only British composer whose development spans experimental beginnings, a characteristically triadic main phase, which Harper-Scott has

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<sup>3</sup> J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism: Revolution, Reaction, and William Walton* (Cambridge, New York: CUP, 2012), 222.

examined, and an ironic undercurrent in his later work. To label him to a reactive modernist is therefore not sufficient.

Walton's early start in music, facilitated and supervised by the Sitwells, is an aspect which sets him apart from the other two composers in this thesis. Walton was not yet in his twenties when he began to work on *Façade*, whereas both Holst and Lutyens were mature composers of a certain reputation and standing when they composed the pieces examined in the previous chapters.

What is more, Holst had seen active service during the First World War, while Lutyens had felt the deprivation and austerity of the Second World War as a mother caring for an entire family. William Walton, by contrast, had no first-hand memories of Flanders, but he remembered not receiving proper teaching or food as a choir-boy at Christ Church, Oxford; presumably because many teachers were away and there were food shortages between 1914 and 1918.<sup>4</sup> Walton spent the Second World War (whose arrival Holst did not live to see) with Alice Wimbourne at Ashby St Ledgers and its immediate aftermath in Buenos Aires. This background may serve as a reminder of one of the conclusions of 2.2.2, in which I argued that modernism, and in particular British modernism, cannot be tied just to the perceived modernism of the First World War, but that it must be open to younger or 'uninvolved' composers as well. The War shaped composers and countries, naturally, but it is not the master signifier of modernism.<sup>5</sup>

Walton was what one might call a bright young thing, but initially without academic success, having failed his third and final attempt at his Oxford Responsions at the age of 18. He feared being sent back to Oldham and faced consequences for his immediate future – consequences which would also influence the conception of *Façade*. Not only was he young then, but he had no musical degree or, indeed, pedigree, to distinguish himself. Unlike Lutyens or Holst, he held no particular associations with the powerful Royal College of Music in London. He may have been partly brought up on Parry and Stanford's music and was under

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<sup>4</sup> Susana Walton, *William Walton. Behind the Façade* (Oxford, New York: OUP, 1989), 43.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. section 2.2.3. This is an idea brought forward in two chapters of Matthew Riley's (ed.) *British Music and Modernism. 1895–1960* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010): in Daniel Grimley's 'Landscape and Distance. Vaughan Williams, Modernism and the Symphonic Pastoral', 147–74 and Christopher M. Scheer's "'A Direct and Intimate Realization". Holst and Formalism in the 1920s', 109–24.

Hugh Allen's supervision at Oxford,<sup>6</sup> but he never went to the Royal College as a student because of his failure in the exam, and later did not become a teacher there, probably not least because of his withdrawal to Ischia. Walton's lack of a college degree and his informal *Wanderjahre* with the Sitwells refutes the idea that the British hotbed of modernism was the Royal College, which, after all, produced the serialists Lutyens and Searle, and also Maconchy. Like the non-musical signifier of the War, the RCM does not feature as a quilting point of modernism in this thesis, and the following analyses of Walton's 'Said King Pompey' will confirm this rejection.

All in all, three strong 'flaws' stand out in young Walton's biography:

*no War, no degree, no Royal College.*

They mark him as a good foil to the other two composers whose works are examined in this thesis and thereby are able to strengthen the claim to a wide applicability of my model of modernism.

### **The Sitwells and Façade**

As is well known, Walton was hosted by Sacheverell 'Sachie' Sitwell post-Oxford (in 1919), inspired to write *Façade* and supported by Osbert Sitwell, and finally wrote *Façade* to Edith Sitwell's poems. This process, 'as so often happened when all three Sitwells worked together, [...] got curiously out of hand,' as John Pearson claims,<sup>7</sup> with Osbert allegedly threatening Walton to call in Constant Lambert, should he refuse to write the music for *Façade*.<sup>8</sup> This may just be another of many anecdotes surrounding the composition of the cycle, but it is certainly not exaggerated to note that the siblings gave Walton his proper start in music. They did this through contacts, through inspiring travels in Europe, but not least by simply providing food, shelter, and a piano in the brothers' flat in Carlyle Square, Chelsea.

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<sup>6</sup> S. Walton, *Walton*, 44.

<sup>7</sup> John Pearson, *Façades: Edith, Osbert, and Sacheverell Sitwell* (London: Papermac, 1989, c1978), 179.

<sup>8</sup> Walton, *The Façade Affair*.

On the flipside, *Façade* set in stone the Sitwells' reputation of belonging 'to the history of publicity rather than to that of literature.'<sup>9</sup> When they adopted Walton, then practically a dark horse, they had already been working hard to establish their reputation as troublemakers and crusaders against what they perceived as the bourgeois middle classes. John Pearson described the siblings as bellicose self-declared modernists and aggressors in a war against the 'philistines' by the early 1920s:

There was an extended line-up for the battle. On one side, under the banner of tradition, stood a host of disparate but more or less united allies – the popular press, the middle classes, provincial Little Englanders, admirers of academic art and Georgian poetry, puritans in general and the old in heart. Against them stood the forces of what Herbert Read still optimistically termed 'the future'. They were less numerous but more vocal than their enemy. They included left-wing politicians, 'intellectuals', 'dandy-aesthetes' with Wilde's green carnation still in the button-hole, admirers of experimental poetry and the latest painting from the school of Paris, and the whole of Bloomsbury.

The groupings were, of course, amorphous, and could change [...]. But the Sitwells never wavered. [Wyndham] Lewis entitled them 'The Phalanx', Arnold Bennett pictured them with battle 'in the curve of their nostrils', and as the twenties started they plunged into the thickest of the fray.<sup>10</sup>

Over the course of the 1920s, the siblings would befriend – and break with – illustrious personalities like Huxley and Wyndham Lewis, whose unfinished portrait of Edith (fig. 6.1) may stand symbolically for the Sitwells' friendships – Edith's portrait remained unfinished after she stopped sitting for Lewis in 1923. She then had the doubtful pleasure of featuring as Lady Harriet in his reckoning with Bloomsbury and the Sitwells, *The Apes of God*, while he became Mr Henry Debringham in Sitwell's *I Live under a Black Sun*.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Stapleton, *The Cambridge Guide to English Literature* (London: Book Club Associates, 1983), 812.

<sup>10</sup> Pearson, *Façades*, 145.

<sup>11</sup> In a letter to Lady Snow on 8 January 1951, Sitwell remembered the incident: 'It was impossible to like him, and in the end, his attitude became so threatening that I ceased to sit for him, so that the portrait of me by him in the Tate has no hands, and I figured as Lady Harriet in his "The Apes of God".' Quoted from Jane Farringdon, *Wyndham Lewis* (Catalogue of the Exhibition 'Wyndham Lewis' at Manchester City Art Gallery 1980), (London: Lund Humphries, 1980), 103.



Fig. 6.1: Wyndham Lewis, Edith Sitwell.  
Begun in 1923, the painting was finished in 1935; Sitwell's hands were not added  
([www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/lewis-edith-sitwell-n05437](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/lewis-edith-sitwell-n05437)).<sup>12</sup>

This may perhaps serve to put Michael Kennedy's popularly held verdict in perspective: 'not that the Sitwells meant much in 1920 outside the small and exclusive circles in which they moved.'<sup>13</sup> It seems rather that the siblings were a force to be reckoned with.

### ***Structure and the Myths of Reception***

For the belligerent Sitwells, much was at stake at the first public performance of *Façade*, which was designed to imitate the *Le sacre du printemps's* Parisian baptism by fire ten years earlier. But there was a difference between concocting an *Entertainment* for one's own private drawing room with invited guests (at the private premiere on 24 January 1922 in 2 Carlyle Square, two days before the premiere of Vaughan Williams's *Pastoral Symphony*) and selling tickets to a paying crowd (at the public performance at the Aeolian Hall on 12 June 1923), as the siblings were about to find out. At the concert in the Aeolian Hall, on a weekday afternoon, *Façade* was not quite itself – meaning that it was not merely composed of the pieces that had successfully featured in its private premiere, as can be seen

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<sup>12</sup> 'Hands, in Lewis's iconography, assert tension, presence; to obliterate the hands was to leave ambiguous his sitter's degree of nervous force.' Walter Michel, *Wyndham Lewis* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: UoCP, 1971), 34.

<sup>13</sup> Kennedy, *Portrait*, 19. This remark may have served to diminish the siblings' potentially overpowering influence in Walton's development as an independent composer.

in fig. 6.2. 14 pieces of the 27 performed on that day had been newly composed (including the 'Fanfare', which has since become a standard item of *Façade*). Osbert's 'General Salute and Prologue' through the sengerphone was kept, and the 'Overture' was played, but not counted as one of the 27 anymore. 'The Octogenarian' (no. 3 in the 1922) became no. 10 in a merger with 'Serenade' in the 1923 performance. With so many pieces changed, it is difficult to compare the relative success of the private premiere with the failure in the Aeolian Hall. In the absence of reliable points for comparison, anecdotes of the first public performance therefore became myths told and retold many times.

	1922		1923
No. of pieces in total, not counting 'Fanfare', 'General Salute', 'Overture'	17		27
No. of identical pieces in the two performances		13	
'Fanfare'	no		yes
'General Salute & Prologue'	yes		yes

Fig. 6.2: Comparison of numbers in *Façade* performances 1922 and 1923.

Yet it was Osbert Sitwell himself who attempted to adorn *Façade* with the avant-gardist, scandalous crown. In his autobiography, he states that the press, 'or rather that section of it now defunct, the gossip-crew, which cherished a deadly parasitic hatred and fear of all work, manual or intellectual, but more especially artistic', had attempted to 'whip up the public to pretend to feel rage and resort to insult'.<sup>14</sup> The result of this was that

at the end of the performance several members of the audience came behind the curtain to warn my sister not to leave the platform until the crowd had dispersed. For several weeks subsequently, we were obliged to go about London feeling as if we had committed a murder. When we entered a room, there would fall a sudden unpleasing hush. Even friends avoided catching one's eye, and if the very word *Façade* was breathed, there ensued a stampede for other subjects and for safety. In fact, we had created a first-class scandal in literature and music [...]. All the papers except the Daily Mail combined in attack.<sup>15</sup>

Victoria Glendinning's comprehensive biography attempts a more balanced view and a psychological explanation for the Sitwells' outrage:

<sup>14</sup> Osbert Sitwell, *Laughter in the Next Room: Being the Fourth Volume of Left Hand, Right Hand! An Autobiography by Osbert Sitwell* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1949), 191.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

Edith occasionally lost the beat of the music, and her incantation broke down into girlish giggles from behind the curtain. For a family who considered themselves 'professional' artists, it was all pretty amateur. The reaction was not passionately hostile, not passionately sympathetic.

Although the source for her assertion about Sitwell's flawed recital remains unknown (and may thereby be a mere recycled legend as well), Glendinning's view on the hostile newspaper articles and the Sitwells' strategic response to these is credible:

This was all depressing reading, not so much because of the critics' hostility, but because of their dismissiveness. It was less humiliating for the Sitwells to elevate the opposition into a thoroughgoing persecution, which is what they did.<sup>16</sup>

As with the notorious premiere of *Le sacre*, it appears that not so much the music, but the production of the piece and its poems were *Façade's* issue.<sup>17</sup> Further evidence is provided by the fact that William Walton is rarely mentioned in this war of the wills. The following Sunday after the Aeolian Hall premiere, Percy Scholes remarked in *The Observer* that the music 'in itself [...] is harmless.'<sup>18</sup> Unlike Edith Sitwell, Walton therefore probably did not have to hide behind the curtain until everyone had gone home. Rather, he later criticized the Aeolian Hall premiere as 'a shambles',<sup>19</sup> compared to the much more successful performances at the New Chenil Galleries in Chelsea nearly three years later. These two performances would again feature a different set of pieces: the first performance in the Galleries on 27 April included seven newly composed pieces (of which four were dances which *Façade* has now come to be identified by) and seven pieces from those newly introduced in 1923. 12 movements, however, came from the original private performance in 1922.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Victoria Glendinning, *Edith Sitwell: A Unicorn Among Lions* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), 78, 79–80.

<sup>17</sup> See for example Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (London et al.: Bantam Press, 1989), particularly chapter I, 'Paris', 15.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted from Glendinning, *Unicorn*, 79.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Pearson, *Façades*, 184.

<sup>20</sup> The pieces' number, order, and reappearance are listed in David Lloyd-Jones, 'Introductory Notes', xv.

## 6.2 Behind Façade

For reasons elaborated in 2.2.1, I will not here consider the modernist aspects of Sitwell's text, the staging behind a curtain (a feature which the cycle shares with forerunners such as Holbrooke's *Apollo and the Seaman*, which was performed behind a screen onto which images and poems were projected, or Holst's *Savitri*, which hid all musicians except the soloists), or indeed Walton's attitude (i.e. his personality) as signifiers of modernism in the music. Rather, the exploration of their background served to create a level field, as it were, for the following sections. In these sections, the analysis of one of the earliest *Façade* pieces, 'Said King Pompey', follows Walton's journey from an experimental response to modernism to an ironic one from the cycle's initiation to its publication. In the course of this analysis, it will also become clear why it is an error to automatically assume that *Façade* in any sense *is* its published version of 1951 or, in the case of *Façade 2*, the facsimile edition of 1979. Because the source situation is complex, an explanation of it must precede the musical analysis.

### 6.2.1 Which *Façade*?

*Façade*'s history of composition and reception is for a substantial part not entirely reconstructable. There are several collections of poems by the name of *Façade* by Sitwell, several stages of composition by Walton in autograph, two orchestral suites bearing the name (of which Constant Lambert made piano reductions and which were used for two ballets in the 1930s), and two published parts of *Façade* for reciter and ensemble, *Façade. An Entertainment* and *Façade 2*.<sup>21</sup> Between these two sits the project *Façade Revived*, for which Walton 'revived' some early pieces for two concerts in 1977 (among them 'Said King Pompey'). The project to print these pieces as a second book of *Façade* was abandoned by OUP when Walton, upon inspection of the pieces, decided that they needed a complete overhaul,

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<sup>21</sup> A collection of poems under the title *Façade* in Sitwell's *Collected Poems* and an earlier collection by the same author in *The Canticle of the Rose. Selected Poems 1920–1947* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1949). Walton's autographs are in the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library of Yale University (call number GEN\_MSS\_601) and some in the Dame Edith Sitwell collection at the Harry Ransom Center at Austin, Texas, his two orchestral suites are published by OUP (London, 1936 and 1938, the first suite for pianoforte duet in 1927, arranged by Lambert), and the two Entertainments also by OUP (1951 and 1979). David Lloyd-Jones' edition in the *William Walton Edition* contains *Façade*, *Façade 2*, and additional and incomplete numbers. Not to be forgotten are the ballets by Günter Hess (*Fassade*, Kammertanztheater Hagen, 1929) and Frederick Ashton (Cambridge Theatre, London, 1931).

leading to *Façade 2*. Of all these versions, the one usually taken as the 'valid' score is the published *Façade. An Entertainment* of 1951.

During the first performances in the 1920s, Sitwell and Walton created many new numbers and scrapped others, but the number and order of pieces performed in the respective performances is known.<sup>22</sup> For performances before the publication of 1951 Walton provided autograph scores. Some of the music for the 'discontinued' pieces is therefore lost, while other undated, but apparently early, versions of pieces that made it into the 1951 and 1979 publications are very different from their printed counterparts.

Upon closer inspection not only of the printed score, but also of the surviving, and mostly undated, manuscripts, *Façade* shows an impressive Janus-faced mask, which is rarely accounted for in the work either of performers or of musicologists. This oscillation between printed score (henceforth OUP51 or the facsimile edition OUP79 for *Façade 2*) and manuscripts hides in plain sight. For many *Façade* pieces, this means that there may be up to four differing manuscript versions next to OUP51, whose date of composition can merely be guessed. *Mariner Man* is possibly the most extreme case, with four undated and very different manuscripts in the Koch Collection at Yale and one piccolo part of an early version at the OUP Archives.<sup>23</sup>

Any claim of a development from modernist to melodic Walton, as Kennedy and Lambert imply, must be imprecise if it rests, as in most considerations of *Façade*, only on the addition of more dances to the collection, while it is not clear how many earlier, possibly wildly different versions of any given piece exist. Building on the forensics among programme notes and manuscripts done by the editors of Walton's *Collected Works*, however, some manuscript versions can indeed be dated through circumstantial evidence, even though this is not attempted by the editors themselves.

A good example is 'Said King Pompey', which is among *Façade*'s oldest pieces. The piece featured in all key performances of *Façade*: the private premiere in 2 Carlyle

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<sup>22</sup> Lloyd-Jones, 'Introductory Notes', xv.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, xx-i.

Square in 1922, in the public premiere in the Aeolian Hall in 1923, the performances in the New Chenil Galleries in 1926, and, after a long gap, again in the performance of *Façade Revived* in 1977 and of *Façade 2* and its edition in 1979 (fig. 6.3). A printed version can be found in the facsimile edition of OUP79, but the oldest surviving manuscript version is that of the Aeolian Hall performance of 1923, which can be gleaned from circumstantial evidence. This manuscript of ‘Said King Pompey’ (Koch 638B) is the last (on pages 5v–7r) in a group of three pieces, ‘Small Talk’, ‘By the Lake’, and ‘Said King Pompey’, all written in the same hand in ink and numbered 7, 8, and 9 on the title page.<sup>24</sup> The only time these three pieces held these numbers in this order was at the unhappy Aeolian Hall premiere (at the 1922 premiere, ‘By the Lake’ was not included, by June 1926 ‘Small Talk’ had been dropped, and in 1977 only ‘Said King Pompey’ remained of the three). As can be expected, there are substantial differences between the version of 1923 and that of 1979. Even a superficial glance at both versions makes it clear that the 1979 version (henceforth SKP79) has got hardly anything to do with its much older brother (henceforth SKP23), as the detailed analyses of both versions will confirm later in this chapter.

	Number	Version
<b>24 January 1922, Carlyle Square</b>	6	n/a
<b>12 June 1923, Aeolian Hall</b>	9	SKP23
<b>27 April 1926, New Chenil Galleries</b>	6	likely SKP23
<b>29 June 1926, New Chenil Galleries</b>	9	likely SKP23
<b>25 March 1977, Plaisterers’ Hall</b>	9	SKP77 <sup>25</sup>
<b>19 June 1979, The Maltings, Snape</b>	8	SKP79

Fig. 6.3: Performances and versions of ‘Said King Pompey’ between 1922 and 1979.

<sup>24</sup> These numbers are crossed out and replaced in pencil by the numbers 4, 5, and 6, which was the order for the first of two 1926 performance in the New Chenil Galleries in Chelsea. The pieces were apparently kept unchanged for this performance.

<sup>25</sup> This version is held at OUP Press Archives. Unfortunately, it was not possible to access the material during my PhD programme, as the music department of OUP Archives was unable to make material available to researchers due to understaffing for a considerable time. It is likely, however, that SKP77 is identical to SKP23, as Walton is said to have revisited old pieces in this project with OUP and to have abandoned the project for a complete revision of these early pieces.

## 6.2.2 Authenticity and the Consequences

Those examinations of *Façade*'s modernism that do not take the different versions of the movements within *Façade 2* into account must lead to doubtful conclusions about the young Walton's modernism. For example, they usually assume that SKP79 is a piece of 1922, when in fact it is of 1978 or even 1979. An example taken from a PhD thesis about *Façade 2*'s originality and revisions in as compared to *Façade* sums up the common assumption: 'in *Façade II* the focus is on presenting the poetry. In this respect, the work gives us an approximation, albeit a more polished one, of how the work may have sounded in 1922.'<sup>26</sup> The study's author, Enrique Lasansky, even discusses the versions of 'Said King Pompey' in a later section, but did not see more in SKP23 than an immature and musically less interesting attempt to capture Sitwell's text.

'Said King Pompey' is also one of the topics in Tim Barringer's *Façade* chapter for Riley's *British Music and Modernism*. In a move to distinguish an 'early' movement such as 'Said King Pompey' from the later, 'truer' pieces such as the dance numbers, Barringer falls into the same trap as Lasansky, Kennedy, and Lambert, and assumes that OUP79 is of the early 1920s and OUP51 of the later 1920s. Their conclusions about the 19-year old Walton are hence based on the pieces of the septuagenarian composer. 'Said King Pompey' of OUP79 is by no means an example for the Continental modernism of the earliest *Façade* pieces as Barringer claims, but on the contrary, is one of the latest and shows Walton's departure from modernism into a derision of it. Several of Barringer's observations of SKP79's 'early' modernism will therefore be corrected in the course of this chapter. For example,

The number opens with a fanfare whose harsh sonority is heightened through the use of flutter-tonguing and the strident tone of a metal mute in the trumpet part. As in many of the earliest numbers of *Façade*, the voice is left unaccompanied for several bars. The musical contribution, while highly effective in performance, is minimal compared to the fully elaborated settings composed for later performances. Neither the dissonant opening section nor the frantic ostinati that follow establishes a steady tonal centre.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Enrique Leon Lasansky, 'William Walton's "Façade: An Entertainment"', Doctoral dissertation (University of Arizona, 1991), 61.

<sup>27</sup> Tim Barringer, 'Façades for *Façade*. William Walton, Visual Culture and English Modernism in the Sitwell Circle', in Matthew Riley (ed.), *British Music and Modernism. 1895–1960* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 125–45, 131.

Before the analysis of the chapter's core sections, suffice it here to say that in SKP23 there is no flutter-tonguing, no metal mute, the voice is left unaccompanied not for six, but only for two bars, and the instrumental accompaniment seems richer as there are less *ostinati* in SKP23 as there are in SKP79.

A B-Modernist argument could easily perceive *Façade's* texts and music as avant-gardist (if of an idiosyncratic mixture between Dada and Englishness), if the methods of 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 (modernism by personality or by pastoralism) were drawn upon once more: its supposedly scandalous public premiere in the Aeolian Hall in 1923 gave it a hint of the *Le sacre*, the avant-gardist cloths for its early performances smelled of *Parade*, and the size and constellation of the ensemble tasted of *Pierrot lunaire*.<sup>28</sup> The actual composition of the poem and its music, however, are less easy to fit into this neat network of loose associations. In a typical B-Modernist argument about the modernism of *Façade's* visual culture, Barringer therefore lamented that

while *Façade* could be assimilated to the history of modernist performance, such a reading would undoubtedly conclude by chiding the piece and its authors for failing to conform to the teleological project of modernism, as it has been retrospectively constructed. The same conclusion is produced by orthodox modernist readings of most British music of the period, and, indeed, of almost all of British art. *Façade* is *sui generis*, however, and disrupts any narrative in which it is placed.<sup>29</sup>

He concluded with the no less typical call for retreat and insularity in view of the disturbing dominance of Continental modernism: 'the strength of *Façade* lies precisely in its uniqueness, its blithe refusal to choose between radical and reactionary polarities, and in the rich intertextualities which link it to its own, changing, cultural contexts.'<sup>30</sup>

It is true that a direct comparison between *Pierrot* and *Façade* must end in disaster if *Pierrot* is set as the standard, and it is also true that *Façade* has many triadic facets (according to the Event-response model), as Barringer unknowingly implies when he points to the piece's refusal to take sides. Nevertheless, Barringer's critique of modernist teleology (which may be summarized in the idea that

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<sup>28</sup> Osbert had seen and criticized *Parade* (Osbert Sitwell, *Laughter*, 14) and Walton had been spotted once with the score of *Pierrot* (S. Walton, *Walton*, 57).

<sup>29</sup> Barringer, 'Façades', 132.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*.

everything modernist culminates in something like *Pierrot*) sits uncomfortably next to his own, similarly strong, teleology of the stages of composition in *Façade* (the claim that *Façade* only came into its own in its final form of the 1940s performances and the 1951 publication, denouncing its Continental modernist beginnings).<sup>31</sup> His greatest error, in consequence of this, is the sole reliance on the published scores of *Façade* of 1951 as a later, mature version, and *Façade 2* of 1979 as an earlier, immature version, to pin down what he sees as the development from modernist to ‘neoromantic poetics’.<sup>32</sup>

For Barringer, the printed 1979 version of ‘Said King Pompey’ is one of the earliest *Façade* pieces, which leads to an unpersuasive starting point for the development he traces. In fact, *Façade 2* is the later, *Façade* the earlier collection (as their titles correctly imply), while the modernist beginnings, which Barringer refers to, cannot be found in their pure form in either of these. This failure throws his argument in doubt, a situation that is not helped by his main argument building upon associations with the three earliest cloths for *Façade*, one of which is lost without remaining pictures or descriptions. By mere association, *Façade*’s development is thereby attached to the (partly guessed) style of its cloths, developing presumably from modernist to neoclassical. In order to refute the claim that the *entire Façade 2* is a (experimentally) modernist work, only one of its pieces needs to be shown to be otherwise. ‘Said King Pompey’ is an ideal candidate because of its location at the opposite ends of *Façade*’s timeline.

In contrast to Barringer’s argument, I will therefore develop a reading of ‘Said King Pompey’ which can account for the piece’s changing features without recourse to the doubtlessly limiting and distracting comparison with *Pierrot lunaire*. This is achieved with the help of the Event-response model, which shows how ‘Said King Pompey’ developed from an experimental response into an ironic one.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, there may be *Façade* movements with ironic elements from the beginning, such as ‘Swiss Jodelling Song’, which consists of an overly simple melody with accompaniment, which at times spins off in dissonant arabesques. Constant Lambert’s reduction of the piece for piano four hands from 1927 already features these elements.

### 6.2.3 Irony in Concert Music

In 3.3.2, the Badiouian model was changed from a triangle or diamond shape (if the second faithful, resurrecting response is taken into account) with differently classified responses into a circular structure, which allows for the simultaneity as well as for the equality of the three types of response (fig. 6.4).

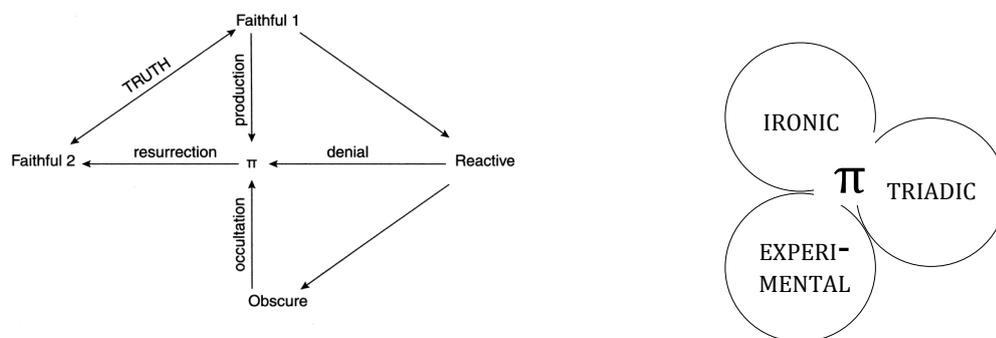


Fig. 6.4: Badiou's Event-response model and the circularized Event-response model from chapter 3.

As elements of different responses can appear in one and the same piece of music, the change into a circular shape is important to understand responses on a par with each other. Additionally, the circular shape demonstrates that none of the responses is principally 'better' than the others. One of the most crucial consequences of this logicalization concerns Badiou's obscure response. It is not confined any more to areas of musicology, criticism, or certain kinds of music (minimalism, jazz, or world music) as it is in Harper-Scott's *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism*. Nevertheless, it can certainly be found in these kinds of music, which would certainly deserve to be rescued together with obscurity from Harper-Scott's harsh verdict (an enterprise which however transcends the scope of this thesis). Despite this response being less common than the triadic or even the experimental response in British early twentieth-century concert music, it stands out prominently in the compositions that do feature it, and *Façade* is no exception.

In Harper-Scott's account, minimalism, pop, jazz, and world music attempt to eliminate the traces of the modernist Event by an illusionary return to a pre-modernist, supposedly natural, tonality. They thereby 'produce nothing', because the product of this ironic subject is a withdrawal to a pre-Evental state which

never existed as such (not unlike the familiar concept of invented traditions)<sup>34</sup>, or only as an illusion. What is worse, however, is that they are inferior even to the reactive response, because they actively hinder the progress of communism, in politics as in music. As I argued in chapter 3, the different responses do not define quality but a relation to modernism, and in this new model (which also distinguishes itself from Badiou's by renaming its responses) the ironic response thereby gains an equal value to triadic and experimental responses, because there is no reason to accuse it of a political wrongdoing.

How might an ironic response in concert music sound? Irony is defined by remorseless opposition to the experimental and the aim to prompt a return to an imagined simplistic pre-Evental world. Unlike the triadic position, which is defined by its ambivalence towards old and new – its refusal to take sides – the ironic response insists on a side being taken. In concert music, this does not so much have to manifest itself in a simplistic tonality, but it can take the form of aggressive derision of modernist means or a particularly aggressive treatment of the remaining dissonances with the aim of showing modernism's weaknesses so drastically that the return to tonality will seem as the only sensible response to it. The element of violence is crucial, as chapter 3's examples showed: Crassus fought for what he perceived as the natural state of Roman society, and leucocytes seek to re-establish a pre-infection state in the body. In both cases, great force can be deployed to destroy as well as produce.

The ironic response in music will therefore employ the same rigour and force as the experimental side in its musical argument. Minimalism is not the form it necessarily takes for this, because it focuses on the *violence* with which tonality is employed, not on the employment of tonality itself. Therefore, irony will show an *aggressive* kind of tonality, and this can mean that it will use superficial dissonances (in their role as signifiers of experimental modernism) in order to represent the destruction of their function in a piece of music. An ironic response to modernism makes fun of modernist elements; first it deploys them, and then shatters them to the ground. Parody is one of its foremost tools applied for this game between experimental and ironic. This use of parody additionally evokes the

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992, c1983).

second crucial characteristic of the ironic next to violence, simplicity. Together with a tonal outline, elements like 'a good tune', a straightforward formal layout, or an uncomplicated texture point to an ironic response to what is perceived as experimental fragmentation, alienation, or triadic ambiguity. Still, an ironic piece of music does not need to be one-dimensional or downright overly simplistically constructed in order to exhibit simplicity, as 'Said King Pompey' shows. It is just that subtlety is not exactly the ironic response's strength.

The deployment of modernist elements in order to reduce them to absurdity is the reason why the ironic response may at times be difficult to distinguish from the experimental one, as reactions to Vaughan Williams's Fourth Symphony showed. One further case in point may be neo-classicism. In Badiou's table of reactive, obscure, and resurrective responses in the four conditions of philosophy, neo-classicism is the resurrective subject's expression of choice.<sup>35</sup> Neo-classicism certainly has an ironic undercurrent though. Firstly, the style allows itself to be heard as parodying its tonal, 'pre-modernist', elements: by deleting their role as functioning pillars of the structure, neo-classicism cancels out their reason for being there and leaves only their empty shells in place (it casts itself in the role of an ironic response not to modernism, but to a tonal romanticism). Secondly, and in complete opposition to the first undercurrent, neo-classicism could be read as the attempt to forcefully return music to an imagined, simplistic, pre-modernist state and thus destroy modernism's influence on music. It sends music, as Taruskin put it, on a 'tendentious journey back to where we had never been'.<sup>36</sup> An all-too simple idea of the neo-classicist paradigms of *Pulcinella* and *The Rake's Progress* could however perhaps be complicated by pieces such as Hindemith's *Kammermusik* (seven multi-movement pieces of this title written between 1922 and 1927) or even by the inclusion of dance movements in Schoenberg's Piano Suite op. 25, both of which do not refer back so much to the soundscapes of Baroque or Classical, but to their forms.

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<sup>35</sup> Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event, 2*, tr. Alberto Toscano (London, New York: Continuum, 2009, published in French 2006), 78.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Taruskin, 'Back to Whom? Neoclassicism as Ideology', *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, 16/3 (1993), 286-302, 287.

Neo-classicism may be a powerful example of concert music with ironic elements, but this type of response presents itself even more drastically in Walton's late *Façade 2*, where fights between dissonance and tonality push to the fore with the violence and irreconcilability typical for the ironic response without the cycle adhering to neo-classicism.

#### 6.2.4 'Said King Pompey': From Experimental to Ironic

'Said King Pompey' is defined structurally by the 'Emperor's ape's' speech and the seemingly contrasting speech of a ketchup-eating bishop (fig. 6.5). Its earliest and latest versions, SKP23 and SKP79, are of the same length but different in nearly all else – between 1923 and 1979, Walton changed the piece's texture, its form, and, most crucially, its tonal system.<sup>37</sup>

Said King Pompey, the emperor's ape,  
Shuddering black in his temporal cape  
Of dust: 'The dust is everything—  
The heart to love and the voice to sing,  
Indianapolis,  
And the Acropolis,  
Also the hairy sky that we  
Take for a coverlet comfortably.' ...  
Said the Bishop  
Eating his ketchup—  
'There still remains Eternity  
(Swelling the diocese)—  
That elephantiasis,  
The flunkeyed and trumpeting Sea!'

*Fig. 6.5: Edith Sitwell, 'Said King Pompey' (eadem, Façade and Other Poems 1920–1935 [London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1950]).*

##### 6.2.4.1 From Slim to Round: Texture

SKP23 seeks to make the most of its thin instrumentation. The muted trumpet and alto saxophone are never heard at the same time (they are notated on the same staff), and the percussionist plays nothing but a side drum. The other instruments – flute, clarinet, and cello – operate without special effects such as flutter-tongue or mute. Not surprisingly, in SKP79 Walton had access to more varied instrumental

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<sup>37</sup> A transcript of the music of SKP23 can be found in Appendix 1.

resources, which most noticeably resulted in the use of a larger percussion set: it comprises the perhaps overly prominent tambourine, a side drum, and a tenor drum without snares, the latter of which are to be played simultaneously at one point (bb. 11, 13). Flute, clarinet, saxophone, and trumpet are scored each in their own stave. The trumpet is prescribed a metal mute and is now supposed to use flutter tongue in the opening fanfare of the piece. In his remark about the modernist character of SKP79, Barringer identified this technique and the metal mute as a sign for the young composer's attempt to 'emulate[...] the radicalism of Sitwell's text', but these effects do not occur in the original at all.<sup>38</sup>

Original or not, this instrumentation and the use of the instruments gives the later version a more rounded appearance and a fuller sound. Additionally, it strengthens the piece's association with jazz, as the most remarked upon, but perhaps also most vague, influence on 'Said King Pompey'. The combination of clarinet, saxophone, a drum set of some kind, and trumpet doubtlessly belong to the sphere of jazz just as well or even more than to that of classical music. The saxophone was only added for the 1923 premiere and Walton notated it in the trumpet's system of the score of SKP23 and treated it as an orphan: it has seven notes to play in SKP23, which were taken away from the clarinet (bb. 11–3). In SKP79, however, the instrument is in full swing throughout the piece.

In 1920s jazz, the clarinet would usually play the countermelody to the cornet, which tended to be given the main line. In SKP23, this element of call and response, here between clarinet and flute, is indeed noticeable, for example in bb. 1–10 and 13–6, whereas SKP79 relinquishes this structure for a more dense, homorhythmic appearance. The first jazz virtuoso on the clarinet and the (mostly soprano) saxophone to appear in London was Sidney Bechet from New Orleans, who had arrived with members of the Southern Syncopated Orchestra in 1919. His style, 'at fast tempos dashing headlong through the melody, at slow tempos swirling up and down the full range of the instruments in free-floating arpeggios', also encompassed microtonality and may have had some influence on the clarinet's arabesques in SKP23.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Barringer, 'Façades', 131.

<sup>39</sup> Christopher G. Bakriges, 'Cultural Displacement, Cultural Creation. African American Jazz Musicians in Europe from Bechet to Braxton', in Neil A. Wynn (ed.), *Cross the Water Blues. African*

Another easily noticeable difference between SKP23 and SKP79 concerns the relation between voice and instruments. SKP79 sports a fair deal of snappiness through its nearly unaccompanied reciter section, with the instruments merely thundering in on each second bar (ex. 6.1).

Ex. 6.1: William Walton, *SKP79*, bb. 8–11, continued until b. 14.

SKP79 thus produces heightened contrast between the instrumental introduction and the sudden silence of all instruments for the declaration of Pompey's first lines – a contrast which the 'modernist' SKP23 does not provide to the same degree. Nevertheless, SKP23 also features a solo voice passage (two bars of instrumental silence for the verse 'There still remains eternity', ex. 6.2):

Ex. 6.2: William Walton, *SKP23*, bb. 19–23, side drum and voice.

Unlike in SKP79, the instruments are completely silent during these two bars, thereby lifting out the voice from the surrounding situation to a degree unmatched in SKP79. Barringer's observation was thereby correct, if only incidentally and not

*American Music in Europe* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007), 250–65, 253; James Lincoln Collier, Howard Rye, 'Bechet, Sidney', in Barry Kernfeld (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz. Second Edition. Vol. One, A–Fuzz* (London, New York: Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 2002), 171–4, 173.

to the same degree as it would have been, had he considered the earlier version. Additionally, SKP23's choice of 'There still remains eternity' as the only intelligible line of the piece seems the wittier and ironic choice of the two, given that this extremely short and elusive piece itself has so little to do with eternity.

Metric and rhythmic considerations of the whole piece highlight yet more differences. In SKP23 each instrument operates in its own rhythmical mode, which leads to frequent overlapping of different rhythms, or even to metric clashes; for example between duplets in the saxophone and simultaneous triplets in the voice, cello, and drum (ex. 6.3):

Ex. 6.3: William Walton, *SKP23*, bb. 11–3, without flute.

Further moments of this kind occur between duplet semiquavers in the flute and triplet semiquavers in the clarinet (b. 24), and between the cello's eight demisemiquavers and the flute's six (b. 25).<sup>40</sup> What SKP23 lacks in instrumental introduction, it makes up for in a very brief instrumental interlude (b. 18), which breaks the 6/8 meter in favour of 9/8. This interlude neatly separates Pompey's speech from the bishop's following outpourings, for which the instruments return virtuously to 6/8. SKP79, in contrast, pretends to be rhythmically versatile in its introduction (ex. 6.4):

<sup>40</sup> In the manuscript, these eight demisemiquavers are missing their third beam to distinguish them from semiquavers.

Mosso  $\text{♩} = 108 \text{ c.}$

FLUTE

CLARINET (B $\flat$ )

ALTO SAXOPHONE (E $\flat$ )

TRUMPET (C)

PERCUSSION

VOICE

VIOLONCELLO

Ex. 6.4: William Walton, SKP79, bb. 1–3, different rhythmic features.

Yet it falls back onto simpler rhythmic patterns in all instruments as early as b. 7, from which there is hardly any deviation until the end. Barringer's aforementioned assertion that 'the musical contribution, while highly effective in performance, is minimal compared to the fully elaborated settings composed for later performances' is true for the later version, but not for the earlier one he unknowingly means to refer to. The imagined development, even ascent, from rough, early, version to effective, later, version is an illusion. Rather, a rhythmically relatively complex structure in SKP23 is broken down to simple ostinati in SKP79, just as the piece's overall structure could be said to be broken down from a free multiplicity of voices into a tightly bound, perhaps even militaristic, unity which eliminates practically the entire rhythmic freedom of its predecessor.

The contrast between the two versions could hardly be clearer than in the accompaniment to the text 'Indianapolis and the Acropolis | Also the hairy sky that we | Take for a coverlet comfortably'. This section is particularly interesting to look at because the voice's quavers flow along as evenly as pearls on a string in both versions and the instruments' behaviour therefore has great impact. SKP79's strategy in this situation is to present a simple quaver pattern which runs parallel in all parts (ex. 6.5), together with the voice. It sounds as if Walton makes King

Pompey raise his finger to deliver a lecture about Indianapolis and the Acropolis in the most boring manner possible. Clearly this is an ironic feature which aims to point out the text's missing meaning, its 'nonsense'.

Flute *p* 8va

B♭ Clarinet *p*

Alto Saxophone *p*

Percussion Tamburino *p*

Voice *p*  
In - di - a - na - po - lis And the A - co - po - lis,

Violoncello *p*

Ex. 6.5: William Walton, *SKP79*, bb. 17–18, rhythmic pattern in the 'Indianapolis' section.

SKP23 uses an entirely different strategy. It seeks to disrupt the voice's evenness by having the saxophone juggle tied duplets beyond bar lines (bb. 11–3, ex. 6.6) and by having the flute create a further duplet-like impression through accentuating its semiquavers in triplets (b. 14, followed by the same effect in the clarinet in bb. 15–6, ex. 6.6). The cello is the voice's only rhythmic support, which makes this a potentially risky section for the reciter (what would not constitute a problem for a professional singer may be a rhythmic challenge for reciters of *Façade*, who frequently are actors). Again, SKP23 outdoes SKP79 in complexity.

Flute

A Clarinet

Alto Saxophone

Percussion

Voice *p*  
In - di - a - na-po-lis and the A - cro-po-lis, Al-so the hai - ry sky that we Take for a

Violoncello *p*

Ex. 6.6: William Walton, *SKP23*, bb. 11–15.

Yet another important observation concerns the voice and its particular rhythmic challenges: SKP79 starts – possibly for safety reasons – on the downbeat, but SKP23 risks a start on the upbeat. This may be a further reason why 1920s reciters, who were left with a copy of Sitwell’s poems or a simple typescript, occasionally messed up their delivery (even Sitwell herself, if Glendinning is to be believed).<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, this difference accounts for a more natural flow and emphasis of words in SKP23. Instead of ‘Said King Pompey’, for example, the stress is on ‘Said King Pompey’, and ‘Indianapolis and the Acropolis’ originally was ‘Indianapolis and the Acropolis’. In the final section ‘Said the bishop’, this difference disappears however. It is to be assumed that the experienced Walton of SKP79 was intent on avoiding the risk of reciters missing their entry in the murderous speed of the piece by cementing SKP79’s rhythm in the instrumental prelude and by giving the voice a downbeat start. The logic of the actual text suffered slightly perhaps, but this also shows Walton’s willingness to finally discard Sitwell’s orders about the rhythm, which they were reported to have spent hours discussing in 1921.<sup>42</sup>

In SKP23 then, Walton uses a thin instrumentation which functions with a complex rhythmic and metric structure, while SKP79 banks on a fuller instrumentation that remains more static in its rhythms and favours homorhythmic, even monophonic, structures. It thereby avoids the polyphonic aspects that define SKP23. This does not mean, though, that SKP23 is ‘better’ music than SKP79 or that the latter sounds sluggish. Both versions demonstrate a witty vitality and rapid velocity, but the priorities vary. In the earlier version, the joyful play with quick polyrhythmic structures and the change to 9/8 in the interlude comes close to what many a listener might identify as a modernist feature. Yet, the same listener would probably acknowledge the more vigorous effect of the later version’s strong rhythmic assets. The frequent dotted rhythms imply a parody of military music that is also presented in the opening fanfare of this version, making matters much easier to listen to. Several pieces from the ‘definite’ *Façade* family share this characteristic: the opening ‘Fanfare’, ‘Hornpipe’, ‘Mariner Man’, ‘Foxtrot “Old Sir Faulk”’, ‘Something Lies beyond the Scene’, and of course ‘March’.

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<sup>41</sup> Glendinning, *Unicorn*, 78. A facsimile of a typescript page annotated for performance by Constant Lambert in Lloyd-Jones and Craggs, *Façade Entertainments*, xxxix.

<sup>42</sup> Osbert Sitwell in a letter to Frank Howes in 1942, quoted in Kennedy, *Portrait*, 27.

Despite all this, there are similarities between the two versions, particularly in what we could call *survivors* – that is, motives or patterns which made the transition from SKP23 to SKP79, even if in a slightly different form. The first survivor is an accompanying figure in the cello, first appearing in bb. 11–16 of SKP23 and 17–22 in SKP79. The ur-form of this figure appears in the earlier piece, as a simple three-chord motif on the cello’s open strings (ex. 6.7).



Ex. 6.7: William Walton, *SKP23*, b. 12, cello pattern.

In SKP79, the three initial chords are preserved, but completed by a second, different three-chord motif, which abandons the policy of open strings with no tonal direction in favour of a dominant sound with a jazzy enrichment (ex. 6.8).



Ex. 6.8: William Walton, *SKP79*, b. 17, cello pattern.

The second survivor is what I will call the oscillating motif – in its basic, ur-form a very simple motif oscillating around its root pitch on the downbeat and the two surrounding pitches. This basic form, however, is never heard in either version, both of which use rhythmically more complex versions and, in the case of SKP23, once spread the motif’s pitch classes over two octaves in a kind of miniature *Verfremdungseffekt* (ex. 6.9).



Ex. 6.9: William Walton, *'Said King Pompey'*, versions of the oscillating motif.

While both the early and the late version use these disguises, the motif’s context is different. In SKP23, it is always surrounded by or even simultaneously contrasted with motives in the other parts, whereas SKP79 uses variants of the motif either in blocks of instruments with no simultaneous ‘dissenting’ motives (bb. 7–8 in flute, clarinet, saxophone, and trumpet and bb. 27–8 in flute, clarinet, and trumpet) or in

a short solo (bb. 1 and 4 in trumpet). The use of melodic blocks to enforce rhythms and tonality shapes the character of SKP79 much more than it does that of SKP23 and plays an important part in the irony of SKP79, which section 6.2.4.3 will clarify. Suffice it here to say that the oscillating motif is a litmus test for the treatment of dissonance as well as form in both versions.

#### 6.2.4.2 From Complex to Simple: Form

The music of 'Said King Pompey' proposes five structural parts, which divide the poem into three parts:

- (1) an instrumental **Introduction**,
- (2) the introduction of King **Pompey** in his black cape of dust and his line 'The dust is everything. The heart to love and the voice to sing',
- (3) the line '**Indianapolis** and the Acropolis, also the hairy sky that we take for a coverlet comfortably',
- (4) an **Interlude**, separating this speech from the following,
- (5) and finally the ketchup-eating **Bishop's** speech.

Just like most other *Façade* movements, neither version of 'Said King Pompey' has a postlude. Possibly, this served to preserve the immediate impact of the voice's rapid speed until the very end of the piece.

Both SKP23 and SKP79 assemble four-section structures from these five modules, but different ones. SKP23's instrumental introduction is not only extremely short, but also uses its introductory pattern, entirely unchanged, for the following first section of the voice (bb. 1–10), and thereby draws (1) and (2) together into one section. The 'Indianapolis' section (3) discourages simple rhythmic patterns and instead engages in a more freely developed instrumental background (a background, in fact, which might obscure the text's intelligibility with its freedom and density). The following Interlude (4) not only distances the two speeches from one another, but also serves to prepare the ground for the drum's role in the following section. The drum takes over as the only accompanying instrument in the Interlude (b. 18) for the next two bars (bb. 19–20), before all accompaniment

stops, while the reciter proclaims the Bishop's solemn line 'There still remains eternity.' The rest of this 'Bishop' section (5) builds up a surprising rhythmic complexity within only four remaining bars of the piece. Flute and trumpet play rhythmically different but compatible versions of the oscillating motif in bb. 23–4, and at the same time cello and side drum hold either a chord over a full bar (cello) or a trill over a crotchet, with an added quaver. The voice recites in quavers, but the clarinet part is more complex. Its adherence to the division of the quaver in six semiquavers stops in b. 24, when it embarks for a short while on the division of the quaver into nine semiquavers. It returns to the six semiquavers in the same bar, but together with the flute it divides the crotchet into eight demisemiquavers in the last bar.

A summary of SKP23's form comprises four structural elements:

<b>Intro + Pompey</b>	<b>Indianapolis</b>	<b>Interlude</b>	<b>Bishop</b>
bb. 1–10	bb. 11–17	bb. 17–18	bb. 19–26

*Fig. 6.6: Formal structure of SKP23.*

Apart from the Interlude, all sections are between seven and ten bars long, whereas the Interlude can claim the only change of meter. With this change of meter, its overall rhythmic flexibility, and the formal unification of introduction and first vocal section, SKP23 can claim the greater complexity of the two versions.

SKP79 sets out to assemble what could be called a more classical, certainly better manageable, overall form of the available modules. A proper Introduction (1) of eight bars (divided in 3+3+2) is followed by the solo voice in the Pompey section (2). The 'Indianapolis' section (3) is kept in check and intelligible by the aforementioned monophonic pattern. This pattern changes for (5), the 'Bishop' section, but still remains rhythmically comparatively simple.

A summary of SKP79's form also encompasses four sections:

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>Pompey</b>	<b>Indianapolis</b>	<b>Bishop</b>
bb. 1–8	bb. 9–16	bb. 17–22	bb. 23–30

*Fig. 6.7: Formal structure of SKP79.*

In SKP79, the priority seems to be intelligibility, even at the cost of a relatively simple structure with many repetitions in the instruments, in contrast to which

SKP23 operates with a variety of patterns and their changes to avoid the later version's simple, even militaristic appearance. In exchange it sacrifices intelligibility of its text to a great degree. These observations should however not lead to the conclusion that the Walton of SKP23 was inexperienced in writing vocal music and overly fond of experimentation, whereas the Walton of SKP79 was able to procure greater transparency with an even larger instrumentation. Rather, the developments from complex to simple in form and from thin to round in texture point to a very deliberate change from a experimental response to Continental modernism, which, despite its wit and fun, meant its modernism seriously, to a piece which enforces classical balance and manageability. The remaining elements of a contextual modernism (its text and its brevity) are kept visible on the surface of a perfectly shaped, small, and ironic, piece. Its dissonances, however, require further examination.

#### 6.2.4.3 From Atonal to Tonal

As is to be expected, the two versions also markedly differ in their tonal strategies. Here, as in the other parameters, a tendency from complex to simple, experimental to ironic, and in this case, atonal to tonal, can be studied, and the ironic response's directed violence looms large in SKP79. By *atonal* I here mean a kind of post-tonality which, after abandoning tonality, yet preceded serialism. This atonality, however, is not *the* atonality of the Viennese School between 1908 and the 1920s, since it employs different strategies from the ones that textbooks such as Alan Forte's *The Structure of Atonal Music* make use of on the basis of Schoenberg's atonality.<sup>43</sup> Walton's atonality in SKP23 sits between two of the common definitions of atonality,<sup>44</sup> between 'neither tonal nor serial', and 'the post-tonal and pre-12-note music of Berg, Webern and Schoenberg'. By *tonal* I here mean a kind of music within the Western art music tradition which builds on 'the orientation of melodies and harmonies towards a referential (or tonic) pitch class',<sup>45</sup> to use a standard dictionary definition. By tending towards either of these two poles, the

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<sup>43</sup> Alan Forte, *The Structure of Atonal Music* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1973).

<sup>44</sup> Paul Lansky et al., 'Atonality', in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. OUP.  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/47354> (28/6/13).

<sup>45</sup> Brian Hyer, 'Tonality', in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. OUP.  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/28102> (28/6/13).

versions of ‘Said King Pompey’ make their final and strongest statements about their dominant type of response to modernism.

### **Atonality**

SKP23 is atonal and thereby strongly embraces elements of the experimental response to modernism, even if it cannot be said to represent the concept to the same degree as a piece such as Lutyens’s *O saisons, ô châteaux!*. SKP23’s proximity to Schoenberg’s *Pierrot lunaire* is visible on many layers, but particularly in similarities between the atonal arabesques of, for example, ‘Colombine’ (ex. 6.10), and SKP23 (ex. 6.11).



Ex. 6.10: Arnold Schoenberg, *Pierrot lunaire*, ‘Colombine’, bb. 27–8, violin.

Ex. 6.11: William Walton, *SKP23*, bb. 14–16, flute and clarinet.

SKP23’s small chromatic figures such as the oscillating motif find a resonance in chromatic phases such as the clarinet’s b. 6 of ‘Heimweh’ (ex. 6.12).

Ex. 6.12: Arnold Schoenberg, *Pierrot lunaire*, ‘Heimweh’, b. 6, clarinet.

As this section will show, however, SKP23 operates with a much freer atonal structure than *Pierrot*. This structure rests upon five consecutive sets of pitch classes, the smallest sets being pentachords, the larger ones heptachords. It therefore derives its characterization as atonal mainly from the lack of *one* clear tonic pitch class or scale. Some of SKP23’s pitch class sets are stable for ten bars, some only for half a bar and their beginnings and endings serve to clearly define the borders of each section and the changes of character implied in the text. Although some of the sets do not bind all pitched instruments – the cello is a

prominent breakaway at several points – all sets succeed in creating *simultaneity* of neighbouring pitch classes within the sets. Owing to the piece's tempo and texture it is practically impossible to hear the distinct contents of sets, but the sense of modulation that the end of each set creates clearly marks their borders.

The first, and most stable, set dominates the piece for ten bars (ex. 6.13).



Ex. 6.13: William Walton, *SKP23*, bb .1–10, pitch class set 5–29.

At this early stage in *SKP23*, all instruments adhere to this neatly pentachordal set (Forte no. 5–29, inversion). Each instrument uses its components for its individual patterns. The clarinet is given the full pentachord in a rising and falling sweep, a move which is imitated in a more elaborate way by the flute (b. 2). The flute's emphasis on a trilled E is mirrored by the trumpet and the cello's versions of the oscillating motif in b. 1, the pitch classes of which are also encompassed in the pentachord. Serial as well as tonal interpretations of this set are discouraged from the beginning, as the melodic structure is too repetitive for a serial, yet too emancipated for a hierarchically tonal scheme.

This situation results in the frequent collision between pitch classes: the clarinet's F with the trumpet and cello's E and vice versa (ex. 6.14).

Ex. 6.14: William Walton, *SKP23*, b. 1, collisions between F and E.<sup>46</sup>

This clash is not one of two blocks of instruments bluntly clashing, but rather three different lines (two of which are derived from the same motive) running in

<sup>46</sup> The beaming in the trumpet part is copied from Walton's manuscript.

different directions *simultaneously*.<sup>47</sup> What is indicated here (and what will become even more explicit later in SKP23) is a modernist counterpoint in the truest sense of the word: part-writing which respects the directions of its parts and does not seek to accommodate them within the restrictions of tonal considerations.

The following set's brevity of merely half a bar is set between two stable areas (ex. 6.15). Only the first half of b. 11 has what could be described as the piece's first non-tonal modulation leading from the stable pentachord towards a following section of two simultaneous sets.



Ex. 6.15: William Walton, *SKP23*, b. 11, pitch class set 7–29, flute and cello.

This brief section's function is to shatter expectations for a pentatonic scheme of the overall piece, and to prepare for the changed mood of the following 'Indianapolis' section. The two sets 5–29 and 7–29 share a common superset however, which will appear in a later section of the piece (9–5). Also, they are both themselves supersets of the cello's set in the following 'Indianapolis' section, 4–23.

The following 'Indianapolis' section returns to relative stability for nearly six bars (bb. 11–6) and connects uninterrupted with the end of the flute's preceding arabesque. Here, two sets are situated in simultaneous opposition to each other for the first time (ex. 6.16). One remains static in the accompanying cello figure, while the other (saxophone, flute, clarinet) unfolds a rhythmically relatively complex structure, which perhaps serves to balance out the smoothness of the voice's rhythm.



<sup>47</sup> The question of what distinguishes a *clash* from a *simultaneity* will be answered in the section 'Tonality' later in this chapter.

*Ex. 6.16: William Walton, SKP23, b. 11, two simultaneous sets (4–23 in the cello & 5–26 in the saxophone, clarinet, and flute).*

The two sets overlap in the pitch classes C and A. Together, they form the heptachord C–D–E–F#–G–G#–A. This heptachord (7–24), not unlike the previous one, does not concur with any modal or tonal scale, nor is it identical with one of the other heptachords in this piece. As in the previous set areas, it is impossible to determine one pitch class functioning as a tonic or at least a centre for its duration. As in the first section, the simultaneity of either saxophone and cello, or of flute/clarinet and cello, narrowly avoids what tonal associations could be made.

Walton's idiosyncratic atonal scheme continues in the following instrumental interlude of two bars, which, in virtuous compliance with the text's form, arrives at its own pentachord (ex. 6.17) before subsiding into the side drum's rhythm (bb. 19–20) and finally, after the drum's stop, into the solo voice (bb. 21–2).



*Ex. 6.17: William Walton, SKP23, b. 17–22, pitch class set 5–Z36.*

Trumpet and cello provide a frame of G# and D for the clarinet's variant of the oscillating motif, which is here brought to a new close on D#. There are relatively many 'dissonant' sounds to be noticed in this brief section, foremost the clarinet's repeated C# belonging to the oscillating motif over the cello's D ostinato.

The final four bars of the piece do indeed, as the text demands, 'swell the diocese' of pitch classes by unfolding three, and finally four (the trumpet only enters the game in b. 24), simultaneous but independent lines in the pitched instruments (ex. 6.18). During these last bars, previous allegiances between instruments are tested or even broken, while new alliances are being forged for brief moments. The cello, for instance, breaks its previous alliance with the trumpet – an alliance which spanned the introduction and first vocal section and returned in the interlude – to align itself more with the flute's arabesque, while the flute itself swings in with the oscillating motif in b. 24, which previously 'belonged' to the trumpet and the cello. The clarinet, finally, tears itself away from all instruments, only to amass a confusingly large set of pitch classes in its set.

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Violin (Vc.), Trumpet (Trp.), Clarinet (Cl.), and Flute (Fl.). The notation is spread across two staves. The top staff contains the main melodic lines for all instruments, with notes and accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) indicating the pitch classes. The bottom staff shows the bass line for the Violin. The measures are numbered 23, 24, 25, and 26. The instruments are labeled below their respective parts: Vc., Trp., Cl., and Fl.

Ex. 6.18: William Walton, *SKP23*, bb. 23–6, simultaneous pitch class sets 5–34, 4–2, 9–5, and 5–25.

None of these sets is transpositionally or inversionally equivalent to another. 9–5 is the superset to all sets, and several pentachords share 3–11 (the minor triad) as a subset, but there are no recurring further tonal implications, relations, or repetitions between the sets *à la Viennese*. The emphasis clearly is on the simultaneous plurality of parts, which is highlighted by a crescendo in all pitched instruments from b. 24 onwards, to match the text ‘swelling the diocese | that elephantiasis | the flunkeyed and trumpeting sea’.

SKP23’s pitch structure develops from a virtuous pentatonic scheme to a boisterous polytonal riot within only 26 bars. The stable section of ten bars for one pentachord in all four pitched instruments thus gives a deceptive impression of what is to follow – a carnival of competing sets in different timbres and rhythms, repeating and imitating one another. As one might expect, standard pitch class set analysis can describe, but not make sense of, the proceedings of SKP23. One reason for this development is certainly that Walton’s aim was not to calculate complex and reconstructable relations between intervals, interval classes, or sets as the Viennese or Americans were setting out to do, but to produce an atonally sounding piece of music in little time (and perhaps he was simply not familiar with the set class relations that it is possible for atonal music to establish). Walton’s lack of a coherent pitch class set construction could be taken as a ‘failure’ to adhere to the Forte-esque ground rules when a traditional A-Modernist reading is applied to SKP23. But, yet again, the Event-response model is more flexible: what Walton does is to apply a multiplicity of sets in a bland refusal to do what he would have learned at the RCM. He responds experimentally to the idea of pantonality, in a way even more experimentally than the Viennese circle, because his pitch classes seem truly emancipated from any associations and bonds.

His way of using his sets leads to a sound which, despite its frequent collisions of semitones, is not so much bent on showing off clashes between parts, but on incorporating the dissonances into what can be heard as a simultaneous, free,

counterpoint. SKP23's colliding semitones are, for the greater part and in marked difference to SKP79's, transitional, as they pass each other by in simultaneous, but independent, broken chords.

### ***Between Two Versions: A Very Short Excursion to Jazz***

After listing several possible influences on *Façade* in his Walton biography, Michael Kennedy throws in the truism that 'the final influence on the music of *Façade* was, of course, jazz.'<sup>48</sup> While pieces like *Pierrot lunaire* or *L'histoire du soldat* may have acted as godmothers to *Façade. An Entertainment*, its successor *Façade 2* is often identified as a swinging memorial to London's jazz age.

Jazz was in the air when Walton and Sitwell set out to create *Façade*, the first bands to play in London (the all-white Original Dixieland Jazz Band and members of the mostly black Southern Syncopated Orchestra) only having come over from New York in 1919 to play in venues such as the London Hippodrome, the Palladium, the Hammersmith Palais, or the Philharmonic Hall in Great Portland Street.<sup>49</sup> By 1921, Londoners danced to jazz, as documented for example in the painting *The Jazz Party* by William Robertson (fig. 6.8). In fact, the influence of jazz on the cycle may start on a much deeper layer of the composition; that is in the choice of characters and topics of Sitwell's poems. Stereotypes of jazz, sexual innuendo, and of people of colour inhabit the world of Sitwell's *Façade*, be it 'Mr. Belaker, the allegro Negro cocktail-shaker', be it 'Lily O'Grady, silly and shady' (it is not clear whether this is really supposed to be an Irish black person) or the daughters of the admiral Joshua Jebb in Bohea, who envy the femininity of Myrrhina, a person too sexually explicit even for hell.<sup>50</sup>

Despite being suspected of corrupting young people (not unusual for new forms of popular music), jazz reportedly had prominent fans such as the Prince of Wales, later Edward VIII, and its newness and presence in the dance and musical halls

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<sup>48</sup> Kennedy, *Portrait*, 23.

<sup>49</sup> Catherine Parsonage, *The Evolution of Jazz in Britain, 1880–1935* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), particularly the chapter 'The Original Dixieland Jazz Band and the Southern Syncopated Orchestra', 121–62.

<sup>50</sup> Marsha Bryant, 'Sitwell beyond the Semiotic: Gender, Race, and Empire in "Façade"', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 26/2 (Fall, 2007), 243–267, 251; Catherine Parsonage, 'Fascination and Fear. Responses to Early Jazz in Britain', in Wynn, *Cross the Water*, 89–105, 92–3.

would have guaranteed it the attention also of the Sitwells, who were seeking any means to *épater les bourgeois*. The previous section 6.2.4.1 noted jazz structures in the instrumentation of SKP23. SKP79, by contrast, can be shown in the following section to revisit the atmosphere of 1920s dance halls in its tonal outline, while sacrificing a more polyphonic structure. Still, there is not as much jazziness in ‘Said King Pompey’ as for example in ‘Something Lies beyond the Scene’, which usually serves as the paradigm of Walton’s attempt to transfuse his and Sitwell’s *Gesamtkunstwerk* with the meaning the text lacked through jazzy music.<sup>51</sup>

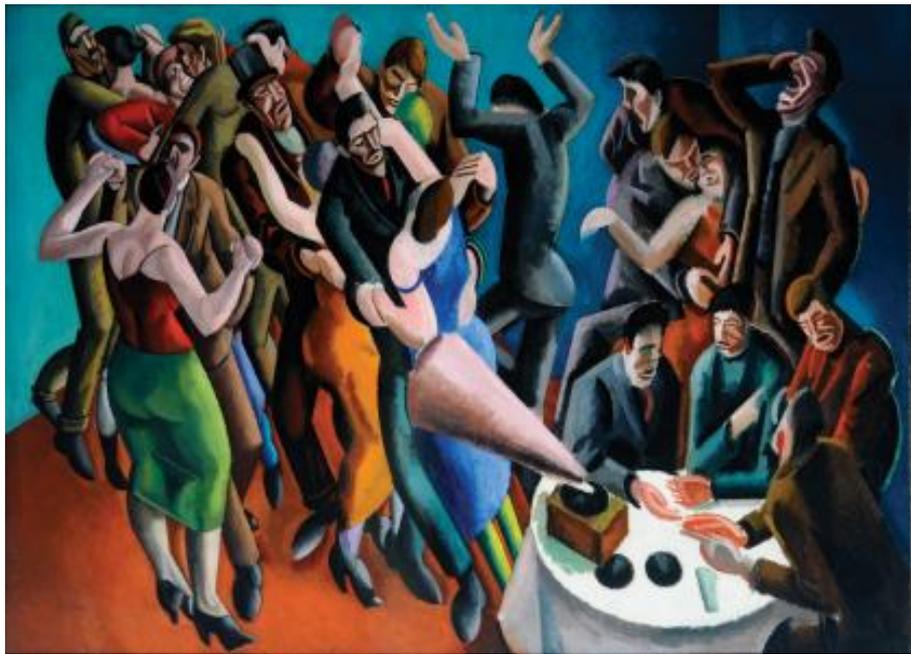


Fig. 6.8: William Roberts, *The Dance Club (The Jazz Party)* (1921).  
The painting was exhibited in the Chenil Galleries in 1923, the same location which saw the 1926 performances of *Façade*  
([www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/the-dance-club-the-jazz-party-37608](http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/the-dance-club-the-jazz-party-37608)).

### **Tonality**

SKP79 is tonal and can hence be assumed to exhibit more of either a triadic or an ironic response to modernism than SKP23. It is the purpose of this section to show that this version is concerned with what Badiou calls occultation, which exhibits ruins of dissonance on its surface, and not reaction, which follows a truly tonal course.

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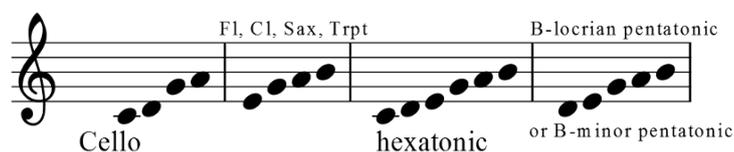
<sup>51</sup> Gyllian Phillips, ‘“Something Lies beyond the Scene [seen]” of *Façade*. Sitwell, Walton, and Kristeva’s Semiotic’, in Michael J. Meyer (ed.), *Literature and Musical Adaptation* (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2002), 61–80, 70; Dietrich Helms and Saskia Malan, ‘Sinn, Unsinn, Nonsens. Edith Sitwells und William Waltons “*Façade*”’, *Musik und Bildung*, 36/1 (2004), 44–51, 45.

The tonal structure of SKP79 is fairly simple, with the piece presenting a frame of two tonal centres and connected scales, which can be reduced to one tonic. The first centre, E, dominates the scene until the end of the first part of King Pompey's speech (b. 16), the second, B, acts as a main tonic for the rest of the piece. Neither is backed by a consistent diatonic scale, however. Rather, the main centres are enforced in blocks, and in their turn endangered by dissenting, 'dissonating', blocks of contrasting pitch classes. E, for instance, is never allowed to establish itself as an uncontested tonic in the first six bars, because these circle around a chromatic fanfare motif in the trumpet, which is followed by two parallel upward scales in the flute and clarinet, the first in what is best described as E-phrygian, the second in D-dorian. This clash, typical for the blocky structure of SKP79, is continued in the simultaneous fight between the trumpet's E and the saxophone's D (bb. 2, 5), both of which are thrown together on the cello in the same moment to increase the sense of dissonance. E nevertheless is the stronger of the two, not least because it has the two most pervading instruments, flute and trumpet, on its side and because it is the centre of the oscillating motif. Like the following sections, the first 16 bars make practically no use of chromatic structures or in fact the semitones outside of a C major scale, making E-phrygian its most likely key.

In a similar way, the later part of SKP79, which centres on B, could be called B-locrian owing to its resting point on B in b. 20 and to the final statement of the scale in 30. In this case, the two sections are connected by the B-hypophrygian scale, which reaches from B to B with the *final* E and which may be implied more explicitly in the short, preparatory section between bb. 23 and 26. Here, the piece's only chromatic ascent from B via C, C#, D, and D# leads to E and only resolves to B in the remaining four bars, strengthening E, yet doubtlessly building upon a scale from B.

There is nothing whatsoever outrageous about the use of modal scales in twentieth century concert music, but the locrian scale is certainly one of the least used of these. Even in modal jazz, the locrian mode is rarely regarded as an independent scale in its own right, because of its diminished root position triad on the first scale step, together with its combined diminished fifth and minor seventh.

A good place to examine SKP79's tonal strategies in slightly more detail is SKP23's survivors in the later version. The cello's open-string ostinato from SKP23, underlying the 'Indianapolis' section, is one of the few near-tonal elements of the early version (it formed the pitch class set 4-23). Not only is it so simple that it nearly seems ironic even in its SKP23 form, but it also sets a drastic counterpoint to the flute and clarinet's arpeggiation. Its perfect fifths imply a tonic-dominant relationship between C-G and D-A, but its openness does not allow this relationship to actually materialize. In SKP79 this ostinato reappears in order to provide tension to the other instruments' broken trichord E-A-B (with an added G in ascending mode). It has moved away from its restriction to open strings and thereby its emptiness, however, and now adds to its C-G/D-A the fifths G-D/E-B. The bar's theses thereby fall on C-G and G-D, creating a stronger dominant sound than SKP23's open strings and ensuring a tonal consistency within the cello's line, which at the same time is a reminder of the distant dominant relationships that were implied in the original motif (if D-A is the double dominant of C-G, then E-B is the triple dominant of G-D). The resulting sound in the cello part is jazzier. The clash with the upper instruments' simple but powerful arpeggiation B-A-E-B-E-A(G) is cushioned by the fact that the ordering in fifths of the bar's arsis could be taken as a structuring principle which is continued in the upper parts by adding one more fifth, E-B. Together, these three fifths constitute a hexatonic scale which seems to be based on B and therefore comes closest to being a B-locrian scale. If the cello's theses pitch classes (in effect the C) are omitted, a pentatonic scale emerges which could be minor pentatonic or a locrian pentatonic (without either F or F#, this cannot be decided), which is sometimes, if rarely, used in modal jazz improvisation (ex. 6.19).<sup>52</sup>



Ex. 6.19: William Walton, *SKP79*, bb. 17-22, cello, upper parts, hexatonic scale, B-locrian/minor pentatonic scale.

SKP79's cello ostinato thereby creates the illusion of a massive clash between C (cello) and B (flute, clarinet, saxophone), but goes to some trouble to absorb the

<sup>52</sup> An overview of these scales in Wolf Burbat, *Die Harmonik des Jazz* (Munich: DTV, 2002), 140.

shock straight away. SKP23 had insisted on an even simpler ostinato which however created tension in each moment.

The second survivor in SKP79 is the oscillating motif of the upper instruments, which can be found in a situation that, not unlike the cello ostinato, is after a strong effect. Flute, clarinet, saxophone, and trumpet unite in a fanfare pattern of only three pitch classes (E–D–F), rhythmically supported by the tambourine in bb. 7–8. The clarinet and saxophone’s D and E on the bar’s thesis mingle uneasily with the flute and trumpet’s simultaneous E and F respectively. The cello adds a third layer by insistently remaining on D as a basis of the motif (ex. 6.20).

The image displays two musical excerpts. The left excerpt, from SKP79, measures 7-8, features a fanfare pattern in 6/8 time for Flute, Clarinet in B-flat, Saxophone in E-flat, and Trumpet in C, with the Cello providing a steady bass line. The right excerpt, from SKP23, measures 23-24, shows the flute and trumpet playing more complex rhythmic patterns, with the flute in an 8va register and the trumpet playing a triplet. The cello continues its role in the lower register.

Ex. 6.20: William Walton, *SKP79*, b. 8 and *SKP23*, b. 24 (both without drums).

In SKP23, the same motif makes a rhythmically more complex appearance in the flute (bb. 23, 24) and the supporting trumpet (b. 24, in a simpler rhythm). The main difference to SKP79 is how Walton strengthens what might be described as the ‘blockiness’ of this survivor. SKP79 allows for no other rivalling tonality or rhythm within the upper voices and instead opts for a blunt but powerful clash between two groups of pitch classes – and only these – on the bar’s thesis. Additionally, the flute’s register is closer to the other instruments’ in SKP79 than in SKP23, strengthening the compactness of the pattern.

Taken together, the isolated cases of the two survivors (the cello open-string ostinato and the oscillating motif) serve to demonstrate one prominent characteristic of the later version which in itself is not a tonal characteristic but forces the tonal structure onto a specific track: SKP79 treats its dissonances

differently from SKP23. SKP79's blockiness does not cause a free plurality between two or more parts (as the experimental response does), but of confrontational clashes between exactly two opposed, usually homorhythmic, blocks of parts. These, in their turn, effect the perception of the interval class 1,11 (minor second or major seventh) as dissonances in an otherwise simple, consonant, environment. Compared with this, an atonality such as SKP23's reverses the block effect: 'dissonant' intervals occurring in several parts which simultaneously move in different rhythmically diverse directions will not seem so much a clash as a counterpoint, thereby avoiding the sensation of certain intervals as 'dissonant' and others as 'consonant'. For SKP79's blocks, this distinction between dissonant and consonant is deliberately enforced. Walton points the intervals out and brands them as *that skewed modernist dissonance*.

SKP79 thereby responds to modernism in something other than the principally ambiguous triadic way of for example *Egdon Heath*. These dissonant blocks are the signifiers of an ironic response. Walton marks out the most prominent and, one might add provocative, master signifier of modernism, emancipated dissonance, as an unnatural, violent, foreign body in SKP79. His response to the self-asserting existence of this foreign body is to forcefully suppress the dissonances' free movement and thereby change their effect on the whole piece. In principle the late Walton treats his dissonances like wild animals. He cages them in their blocks like lions in a zoo, which makes them roar more aggressively behind their bars while they are actually prevented from interacting with their environment. A piece like SKP23, to remain with the metaphor, by contrast leaves the wild animal in its natural habitat, where a roar does signify something (hunger, danger, or heat), and thereby allows the animal (or the dissonance) to affect its environment, as long as it roams freely.

As far as the piece's tonal outline is concerned, SKP79 shares as good as no resemblance to SKP23. Their approaches vary so widely because the earlier uses highly chromatic and smaller parallel structures, while the latter operates with a modal outline which is disrupted by 'dissenting' intervals. The modal, blocky, and repetitive structure of SKP79 envisages its dissonance as a blaring and aggressive, yet finally harmless foreign body. Not unlike two other famous examples of music

ridiculing its dissonance – the slow introduction to Mozart's Quartet 'Dissonance' KV 465 and the opening minor seconds of Vaughan Williams's Fourth Symphony – SKP79 uses its dissonance to create an atmosphere of parody. SKP79's dissonances are marked as such, and are cancelled out as contributors to the overall structure of the piece. This is the goal of the ironic response towards the experimental.

A very brief thought experiment can help bolster this claim and clarify the ironic response's position. In order for SKP79 to distinguish itself from the experimental response, it must be principally tonal or at least have a tonic centre (in this case B with B–locrian and B–hypophrygian scales). To distinguish itself from the triadic response, it must, however, retain dissonances with the aim of parading them around and show how blunt they sound. To return once more to the zoo metaphor, the ironic subject will catch the lion and put it behind bars (in opposition to the experimental subject), but it will also (in opposition to the triadic subject) exhibit the lion to frighten and fascinate children on a school trip, in order to show how dangerous the animal would have been, had it not been caught. The whiter the teeth and the greater the roar of this zoo lion, the better. The more glaring the dissonances in this modal piece, the clearer that its modernism is harnessed, if not cancelled out.

Had Walton wanted to turn 'Said King Pompey' from its (admittedly problematic) original atonal version into a triadic version, he could have remained with to the relatively unproblematic pentatonic structure which was implied in SKP23's first ten bars. He could have cushioned the 'dissonances' that followed by their belonging to one mode, as they also are in SKP79. Yet, he still could have refrained from pinning an extract of the mode's pitch classes against each other in blocks by keeping SKP23's structure of several simultaneous parts. Alternatively or additionally, he could have given the piece more interludes, or could have been reduced in speed, and thereby might have balanced out SKP23's unintelligibility owed to the arpeggiated figures in full speed. In this case, Walton would have achieved his obvious goal in SKP79 of giving the voice more intelligibility, without having to sacrifice all polyrhythmic devices of SKP23.

However, occultation does not seek to accommodate modernism, but to eradicate it. Walton achieves this by turning simultaneous counterpoint into glaring dissonance. This dissonance, however, does not reach into the piece's tonal structure but remains on the surface as a highly signifying but finally eradicated element. The dissonance is, as it were, Spartacus's spiked head carried through Rome by Crassus's army.

### **6.3 Conclusion: In Praise of Irony**

The differences between SKP23 and SKP79 are of a distinct formal and tonal quality. Nevertheless, the semitone in two simultaneous parts will only in certain circumstances be perceived as a dissonance, i.e. a 'wrong', 'unnatural', 'deviant' interval requiring solution into a concord. Conversely, the designation of such an interval as a dissonance will trigger the expectation for the interval to resolve into a consonant solution. In this sense, Holbrooke's *Four Futurist Dances* of 1914 (in particular 'Leprechaun Dance' and 'Demons' Dance') may be a forerunner of Walton's late ironic response, when they deny the solution into concord. In SKP23 and SKP79, the different perception of intervals is achieved by the character of the structure surrounding them. A free interplay of parts guarantees SKP23's intervals their perception as elements of a kind of basic modernist counterpoint. SKP79 counters this by establishing two simultaneous, but opposed, harmonic blocks at any given moment. In consequence, SKP79 sets the singularity of the chord or the modal scale against SKP23's plurality of pitch class sets, which in turn results in clashes between pitches, not their simultaneity. Finally, this leads to the ironic re-establishment of the prohibitive categories of consonance and dissonance in SKP79, where earlier in SKP23 emancipated intervals had existed. The experimental intervals are eradicated as they are bereft of their function and environment, and only their ruins remain.

Unlike minimalist music, which seeks to remove any trace of the experimental response to modernism, these ruins are left standing in 'Said King Pompey'.<sup>53</sup> The

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<sup>53</sup> A detailed examination of minimalist music's relation to modernism is beyond the time-frame and the scope of this thesis. However, according to the logicalized Event-response model, minimalist music could possess a triadic element and might therefore constitute a response to modernism, where its strict tonality remains its central characteristic (as for example in Philip Glass's *Music in Twelve Parts*). Alternatively, it is possible that this music simply does not respond

remains of an idiosyncratic 1920s British atonality in a piece of 1979 make for an interesting sound and it is perhaps not too surprising that the reception has repeatedly taken these ruins for the real thing, given Walton's reputation as an *enfant terrible* turned Southern-Italian conservative as well as the tendency in some of British music between 1900 and 1914 to experiment with interval clashes such as Holbrooke's.<sup>54</sup> This chapter has shown, however, that the Walton of the early 1920s was much more an experimental modernist than we usually give him credit for. It is to be doubted that many composers are similarly far-travelled as Walton is in his journey from an experimental modernist in SKP23 via a major triadic phase (which Harper-Scott has claimed to be Walton's essence) to a later, ironic moment in SKP79. At the same time, SKP79 preserves and selects what Walton apparently perceived as the quintessence of his 1920s modernist response: dissonance. The structure and complexity of SKP23 had to go, but the impression of dissonance has stayed and has since led listeners and scholars alike to believe that this was the young Walton himself speaking, as it were.

Just as important for the context of this thesis, however, is the fact that the irony of SKP79 turns 'Said King Pompey' into a performable piece of music, a claim which cannot be made of the experimental SKP23 to the same degree. It must have been clear to Walton upon returning to 'Said King Pompey' in 1977 that the early version was not going to work well in a performance situation. Despite the fact that the reciter did not have to rely upon the instruments to provide the correct pitch, she or he would have struggled not only to enter on the right beat, but also to keep the rhythm against the instruments' various, sometimes even simultaneous, polyrhythmic devices (for example in bb. 11–2, 14–6, 19). A further issue concerns the aforementioned intelligibility of the text. It is of course inventive and witty to let 'There still remains eternity' stand out as the only intelligible sentence in a piece of only about 40 seconds duration, but if it may be assumed that higher levels

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to modernism, especially where repetition and harmonic stasis are its signifiers rather than tonality (as for example in La Monte Young's *Trio for Strings* or Steve Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians*). However, any such argument would have to be presented at much greater length and in a larger context of twentieth-century music history in order to hold any claim.

<sup>54</sup> This characteristic (as well as an analysis of Holbrooke's experiments) is to be found in Lambourn's analysis of a list of signifiers of modernism (which itself is characterized as 'the will to innovate' [idem, 'Modernism in British Music, 1900–22', MLitt dissertation {Cambridge, Cambridge University, 1993}, 'Preface', *ibid.*, 2–2–12, –13, –14]).

of composed intelligibility mean higher quality of the composition, then SKP79 succeeds where SKP23 fails.

Finally, the fascinating, but difficult arabesques of SKP23 in simultaneous modernist counterpoint increase the difficulties for the instrumentalists as well. These difficulties would have led to – in view of the brevity unjustifiable – amounts of rehearsal time. (A similar problem is certainly faced by pieces like *Pierrot lunaire*, but perhaps more tolerated where the composer is at the centre of the paradox of the ‘progressive’, ‘difficult’, ‘avant-garde’.) SKP79 avoids this problem by reducing the parallel lines to two strong, dissonant, blocks and by keeping the metrical features simple. The surface impression of a fast, witty, and dissonant piece of music is retained, while its difficulty is reduced to a minimum. Contrary to what occultation in Badiou and Harper-Scott’s worlds does, the ironic element makes the piece performable in the first place. It thereby adds one last piece of evidence to the claim that the responses must be conceived as equal.

## Chapter 7. Epilogue

*To art its freedom*<sup>1</sup>

Modernism has fallen on hard times during the reign of postmodernism. Obviously, this is not a coincidence, but one of the *raisons d'être* of the latter, but the situation at the end of this thesis may evoke the question 'what breed is this new Event-response modernism, if it is neither modernist modernism (A-Modernism) nor straightforwardly postmodernist modernism (B-Modernism) anymore?' Several disciplines seek to provide answers to this eminent question of a changing face of modernism and emerge with terms from post-postmodernism to metamodernism.<sup>2</sup> It is not useful at this point, however, to align the work this thesis has done with one of these already highly contested terms from other disciplines, and this Epilogue therefore refrains from closing with a declaration of a new name for this middle ground modernism (not to be confused with Christopher Chowrimootoo's middlebrow modernism, another concept that suggests to include Britten's operas in the modernist canon by removing modernism's highbrow status).<sup>3</sup> Instead, it will cast a short glance back over its argument, while it speculates about the potential for music historiography and criticism of its Event-response model of modernism, which replaces the dichotomy of A-Modernism and B-Modernism.<sup>4</sup>

As the previous chapters have demonstrated, there is a modernist British concert music before the 1960s, before the advent of the Manchester School, or before those other events (for example the participation of British composers in the *Darmstädter Ferienkurse für Neue Musik*) which are commonly cited to mark

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<sup>1</sup> The second half of the Viennese Secession's claim, which completes it and perhaps serves as a reminder that music is not written for the musicologist's scalpel – not even that of the twentieth century.

<sup>2</sup> One of the first, if not the first, mention of post-postmodernism in Tom Turner, *City as Landscape: A Post Post-Modern View of Design and Planning* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1995).

Metamodernism has been proclaimed by Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker, 'Notes on Metamodernism', *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 2 (2010), DOI: 10.3402/jac.v2i0.5677.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Chowrimootoo, 'Reviving the Middlebrow, or: Deconstructing Modernism from the Inside, in "Roundtable: Modernism and its Others"', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 139/1 (2014), 187–93; see also idem, 'The Timely Traditions of *Albert Herring*', *The Opera Quarterly*, 27/4 (2012), 379–419.

<sup>4</sup> If the 'A' and 'B' of modernism could be combined as in ABO blood groups, then my modernism might be comparable to the group AB.

crucial but late encounters of British music and Continental modernism.<sup>5</sup> More than that, the chapters have shown that it is possible to locate this modernism not just in related texts, composers' biographical circumstances, networks of a cultural history of ideas, or the music's close proximity to other modernists or one of the World Wars, but that the responses music gives to modernism can be found in the music, in particular in the choices it makes about its tonality, its form, and even its texture. In accordance with this, the use in Part 2 of a combination of firstly, musical analysis, and secondly textual analysis, reception history, and even biographical background seeks to lend additional credibility to the idea that music from the seeming peripheries of modernism can partake in modernism.

Because of its tonality, much of this music was barred from being perceived as modernist as long as a kind of progressivist music history was firmly in place. Even pieces which may possess the standard signifiers of modernism suffered from neglect because of other factors like its composer's gender (Lutyens), while others simply seemed not modernist enough because of their composers reputation (Walton and Holst). The thesis identified the issues with this old exclusionist game to be residing not in the music and not even so much in the concept of modernism. Rather, the problem lies in the additional signifiers modernism has acquired over time, which have hidden the concept behind layers of additional signifiers and quilting points. I would like to suggest that its alleged misogyny, elitism, wilful difficulty, militarism, pessimism, masculinism, and disdain for (or fetishization of, depending on perspective) the past require not an expansion or desertion of the concept of modernism, but the opposite: a disentangling of its status and its signifiers.

What the thesis has sought to provide is a compromise in the form of a new model which helps to identify and categorize modernism in music in Western art music of the early to mid-twentieth century. The compromise is in this model's suggestion that modernism does indeed possess a conceptual 'hard' kernel (the master signifier pantonality), while it also highlights the fact that the recent music historical re-evaluation of marginalized twentieth-century music is as timely as it

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<sup>5</sup> As Philip Rupprecht implies in "Something Slightly Indecent". British Composers, the European Avant-Garde, and National Stereotypes in the 1950s', *The Musical Quarterly*, 91/3-4 (2008), 275-326.

is important for understanding the history of music.<sup>6</sup> This study attuned these two seeming contradictions by investing the concept of modernism with the status of an idea, which is thereby removed from being able to be claimed by Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern's music more than by Holst, Lutyens, or Walton's (swap these last three for many other composers' names *ad libitum*). Where music *responds* to an idea (instead of representing or incorporating it), we can begin to examine what tonal music, for example, can bring to modernism: the acceptance of its innovative character, both when it seeks to problematize modernism and its techniques itself and when it seeks to understand modernism as a continuous tradition, rather than a break.

On a theoretical level, the Event-response model can clarify the quality and validity of modernism's signifiers, and on a more practical level reconcile the longstanding opposition between the concept's exclusivity and the urged expansion of the recent years (in Part 1). What is more, it can establish the relation between tonal music and modernism – and in its train the related issues of form, thematic development, and even texture – by means of musical, textual, and contextual analyses (in Part 2). Not least, this Part furthermore tackles the explosive relation between gender and modernism, and seeks to clear modernism from the accusation of inherent sexism.

The result reveals two ways in which this model can positively contribute to writing music history of the twentieth century. Firstly, the Event-response model has the potential to narrate microhistory as well as macrohistory. In accordance with Badiou's concept of 'worlds', the model could draw upon a historical microcosm such as 'Paris 1946' to examine the aforementioned clash of responses to the idea of serialism by Lutyens and Leibowitz,<sup>7</sup> or even an analytical microcosm such as 'Vaughan Williams's Fourth Symphony' in order to explain the piece's unusual structure through its interlocking of different responses. At the other end of the spectrum, the model could deal with the macrocosmic world of,

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<sup>6</sup> As this thesis draws to a close, the Spring 2014 issue of the *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* includes a 'Round Table: Modernism and its Others', consisting of six short articles and an introduction about the changing face of modernism and seeking to criticize as well as revive the concept for use on twentieth-century A-Modernist music as well as popular music (*Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 139/1 [2014]).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. section 5.2.1.2.

for example, 'twentieth-century opera', and connect the responses to modernism of, to pick a few, an experimental *Lulu*, a triadic *Peter Grimes*, and a (partly) ironic *Elegy for Young Lovers*. Like the B-Modernist way of telling history, the Event-response model lends itself to the exploration of a piece's (and its composer's) context and mindset. It goes beyond much postmodernist B-Modernism, however, in that it is a model which can exist (and be refined) independently of and beyond the context of one particular piece of music. As Part 1 showed, it is possible to construct the model independently, and as Part 2 demonstrated, the model can work for different pieces of music without taking on new master signifiers of modernism.

Susan Friedman's assessment in Part 1 that the full story of modernism is in opposites proves correct, but this does not mean anymore that a decision between two evils (too much exclusion or inclusion) has to be made or that modernism has to become 'modernisms' in order to survive. Hence, the model could be used to shed light on the role of modernism in the works of, for example, Scriabin, one of the most prominent 'other' modernists. The composer's development of his harmonic language situates him in a challenging relation to musical modernism, and the Event-response model could reveal the similarities in his treatment of tonality and pitch to the ambiguities of the triadic response and could therefore secure his music a place among the three responses to modernism. In the Sonata op. 53 no. 5, for example, Scriabin's music exhibits strikingly similar harmonic ambiguities to *Egdon Heath*: whole-tone elements are contrasted by tonal elements, and it is still debated which key the piece begins in.<sup>8</sup>

Ambiguity, as one of the central features of another type of modernism recently presented in Downes's *Music and Decadence in European Modernism*, is the signifier of a decadent modernity as well as the master signifier of the triadic response. Although this decadent modernism takes its cue from earlier music than my concept of modernism does (it begins with Wagner and Nietzsche), this does not establish an inconsistency with the Event-response model of modernism. On the contrary, similarities between these two approaches stand out and they have the potential to strengthen each other, as long as they describe the same time

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<sup>8</sup> Kenneth M. Smith, *Skryabin, Philosophy and the Music of Desire* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 79–80.

frame. An element of decadence is able to refine aspects of the triadic response, where the latter exhibits the signs of Downes's decadence: 'miniaturism, fragmentation, hysterical hyperbole, sensuality, ornament and degenerate ugliness'.<sup>9</sup> Like the triadic response, decadent modernism is granted a fruitful exchange with the progressive side of modernism, when it is claimed as the avant-garde's counterpart.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the event-response model offers to solve one of decadence's issues, its chronology. Where the concept of decadence assumes a sequence of decay or decline, which precedes the regeneration or progression of the avant-garde, the Event-response model has shown that the tonal and ambiguous response to modernism does not have to justify itself for its appearance together with the avant-garde, but that their contemporary existence can be accounted for.

This existence of different responses within one temporal 'field' erupts again and again in the twentieth century, for example in British music of the 1950s: the contemporary but opposed responses to modernism in Humphrey Searle's experimental, serialist, output of the 1950s as well as in what Jill Halstead has identified as Ruth Gipps's 'anti-modernism' – her ironic response to modernism.<sup>11</sup> A clash between these two opposed types of response in one piece of music can be found only slightly later in Hans Werner Henze's early operas, in particular the aforementioned *Elegy for Young Lovers*. It features the 'madwoman' Hilda, who sings her prophecies in a serial idiom, and the young lovers Elisabeth and Toni, whose triadic folk-songs become ironic when the thought of the unscalable mountain, the Hammerhorn, and with it of the mad widow, Hilda, intervenes Elisabeth's thoughts of what might become of her in Act 2/VI 'The Troubles of Others' and turns her sung melody against a block formed of the mountain and Hilda's instruments (flute, harp, celesta, mandolin, vibraphone, and guitar, ex. 7.1), but later even against her own instrument, the violin.

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<sup>9</sup> Stephen Downes, *Music and Decadence in European Modernism: The Case of Central and Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), 43. The last signifier, 'degenerate ugliness', however, would have to be examined for its ironic aspects.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 31, 34.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Jill Halstead, *Ruth Gipps: Anti-Modernism, Nationalism and Difference in English Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

Elizabeth

Fl. contr.,  
Arpa + Archi flag.,  
Cel., Mand., Vibr.

*p*

My own, my own,

*pp* sempre

Chit.

Ex. 7.1: Hans Werner Henze, *Elegy for Young Lovers*, Act 2/Vl. 'The Troubles of Others', bb. 435–8.

While I maintain that analysis is required to examine responses to modernism in detail, this small list of examples shows that the model does not seek to discredit preceding, following, or indeed dissenting music, or to discredit analyses of particular styles or philosophies of music during the reign of modernism, but that it suggests the return of modernism as a descriptive and useful tool of a broad canon of twentieth-century music in which these analyses can be cushioned.

A second advantage of this model, next to its ability to narrate microhistory and macrohistory, is that it strikes a balance between the modernist way of telling music history as the story of progress or of evolution, and the more postmodernist approach of telling the history of modernism as 'twentieth-century' history. As long as a progress-driven historiography was prevalent in music history, music was divided by being progressive or regressive. Monuments such as Gerald Abraham's *Concise Oxford History of Music* from 1979 speak the language of evolutionary politics with terms such as 'the *rise* of West Asian and East Mediterranean music', and 'the *ascendancy*' of, respectively, Italy and Germany, or 'the *decline and fall* of romanticism' – terms which are carried on into those books of the 1990s at least which deal with the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> This language surfaces again in Taruskin's *OHWM 4* (although often in an ironic or critical way), and even some chapters of the otherwise consciously diverse and cautious *Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music* flirt with progress as an overarching

<sup>12</sup> Gerald Abraham, *The Concise Oxford History of Music* (London et al.: OUP, 1979). Quotes are taken from Abraham's table of contents. Similar ideas can already be found in Walter Wiora, *The Four Ages of Music*, tr. M. D. Herter Norton (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd, 1965), Robert P. Morgan *Twentieth-Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America* (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), in the chapter titles of Elliott Antokoletz's *Twentieth-Century Music* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1992) and in the idea of evolution, of periods that 'do not begin or end but phase into one another' (Paul Griffiths, *A Concise History of Western Music* (Cambridge et al.: CUP, 2006, 227).

principle of music history, in terms like 'innovation', 'traditions', 'mainstream', and 'rewriting the past', despite the fact that some of these are clearly meant half ironically as well. *Progress* usually claims that at a certain point in time, the nature of music changed fundamentally and that it could not be possible to go back beyond this point without violating the core idea that music evolves (i.e. without being regressive).

The concept of evolution, of course, holds more explosive power than music history could perhaps endure. Evolution means the survival of the fittest: one or several lines of mutation, better adapted to their surroundings, survive, while the other mutations are killed off or at least multiply less until they die out – it is a history written by its winners. It is not surprising that we would be tempted to tell music history in this way, because our thinking is shaped by a century whose politics and culture indulged in the darker regions of modernist thought (of which the most extreme, such as euthanasia and colonialism, hold a connection with evolution). Even Badiou tells this story of the evolution of the faithful subject, whose new mutation rises at precisely the right moment (the *kairos*, a concept which Antonio Calcagno has introduced to bolster the temporal aspect of Badiou's thinking),<sup>13</sup> in order to fight for space (or even *Lebensraum*, to overstate the point) against the less fit mutations (reactive and obscure), destroying them in the long run. For his modernism, the point of no return or *kairos* might be the beginning of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, or the last movement of Schoenberg's String Quartet op. 10 no. 2, or the beginning of Stravinsky's *Le sacre du printemps*, but the result is the same for the progress historian: the aesthetic demands for newly composed music change and this change can never be undone. In such a hardline modernist historiography, British music usually has no space, because the innovative progressive strand 'belongs to' someone else.

This narrative has rightfully been questioned and criticized within the majority of more recent music history, which sides with the postmodernist assumption that one direction in music such as modernism – which seems moreover tainted by its elitism – should not rule over all others. In many histories of twentieth-century music, the idea of modernism is therefore frequently faded out as a disturbing and

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<sup>13</sup> Antonio Calcagno, *Badiou and Derrida: Politics, Events and Their Time* (London: Continuum, 2007), 9.

unhelpful battle cry (or my Introduction's 'bad penny') in what is perceived as a complex and varied stylistic landscape.<sup>14</sup> This strand seeks to describe the most varied kinds of music *in* the twentieth century and from it springs the position of B-Modernism, whose danger chapter 2 outlined: where a progressivist concept like modernism is expanded to fit a postmodernist view of music history, the concept is in danger of coming loose. The Event-response model holds modernism together by maintaining that the word should be used in its singular form. Yet, this logicalized modernism accepts that innovation has a home in tonality as well as atonality.

To return to Arnold Whittall's judgement of the situation once more, the question was what is to be thought of British music when it is 'the absolutely fundamental role of "dissonances and fragmentation" that are the important constituents of twentieth-century modernity'.<sup>15</sup> The Event-response model transcends the explanation Whittall had to give – that the gap between British music and modernism is a time lag – and instead draws the advantages of both progressivist and postmodernist perspectives together to present a middle course: the idea of modernism is contained and protected from fraying out by its core concept of pantonality, but the responses in music are equal and take place within one temporal field in Western art music. This makes British music an indispensable contributor to the modernism of Western, and foremost European, music. Taken even one step further, it makes Britain an essential contributor to cultural Europe; and both Britain and Europe would be poorer if they did not acknowledge this contribution or sought to isolate it.<sup>16</sup>

The model maintaining this vital connection between modernism and its others defends British (as well as everyone else's) musical modernism against its critics and against its devotees alike.

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<sup>14</sup> Among a vast amount, some comprehensive titles are: Nicolas Cook and Anthony Pople (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004); Michael Oliver (ed.), *Settling the Score: A Journey through the Music of the Twentieth Century* (London and New York: Faber and Faber, 1999); Glenn Watkins, *Soundings: Music in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1995); and Arnold Whittall, *Music Since the First World War* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd, 1977).

<sup>15</sup> Arnold Whittall, 'British Music in the Modern World', in Stephen Banfield (ed.), *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain. The Twentieth Century* (The Blackwell History of Music in Britain, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 9–26, 10.

<sup>16</sup> Transfers of this statement onto current EU politics are encouraged.

# Appendix 1

## Said King Pompey

Edith Sitwell

William Walton

Musical score for the first system of 'Said King Pompey'. The score is in 6/8 time and features the following parts: Flute, Clarinet in A, Alto Saxophone in E flat, Trumpet in C, Side Drum, Voice, and Cello. The Flute part has a trill marked 'tr'. The Side Drum part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with trills. The Voice part has the lyrics 'Said King'.

Musical score for the second system of 'Said King Pompey'. The score continues with the Flute, Clarinet in A, Alto Saxophone in E flat, Trumpet in C, Side Drum, Voice, and Cello parts. The Flute part has a trill marked 'tr'. The Side Drum part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with trills. The Voice part has the lyrics 'Pom - pey the Em - pe - ror's ape shud - de - ring black in his tem - po - ral'.

7

Fl.

Cl.

Asax.

Trp. (C)

Dr.

Vc.

Vcl.

cape of dust, the dust is ev' - ry - thing, the heart to love and the voice to

11

Fl.

Cl.

Asax.

Trp. (C)

Dr.

Vc.

Vcl.

sing. In - di - a - na - po - lis and the Ac - ro - po - lis al - so the hai - ry sky that we take for a

16

Fl.

Cl.

Asax.

Trp. (C)

Dr.

Vc.

Vcl.

co - ver - let com - for - tab - ly. Said the bi - shop,

20

Fl.

Cl.

Asax.

Trp. (C)

Dr.

Vc.

Vcl.

ea - ting his ket chup There still re - mains e - ter - ni - ty. Swel - ling the dio - cese that

*p*

24

Fl. *mf* *f* *ff* *fff*

Cl. *mf* *f* *ff* *fff*

Asax.

Trp. (C) *p* *mf* *f* *ff*

Dr. *mf* *f* *ff* *fff*

Vc. *mf* *f* *ff* *pizz.*

e - le - phan - tia - sis the flun-keyed and trum - pet - ting sea.

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