

Michael Graham

Royal Holloway, University of London

Shakespeare and Modern British Opera:
Into The Knot Garden

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Music

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Declaration of Authorship

This thing of darkness I

Acknowledge mine.

I, Michael Graham, 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: MICHAEL GRAHAM

Date: 17/04/2017

Abstract

To date, the scholarly literature has not sufficiently examined the extent to which Shakespeare's plays helped to develop a national operatic tradition within the ideological context of modern Britain. This thesis is a contribution towards rectifying this oversight. Chapter 1 outlines the development of Shakespearian musicology, and emphasises the importance of music analysis to the elucidation of opera. Chapter 2 then presents a series of short analyses of modern British Shakespeare operas, and highlights how several of these works depict issues of gender and sexuality in a remarkably frank and sometimes subversive fashion.

Chapter 3 explains this thesis's particular focus on Tippett's *The Knot Garden*, a psychoanalytic, operatic version of *The Tempest* from the late 1960s. It posits a number of reasons why both literary scholarship and musicology have overlooked this composer and his Shakespearian work, and explains the pressing requirement for a detailed close reading of Tippett's *Tempest* opera that simultaneously situates it within broader musical, cultural, and historical narratives. It particularly contends that Tippett's works require further exploration from the perspectives of gender, sexuality, and autobiography, after the fashion of recent scholarship on his friend and contemporary, Britten. The production of such work will allow a more balanced, nuanced, and constellatory understanding of British music from recent decades.

Part 2 of the thesis offers a comprehensive, interdisciplinary exploration of *The Knot Garden*, which combines musical and textual analysis with biographical information, critical theory, literary and theatrical history, and Lacanian and Jungian psychoanalysis. Through a series of character sketches, this case study considers Tippett's interrogations of contemporary gender, sexuality, and psychology. The conclusion questions current ideas of 'British' and 'Shakespearian' opera. It furthermore highlights *The Knot Garden*'s deeply personal nature, its Shakespearian, 'revolutionary universality', its blend of Jungian humanism and Lacanian posthumanism, and the radical, 'hysterical' personality of Flora-Miranda.

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Part 1

Shakespearian Music(ology)

Chapter 1

INTERDISCIPLINARITY, OR SHAKESPEARE AND MUSIC

‘As long as there have been plays by Shakespeare, there have been adaptations of those plays’: so state Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier in their introduction to *Adaptations of Shakespeare*.¹ According to Julie Sanders, who has written extensively on Shakespearian adaptation over the past few years, Shakespeare’s oeuvre might now even be said to function for the modern world ‘in a remarkably similar way to the communal, shared, transcultural, and transhistorical art forms of myth and fairy tale’.² Given the long history of Shakespearian adaptation, and the importance of his work across societies and centuries, it is somewhat anomalous that studies of the transformations of his plays and poetry into a range of media have only recently begun to emerge en masse. That said, the subdiscipline of Shakespearian adaptation studies is now in a period of rapid growth, with a wealth of literature published in the past three decades covering everything from the Restoration stage to feminist novels to New Wave cinema.³ Certainly, to

¹ Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, ‘General Introduction’, in Fischlin and Fortier (eds.), *Adaptations of Shakespeare: A Critical Anthology of Plays from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 1.

² Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 45.

³ See, for example: Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe, *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007); Kate Chedzoy, *Shakespeare’s Queer Children: Sexual Politics and Contemporary Culture* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1995); Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer (eds.), *Shakespeare and Appropriation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000); Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992); Fischlin and Fortier (eds.), *Adaptations of Shakespeare*; Ton Hoenselaars (ed.), *Shakespeare’s History Plays: Performance, Translation and Adaptation in Britain and Abroad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Russell Jackson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Margaret Jane Kidnie, *Shakespeare and the Problem of Adaptation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); Jean I. Marsden, *The Appropriation of Shakespeare: Post-Renaissance Reconstructions of the Works and the Myth* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991) and *The Re-Imagined Text: Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Eighteenth-Century Literary Theory* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1995); Randall Martin and Katherine Scheil (eds.), *Shakespeare/Adaptation/Modern Drama* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Marianne Novy (ed.), *Women’s Re-Visions of Shakespeare: On the Responses of Dickinson, Woolf, Rich, H. D.,*

borrow Sanders's words, 'research into the cultural adaptations and appropriations of the Shakespearean canon across a wide range of time periods, genres, and mediums is steadily gaining credence as a genuine site of scholarly endeavour'.⁴

Music, of course, is one of the major ways that Shakespeare's work has been transformed by other artists over time. In the four centuries since its creation, Shakespeare's drama and verse have inspired countless musicians working in the widest range of styles and genres, from art music to jazz and pop. Sanders points out that musical works have the specific potential to 'challenge the mainstream canon of Shakespeare as established by more conventional theatre histories' and 'impact upon the literary-critical response' to his work:⁵ 'while the influence of Shakespeare on music has been considerable, the domain of musical interpretation [...] has had its impact in turn on the performance and understanding of many of Shakespeare's plays'.⁶ Furthermore, as Fischlin and Fortier note, the Latin root of 'adapt', *adaptare*, means 'to make fit';⁷ hence, in the words of Sanders, 'the adaptation of Shakespeare invariably makes him "fit" for new cultural contexts and political ideologies', and the study of Shakespearian adaptations – including musical ones – might provide considerable insight into these milieus.⁸ Thorough analyses of musical works based on Shakespeare are therefore vital to the further development of both Shakespearian adaptation studies and Shakespeare studies more generally.

George Eliot and Others (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), *Cross-Cultural Performances: Differences in Women's Re-Visions of Shakespeare* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), and *Transforming Shakespeare: Contemporary Women's Re-Visions in Literature and Performance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Julie Sanders, *Novel Shakespeares: Twentieth-Century Women Novelists and Appropriation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001) and *Adaptation and Appropriation*; and Robert Shaughnessy (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁴ Sanders, Review of Daniel Albright, *Musicking Shakespeare: A Conflict of Theatres* (2007), *Music and Letters* 89, no. 3 (2008), 484.

⁵ Sanders, *Shakespeare and Music: Afterlives and Borrowings* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 105 & 4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁷ Fischlin and Fortier, 'General Introduction', 3.

⁸ Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 46.

Explorations of music inspired by Shakespeare's work have been emerging since at least the nineteenth century,⁹ and there is a fair amount of recent scholarship addressing this topic.¹⁰ Much work still needs to be done, however, in order to improve current methodological approaches to this music, and to broaden the scope of this field beyond a repetitive focus on a clique of repertory pieces. The latter problem will be dealt with partially by Chapter 2 of this thesis, which, through a series of short case studies, presents an introduction to the hitherto underexplored topic of Shakespeare's employment in twentieth and twenty-first century British opera. This opening chapter, meanwhile, will provide an overview of the development and current state of Shakespearian music scholarship. With particular focus on a few Shakespeare-music studies, it will consider the challenges of musico-literary investigation, demonstrate the variety of approaches taken to Shakespearian music to date, and consider the relative effectiveness of each of these methodologies. Additionally, and without wishing to didactically enforce a strict methodology or discourage engagement with this subject from scholars working

⁹ See, for example, Alfred Thomas Roffe, *The Handbook of Shakespeare Music: Being an Account of Three Hundred and Fifty Pieces of Music Set to Words Taken from the Plays and Poems of Shakespeare, the Compositions Ranging from the Elizabethan Age to the Present Time* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1878).

¹⁰ See, for example: Daniel Albright, *Musicking Shakespeare: A Conflict of Theatres* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2007); Albright (ed.), *Great Shakespeareans: Berlioz, Verdi, Wagner, Britten* (London: Continuum, 2012); Philip Brett, 'Britten's Dream', in *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, ed. George E. Haggerty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 106-28; Mervyn Cooke, 'Britten and Shakespeare: Dramatic and Musical Cohesion in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*', *Music & Letters* 74, no. 2 (1993), 246-68; Bryan N. S. Gooch and David S. Thatcher, *A Shakespeare Music Catalogue* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991); Arthur Graham, *Shakespeare in Opera, Ballet, Orchestral Music, and Song: An Introduction to Music Inspired by the Bard* (New York: Mellen, 1997); Daniel M. Grimley, 'Storms, Symphonies, Silence: Sibelius's *Tempest* Music', in Grimley (ed.), *Jean Sibelius and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 186-226; Adam Hansen, *Shakespeare and Popular Music* (London: Continuum, 2010); J. P. E. Harper-Scott, 'Elgar's Invention of the Human: *Falstaff*, Op. 68', *19th-Century Music* 28, no. 3 (2005), 230-53 and 'Berlioz, Love, and *Béatrice et Bénédicte*', *19th-Century Music* 39, no. 1 (2015), 3-34; James A. Hepokoski, *Giuseppe Verdi: Falstaff* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) and *Giuseppe Verdi: Otello* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Timothy L. Jackson, 'Aspects of Sexuality and Structure in the Later Symphonies of Chaikovsky', *Music Analysis* 14, no. 1 (1995), 3-25; Julian Rushton, *Berlioz: Roméo et Juliette* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Sanders, *Shakespeare and Music* and "'In Windsor Forest and at the Boar's Head": The "Falstaff Plays" and English Music in the Early Twentieth Century', *Shakespeare Survey* 60 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 184-95; Roger W. H. Savage, 'Alice Shortcake, Jenny Pluckpears, and the Stratford-upon-Avon Connections of Vaughan Williams's *Sir John in Love*', *Music and Letters* 89, no. 1 (2008), 18-55 and 'The Shakespeare-Purcell *Fairy Queen*: A Defence and Recommendation', *Early Music* 1, no. 4 (1973), 200-21; Gary Schmidgall, 'Verdi's *King Lear* Project', *19th-Century Music* 9, no. 2 (1985), 83-101 and *Shakespeare and Opera* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

across a variety of disciplines, it will outline the essential ingredients that should be included in an investigation of Shakespearian music, or indeed any music based upon a literary source. In particular, it will stress the importance of music analysis to the elucidation of both Shakespearian opera and opera *tout court*. The multidisciplinary methodological approach expounded in this chapter will then be exemplified in the remainder of the thesis, particularly in the case studies of Chapter 2 and the larger exploration of Tippett's *Tempest* opera, *The Knot Garden* (1970), which comprises the second half of the thesis.

Cakes and ale

Russ McDonald notes how 'interdisciplinary work', such as the interpretation of musical pieces based on literature, 'for all the lip service we give it, is not [actually] done [properly] very often because its demands are great'.¹¹ The study of Shakespearian music requires thorough comprehension and command of at least two linked but distinct academic fields, each with their own technical languages, histories, and bodies of scholarship to master. It is perhaps not surprising, then, to find that few existing Shakespeare music studies make a concerted attempt to consider their chosen material as a Shakespearian adaptation, combine musical understanding with the Shakespearian material, Shakespeare and music scholarship, and socio-cultural history, and explain the specific importance of Shakespeare and his art to a piece, composer, place, era, or genre.¹² Although they deal with an interdisciplinary topic, only a small portion of studies on 'Shakespeare and music' might be described as properly 'interdisciplinary' themselves.

Contributions on Shakespearian music have come from both English Literature and Musicology. So far, however, the most high profile and sustained contributions to the field of Shakespearian music have come from scholars with a background in English Literature, such as

¹¹ Russ McDonald, Review of Albright, *Musicking Shakespeare*, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2009), 108.

¹² Exceptional work includes: Albright, *Musicking Shakespeare: A Conflict of Theatres*; Brett, 'Britten's Dream'; Cooke, 'Britten and Shakespeare'; Grimley, 'Storms, Symphonies, Silence: Sibelius's *Tempest* Music'; Harper-Scott, 'Elgar's Invention of the Human: *Falstaff*, Op. 68' and 'Berlioz, Love, and *Béatrice et Bénédicte*'; and Hepokoski, *Giuseppe Verdi: Falstaff* and *Giuseppe Verdi: Otello*.

Sanders, Gary Schmidgall, and Daniel Albright. While musicologists including Julian Rushton, James Hepokoski, and J. P. E. Harper-Scott have written pieces on Shakespearian music, it is unlikely that these scholars would necessarily describe themselves as ‘Shakespearians’, or even literary musicologists, given that their other work deals with an assortment of topics unrelated to Shakespeare or literary adaptation.¹³ It is arguably unfortunate that no musicologist has yet offered a persistent engagement with the Shakespearian musical repertoire, since scholars with an English Literature background often tend to overlook the role of music in musical works. Schmidgall, for instance, in his seminal *Shakespeare and Opera* monograph, describes Shakespearian operas as a straightforward ‘collision between virtue (fidelity to the original play) and cakes and ale (the pure pleasure of musical sounds)’.¹⁴ He further separates ‘legitimate’ – that is to say, Shakespearian – drama from musical drama.¹⁵ (‘Fine word, legitimate’, as Edmund says in *King Lear*). While Schmidgall’s discussions can be insightful and provocative, he seldom supports his arguments with any sort of musical analysis. He does not provide notational illustrations, and his musical engagement mostly involves comparing an opera’s libretto to Shakespeare’s original text, quoting reviews, and making subjective statements about the aural qualities of an opera’s music – the equivalent of skim-reading and paraphrasing Shakespeare’s words for a literary analysis. Schmidgall states that he neglects music and music analysis in his study because ‘music is notably inept at describing abstract concepts or intellectual processes’.¹⁶

¹³ Harper-Scott has written predominantly on British musical modernism. See, for example, *Edward Elgar, Modernist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism: Revolution, Reaction, and William Walton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Hepokoski specialises in form in eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century music. See, for example, Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), and Hepokoski, *Music, Structure, Thought: Selected Essays* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009). Rushton has published on Mozart, Berlioz, and Elgar. See, for example, *Elgar: Enigma Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), *The Music of Berlioz* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), and *Mozart: An Extraordinary Life* (London: ABRSM, 2005).

¹⁴ Schmidgall, *Shakespeare and Opera*, xx.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xviii.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 260.

Schmidgall's attitude towards operas derived from 'legitimate' Shakespeare is reminiscent of that of 'Pushkin lovers' towards Chaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, as outlined by Richard Taruskin in his essay on that opera.¹⁷ According to the 'snobbish solecism' of such critics, an opera derived from pre-existing literature is firstly 'judged by a simple yardstick of fidelity'.¹⁸ The Pushkinistas, in the words of Taruskin, display 'a magnificent incomprehension of what the music in an opera does'.¹⁹ In the particular case of Chaikovsky's opera, for instance, they ignore music's narrative function: that is to say, how it expresses emotions, character development, and – most crucially – irony (a vital element of Pushkin's novel that is often assumed to be missing from the opera) through a 'finely calculated filter of musical genres and conventions'.²⁰ They ignore, in other words, how music fills in the gaps left by the excision of text for the purposes of operatic adaptation; or, to put it another way, how it describes abstract concepts and intellectual processes.

In *Shakespeare and Opera*, Schmidgall does actually display an awareness of music's hermeneutic capabilities, but his inattentiveness to the specifics of the musical score often leaves his arguments unfinished and, in some cases, diminished. In a section on Reimann's 1978 opera *Lear*, for instance, Schmidgall begins by criticising the 'systematic tendency' of Reimann's librettist, Claus H. Henneberg, 'to sharpen and shorten by de-poeticizing', albeit while acknowledging that these criticisms sound like 'the carping of a Shakespeare purist'.²¹ While Schmidgall does not care for Henneberg's German translation of Shakespeare, however, he generally approves of Reimann's music, citing a positive review of the opera's premiere in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*.²² 'Reimann's opera', he writes, is at least 'worthy of Shakespeare's play in its evocation of humanity and civilization left "darkling". Its music powerfully vitalizes

¹⁷ Richard Taruskin, 'P. I. Chaikovsky and the Ghetto', in *Defining Russia Musically* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 53.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 54.

²¹ Schmidgall, *Shakespeare and Opera*, 255.

²² Ibid., 255.

those phrases cast throughout *King Lear* that suggest entropy and chaos'.²³ Schmidgall observes that the 'amorphousness of Reimann's tone-row-dominated music evokes the movement from form to formlessness, order to anarchy, which is part of the original play's structure. The imponderable atmospherics of pessimism are brilliantly conveyed by the score'.²⁴ He offers some musical commentary, noting that 'Reimann achieves his grim effects through [...] intricate formalistic patterning, the marshalling of tone rows and clusters, extreme variation in sound mass, extreme variation of vocal utterance from spoken word to coloratura, a tendency of the orchestra to sound in separate string, brass-and-wind, and percussion groups, and a willingness to forego all regular metrical organization'.²⁵ He does not, however, expand upon his potentially penetrating observation about *Lear*'s 'movement from form to formlessness, order to anarchy' by actually looking at the score and tracing tone-row transformations through the opera to explain precisely how Reimann achieves 'amorphousness' at a musical level.

One particular criticism that Schmidgall makes of Reimann's music is the 'odd lack of distinction' between Lear's three daughters. He attributes this similarity to their shared 'soprano' voice type, which 'blurs spectacular differences in character'.²⁶ In fact, Reimann inventively differentiates the three sisters through both voice type and musical material. In *Lear*, Cordelia is a lyric soprano, Goneril is a dramatic soprano, and Regan is (to use Paul Griffith's description) a 'hysterical soprano'.²⁷ The contrasts between the three daughters' personalities are apparent in the music of the opera's opening scene, when Lear invites his daughters to declare their love for him. Goneril sings a strident, angular line, which is syllabic, highly chromatic, and contains jolting intervallic leaps (see Example 1.1). Her music therefore exemplifies her confidence and her menace, and the hyperbole of her declarations in the play to love Lear 'Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty;/ Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare;/ No less

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 256.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Paul Griffiths, 'Lear by Reimann', *The Musical Times* 121, no. 1644 (1980), 107.

16

mf
Ich kann an kei - nen Au - gen blick des Le - bens mich er - in - nern

Example 1.1. Reimann, *Lear*, I. 1: Goneril.

43

Was_ an - - - de - re mit vie - len

45

Wor - - - ten schwö - ren,

Example 1.2. Reimann, *Lear*, I. 1: Regan.

74

Cordelia

mf
Ich ke - nne dei - ne Shüch - tern heit, ___ Ich weiss, dass du mich lieb - st

mf
Ich lie - be Euch wie ei - ne Toch - ter

Example 1.3. Reimann, *Lear*, I. 1: Cordelia.

than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour;/ As much as child e'er loved, or father found' (*King Lear*, I. 1). Regan has a similar but even more virtuosic and frenzied vocal line, consisting of agitated melismas, extreme range, and syncopated metric instability, to represent her even more

impatient, hysterical nature (see Example 1.2). In the score, Reimann instructs that Regan's line is to be sung, 'Wie um Goneril zu übertrumpfen, bravouröser' ('As if to outdo Goneril, with bravura'). Musically, then, her passage encapsulates her claim that Goneril 'comes too short' in her claims of love. Cordelia, on the other hand, has a comparatively lyrical, metrically stable vocal line, which is especially apparent during the passages when she argues with Lear (see Example 1.3). This style distances her from her sisters, making her seem calm, assured, and restrained. It furthermore aligns her closely with the declamatory style of her father, indicating their special relationship. If, then, one conducts an analysis of Reimann's serial methods, incorporating basic musical parameters such as melodic contour and rhythm, it becomes apparent from the very first moments of the opera that there is a great deal of sharp musical characterisation, and the three sisters are clearly distinguished. Attention to the 'poetics' of music, then, can significantly enhance appreciation of a musico-dramatic work, in the same way that attention to the poetics of language can enhance understanding of, for example, the intricacies of a moving Shakespearian soliloquy.

Sanders, in her 2007 monograph *Shakespeare and Music*, offers a marked improvement on Schmidgall's work. Eschewing his simplistic, hierarchical 'compare and contrast' approach, she identifies that whether or not a scholar considers an adaptation worthy of Shakespeare or faithful to the original play is a moot point, and states that she is 'hyperconscious of avoiding [...] the various pitfalls of reductionism when looking at the relationship between Shakespeare and music'.²⁸ Sanders is not interested in 'merely identifying acts of adherence or interpolation with regard to the source', since 'such easy equations between the literary and the musical form will not always be possible or even desirable'.²⁹ Rather, she wishes to look at a more intriguing area, which she calls 'fidelity-in-betrayal': 'the new meanings or (potentially) radical alternatives offered by the musical afterlives'.³⁰ Furthermore, she does not wish to 'think about

²⁸ Sanders, *Shakespeare and Music*, 3.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

musical compositions with a “Shakespearean” connection [...] in the abstract, as “timeless” evidence of the supposed universality of Shakespeare, transcending all cultures, times, and disciplines, but in quite antithetical terms as works with their own specific cultural, historical, disciplinary, and socio-political contexts’.³¹ She emphasises that music, ‘sometimes described by non-specialists as an abstract form that appeals directly to the emotions is [...] born out of cultural and intellectual contexts as identifiable as they would be for any work of literature’.³²

These works might come *after* Shakespeare in one regard, in that they find their creative impulse or impetus in his works – and there is undoubtedly much to be said about the choice of plays, or specific characters, in the process of understanding, historicizing, or contextualizing that impulse – but in many other regards they are works of art that stand alone as producers of meaning, often complex and plural meanings.³³

Encouragingly, in the ‘Prelude’ to her book, Sanders endorses a genuine ‘encounter between the disciplines of music and literature’.³⁴ To a certain extent, she achieves this goal, often mentioning relevant contemporary theatrical productions in her discussions of musical pieces, and considering how musical works support, contradict, and inform their theatrical equivalents. Unfortunately, however, Sanders concedes that it will not actually be possible for her to fully provide the encounter she craves, since her book is only ‘a study written from the vantage point of a literary critic, one with an amateur’s love of music [...] but one who is certainly not a trained musician or musicologist’.³⁵ Her work, she writes, ‘will look rather different from one produced by a musicologist on the same theme’: ‘There will be no notational examples, and little discussion of particular musical issues such as the choice of specific notes

³¹ Ibid., 4.

³² Ibid., 5.

³³ Ibid., 3.

³⁴ Ibid., 4.

³⁵ Ibid.

or chordal sequences'.³⁶ Sanders's criticism of Albright's publication from the same year, *Musicking Shakespeare* – 'some might question whether a truly interdisciplinary study should have sought to integrate its two focus disciplines more than in practice this book does' – is ironic, given the lack of musical analysis in her work.³⁷ In actuality, Albright judiciously incorporates extensive musical commentary and examples in his monograph, even if he does not match Sanders for insightful comparisons between musical works and theatrical performances.³⁸ Sanders's scholarly background and training should not excuse her from offering musical analyses any more than a musicologist might be exempt from reading a play closely because they do not have an English degree. However much she insists on the parity of source material and musical adaptation, then, Sanders's rueful willingness to overlook music analysis indicates that a hierarchical arrangement of the disciplines is still very much in operation in her work.

Sanders's musical instincts are usually correct, but her lack of specialist language and neglect of music analysis prevents her from fully exploring and explicating the pieces under consideration. She notes, for instance, that Romeo's melody in Berlioz's *Romeo et Juliette* 'becomes more fixed and certain' once he is united with Juliet, but she does not provide the couple of notational examples that might substantiate this point.³⁹ Likewise, she observes how, in the third act of Verdi's *Macbeth*, 'the uninterrupted flow of action results in a scene which blurs, almost to the point of deliberate confusion, the supernatural invocations of the weird sisters [...] and the actions and inspirations of Lady Macbeth'.⁴⁰ Yet she does not then address the resultant question of whether there is any accompanying musical link between Lady Macbeth and the witches, which might indicate that Lady Macbeth is in fact a witch herself.⁴¹ In her analysis of Sibelius's *Tempest* incidental music, Sanders describes Prospero's piece as 'an

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Sanders, Review of Albright, *Musicking Shakespeare*, 485.

³⁸ See Albright, *Musicking Shakespeare*.

³⁹ Sanders, *Shakespeare and Music*, 44.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 114.

⁴¹ Albright explores this possibility in 'The Witches and the Witch: Verdi's *Macbeth*', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 17, no. 3 (2005), 225-52.

unsettling combination of harps and percussion, which brilliantly captures the resonant ambiguity of the character and the movement between malign and benign possibilities in the play'.⁴² She does not explain, however, exactly *how* Sibelius achieves this ambiguous characterisation. A harp and percussion combination is not intrinsically 'unsettling'; tonality, rhythm, melody, and other basic parameters must also play some part. Sanders also enticingly contends that Sibelius's *Tempest* is a precursor to twentieth-century postcolonial readings of the play, but only uses the placement of Caliban's piece in one of the *Tempest* suites to support this argument, rather than any musical features.⁴³ Had Sanders paid attention to Caliban's music, she might well have found some more compelling evidence to support her theory. According to Daniel M. Grimley, although Caliban is characterised in a crudely Orientalist fashion, Sibelius 'bleed[s] elements of [Caliban's music] into other numbers [...] Caliban's bestiality, it seems, points towards a more general (base) level of the human condition, one that is no less essential than Prospero's elevated detachment elsewhere and whose presence can be felt across the island'.⁴⁴

It would be unjust to claim that a lack of music analysis is solely a feature of musico-literary studies conducted by English Literature scholars. Musicologists are just as capable of producing 'cakes and ale' scholarship, and the rejection of music analysis is a growing trend in mainstream opera studies and musicology more generally. Harper-Scott notes how certain musicologists now promote an anti-analytical, subjective style of commentary, and are irked by any

⁴² Sanders, *Shakespeare and Music*, 36.

⁴³ See 'Tempestuous times I' in Chapter 3 of this thesis for more on postcolonial interpretations of *The Tempest*.

⁴⁴ Grimley, 'Storms, Symphonies, Silence', 199. Grimley's chapter is further summarised later in this chapter.

questioning of ‘music as pure pleasure’.⁴⁵ Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, for instance, include no musical examples in their recent *A History of Opera*, ‘out of a desire to find a broader audience, one not involved in the disciplinary habits of musicology’.⁴⁶ Readers of their book ‘will look in vain for abstract structural analyses of music, or extended descriptions of notes interacting with each other’.⁴⁷ Instead, Abbate and Parker describe music without recourse to ‘musicological lexicon’, and ‘almost entirely on the basis of memory [...] from the repositories of [their] personal operatic experiences’.⁴⁸ They argue that the analysis of musical scores ‘encourage[s] elaborate attention to particular aspects of a strictly musical argument, above all those involving harmonic and melodic detail on the small and large scale, aspects that have tended to figure too prominently in musicological writings about opera. In other words, scores encourage the idea of opera as text rather than as event’.⁴⁹ They further justify their lack of musical analysis by contending that the ‘kind of information [that is] relatively easy – with training – to extract from a score, is virtually impossible to extract from listening to or attending an opera’.⁵⁰

Abbate’s and Parker’s book, with its rejection of technical expertise and emphasis on individual experience, is a prime example of ‘postmodern’ scholarship which, in the words of David Ashley, ‘is self-absorbed without even pretending to be critically self-reflective’.⁵¹ The ‘liberation’ that Abbate and Parker feel after their ‘renunciation of scores’ is undoubtedly partly down to the fact that, once one gets rid of the notes, explaining a piece of music becomes much

⁴⁵ Harper-Scott, *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism*, 12-13. Harper-Scott is referring particularly to Abbate’s ‘Music – Drastic Or Gnostic?’, *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 3 (2004), 505-36. For a similar, journalistic rejection of ‘theoretical knowledge’ and ‘cryptic, tricky’ musical notation, see Charlotte C. Gill, ‘Music Education Is Now Only for the White and the Wealthy’, *The Guardian*, 27/03/2017. <http://tinyurl.com/knlhzko>. Accessed 30/03/2017.

⁴⁶ Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, *A History of Opera: The Last Four Hundred Years*, rev. ed. (London: Penguin, 2015), xvii.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ David Ashley, *History Without a Subject: the Postmodern Condition* (London: Westview, 1997), 8.

easier. One only has to say ‘I think it sounds like...’, or ‘It makes me feel like...’, and suddenly one is a fully qualified music analyst. In that case, literally anyone could write a history of opera based on their opera-going experiences, and its validity and value would be irrefutable and beyond critique. I do not wish to deny the legitimacy of Parker’s, Abbate’s, or anyone else’s opinions or histories. Undeniably, writing *the* definitive history of anything is impossible, since any story told will be subjective and biased in some way. (Abbate and Parker indicate this fact through their choice of a non-committal determiner for their book’s title). Nevertheless, if, because of one’s level of professional expertise and authority, one is tasked with writing a learned history of any kind of music, a history that will be made available to a wide audience and presented to that audience as an authoritative statement, then one should make an effort to fully elucidate all aspects of that history, including the actual music under consideration.⁵² Uncovering not-immediately-discernible details – the stuff that ‘is virtually impossible to extract from listening to or attending an opera’ – through training and intelligent analysis, and presenting such findings so that the general experience – individual and collective – of listening to music or watching a performance is enriched is, I would argue, the whole point of scholarship.

There is a hypocrisy in Parker’s and Abbate’s position, since the only reason that they are able to interpret their opera ‘events’ so knowledgably is precisely because they have such detailed knowledge of the musical text in question, and the history and conventions of specific works and opera in general. To deny a reader this knowledge smacks of the very elitism that they seem so eager to avoid. Ironically, by writing so-called ‘accessible’ work, they maintain or even widen the gap between academics and readers who might wish to enhance their knowledge of a certain topic, but are unable to do so fully because the authors have decided not to present

⁵² Taruskin’s *The Oxford History of Western Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) offers a fine example of interdisciplinary scholarship, combining historical context with musical analysis and whatever other disciplines might be required for the explication of a specific piece, composer, or era. The online version of Taruskin’s tome might well be a harbinger for the future of interdisciplinary opera scholarship, which could benefit hugely from the possibilities offered by digital formats, such as the intuitive incorporation of score snippets, audio examples, video, and so on. See www.oxfordwesternmusic.com. Accessed 30/03/2017.

them with all of the relevant information. Abbate and Parker also acknowledge that ‘a corollary of the renunciation of scores, and the attendant reliance on musical memory’ results in a history of opera that ‘mostly deals with operas that are firmly in the present-day repertory’.⁵³ Their scoreless history, then, is self-confessedly cursory, limited, and unenlightening – a tacit endorsement of modern operatic culture through selective recall.

Opera (and, for that matter, music, theatre, and other forms of art) is never only ‘text’ nor only ‘event’ – to use Abbate’s other terms, it is never only ‘gnostic’ or ‘drastic’.⁵⁴ In the course of its creation, its ‘performance’ in different contexts (score, CD, concert hall, and so on), and its reception in multitudinous times and locations, it constantly negotiates a tension and flux between these two poles: it is text *and* event, drastic *and* gnostic. A proper exploration of any genre or piece of art should therefore encompass both sides of the coin, combining a thorough understanding of a work’s composition, presentation, and socio-political contexts with a skilled analysis of its inner workings. Notation and the written word might not capture the experience of live performance perfectly, but they are the most effective methods we possess for understanding the intricacies of an artistic creation. Ignoring the score, libretto, or play text arguably rejects the idea of art as a shared method of communication or shared experience, and the possibility that music or language might possess the capacity to transcend their original context and affect new audiences in different locations and later eras. As Julian Horton states, without notation, theory, and analysis, ‘we have no specialised language with which to grasp music’s ephemeral but nonetheless shared materials’.⁵⁵ Interpreting scores does not encourage a ‘strictly musical argument’; it contributes to the musical component of an interdisciplinary argument. Musicology that ignores theory and analysis only studies the discourse around music, and ‘dispenses with music as such’.⁵⁶ Leaving out musical notation and language reduces the musical aspect of opera scholarship to an almost negligible level, and not paying attention to the

⁵³ Abbate and Parker, *A History of Opera*, xviii.

⁵⁴ Abbate, ‘Music – Drastic Or Gnostic?’.

⁵⁵ Julian Horton, ‘In Defence of Music Analysis’. <https://youtu.be/BP7Gw3mfe-U>. Accessed 30/03/2017.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

notes does a disservice both to the composers of meticulously constructed compositions and opera audiences seeking to find out more about this art form.

Essentially, Abbate and Parker allow readers without musical literacy the easy and false satisfaction of ‘understanding’ opera, when in actuality these readers are not being given the opportunity to learn about one of its most vital components. It must also be pointed out that plenty of people outside of musicology can read music, and including musical examples does not necessarily prevent people who cannot do so from appreciating books that mostly comprise non-technical words. Many readers might actually be quite capable of identifying certain melodic or harmonic features, and be interested to find out how these contribute to their experience of a musical-dramatic work. Even if a listener cannot identify any features whatsoever, they might well be experiencing them subconsciously, and be delighted to find out some musical reasons why they have been affected by the work in question. Note reading is still a musical activity, and score examples might very well enhance past, current, or future experiences of an opera. Basic music reading is not actually that difficult a skill; after all, very young children are able to pick it up quickly. Moreover, people who do not read music are still perfectly capable of seeing patterns, learning terminology, and understanding formal ideas, if they are presented and explained in an appropriate manner. The incorporation of some form of music analysis should not automatically render an academic work unapproachable to a broad readership, and attention to music and notes will therefore play an integral role in this thesis’s methodology.

Ignoring music in a supposedly interdisciplinary musico-literary analysis is an oversight that can lead to the misreading and misrepresentation of any piece under consideration. It is, however, important to acknowledge that having the pendulum swing too far in the other direction, by allowing music analysis to cloud important contextual and literary factors, is

equally detrimental to a scholarly exploration. In his analysis of Chaikovsky's *Tempest* overture, for example, Timothy L. Jackson – like Schmidgall – relies on his own synoptic understanding of Shakespeare's play, excludes any other literary analysis or criticism from his exploration, and does not explore how other contemporary understandings of Shakespearian material might have affected the composer's interpretation. Consequently, he draws speculative conclusions, and – like Schmidgall, Sanders, Parker, and Abbate – provides only a partial picture.

Jackson presents a detailed hermeneutic analysis of the *Tempest* overture's sonata form, linking it to Chaikovsky's biography. He argues that the piece's sonata deformation, a partially reversed recapitulation, 'may have programmatic significance', being representative of Chaikovsky's 'homosexual problem': that is to say, his inner anguish caused by the conflict of his sexuality with the standards and expectations of contemporary Russian society.⁵⁷ In the *Tempest* overture, 'the main theme of the first group (associated with Prospero), recapitulated briefly but climactically at the end of the development [...] is interrupted by the recapitulation of the second group [associated with the love of Miranda and Ferdinand]'.⁵⁸ The main theme is only recapitulated fully in the extended coda. Jackson concludes his article by asserting that the partial reversal of the recapitulation represents how 'the love of Miranda and Ferdinand, which reunites Prospero to the world of everyday reality, also renders him impotent, sweeping away his fantasy world. The recapitulation of the second group's love theme thwarts the appearance of Prospero's motive at the climax of the development just as Prospero's magical powers are dissolved by the love of Miranda and Ferdinand'.⁵⁹ According to Jackson, in *The Tempest*,

⁵⁷ Jackson, 'Aspects of Sexuality and Structure in the Later Symphonies of Chaikovsky', 9-13. Jackson borrows the term 'sonata deformation' from Hepokoski and Warren Darcy. For more information on 'deformations', see Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), and Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*. Hepokoski and Darcy dispute Jackson's 'reversed recapitulation' concept. They write of a 'reversed recapitulation fallacy', and argue that pieces apparently displaying this feature should instead be understood as a 'Type 2' or binary variant sonata with a post-tonal-resolution (or post-second-rotation) coda based on P (the primary theme). For further details, see *Elements of Sonata Theory*, particularly Chapter 17.

⁵⁸ Jackson 'Aspects of Sexuality and Structure in the Later Symphonies of Chaikovsky', 7.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 7-9.

Prospero ‘must pay a terrible price to rejoin the world of men. He is compelled to sacrifice the two things most dear to him: his daughter Miranda and his magic powers’: ‘the overpowering love of Miranda and Ferdinand is the agent that both reconnects Prospero with society and destroys those aspects of his personality which make him different and special’.⁶⁰ Jackson therefore links Prospero with Chaikovsky, who, at the time of *The Tempest*’s composition, was faced with a similar dilemma over the thing that made him ‘different and special’: his sexuality. How, as an ‘outcast’ could he ‘achieve social respectability’? ‘Like Prospero, is [Chaikovsky] to assimilate by means of marriage, renouncing his otherness?’⁶¹

Jackson’s hypothesis, while predictable in the context of his wider tendency to tie Chaikovsky’s sexuality to his sonata forms,⁶² is not implausible; it is, however, poorly argued. Jackson does not discuss contemporaneous Russian interpretations of *The Tempest*, nor Chaikovsky’s own contact with and opinions of the play. He does not cite a single source that might indicate Chaikovsky or Russian audiences understood Shakespeare’s play in the manner he suggests. He also does not offer any evidence that Chaikovsky viewed himself as an ‘outcast’ Prospero figure, inviting the question of why this piece must necessarily be autobiographical in nature, and not just an artistic impression of Prospero or *The Tempest*. Could not the late reassertion of Prospero’s theme in the coda equally imply his command over proceedings? Such a reading might align Chaikovsky’s piece with the general nineteenth-century tendency to view Prospero as a powerful and controlling presence in *The Tempest*.⁶³ My own work on Tippett in the second half of this thesis will demonstrate that I am not at all averse to interpretations of music based upon a composer’s life.⁶⁴ In the case of a piece of music based upon a work of literature, however, one cannot simply dismiss the significance of sources, literary

⁶⁰ Ibid., 3.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² See, for example, Jackson, *Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6 (Pathétique)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁶³ See ‘Tempestuous times’ I and II in Chapter 3 of this thesis for further information about *The Tempest*’s performance and reception history.

⁶⁴ See ‘The Prospero fallacy?’ in Chapter 3 of this thesis for further discussion of biographical interpretation.

interpretation, and performance history, in order to yoke together a composer's life and compositions speculatively.

Exemplars

Recently, two studies have emerged that offer a more promising model for analysing Shakespearian music (or any musico-literary piece, for that matter): Harper-Scott's 'Berlioz, Love, and *Béatrice et Bénédicte*', and Grimley's 'Storms, Symphonies, Silence: Sibelius's *Tempest* Music'. Harper-Scott's essay revolves around instances of unfaithfulness – or, to use Sanders's term, 'fidelity-in-betrayal' – that might offer new insights into Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, Berlioz's life, music, and society, and our own time. He draws upon a wide array of disciplines – critical theory, psychoanalysis, social history, literary criticism, and music analysis – to support his provocative thesis that, in *Béatrice et Bénédicte*, Berlioz subjects 'the fantasy at the heart of marriage [...] to even more relentless scrutiny' than Shakespeare in *Much Ado About Nothing*.⁶⁵ He initially bolsters his reading of Berlioz's opera by outlining different readings of *Much Ado* from leading Shakespearian scholars, and sides with Stephen Greenblatt's argument that Shakespeare's 'Beatrice and Benedick constantly tantalize us with the possibility of [...] an identity deliberately fashioned to resist the constant pressure of society [to marry]', but eventually succumb to this pressure and their friends' trickery, demonstrating how 'marriage is a social conspiracy'.⁶⁶

Harper-Scott also situates Berlioz's opera in its socio-cultural milieu, in which attitudes towards marriage were very different from those in the late sixteenth century. *Béatrice et Bénédicte*, he observes, emerged in the immediate aftermath of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856), which controversially 'inverts the standard formula of the popular novel, in which the

⁶⁵ Harper-Scott, 'Berlioz, Love, and *Béatrice et Bénédicte*', 14.

⁶⁶ Stephen Greenblatt, 'Introduction to *Much Ado about Nothing*', in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Greenblatt et al. (New York: Norton, 2008), 1412. Quoted in Harper-Scott, 'Berlioz, Love, and *Béatrice et Bénédicte*', 11-12.

adulterous lovers are punished at the end for their transgressive enjoyment'.⁶⁷ Notably, while *Much Ado* is 'littered with cuckoldry gags', Harper-Scott finds only one reference to cuckoldry in his close reading of Berlioz's libretto.⁶⁸ He therefore surmises that Berlioz's virtual 'eradication of the external location of pain (adultery)' implies that 'any pain felt in love and marriage must inhere within the conception of marriage itself'.⁶⁹ He also speculates that the opera's final lines, which pointedly differ from the play's, constitute a 'rejection of marriage' by Béatrice and Bénédict, who are 'faking their marital promises':⁷⁰

So let us adore each other and, whatever they say,

Be mad for a moment!

Let's love!

I sense that my pride is resigned to this misfortune.

Sure of hating each other, let's take hands!

Yes, for today the truce is signed;

We'll return to being enemies tomorrow.

Béatrice et Bénédict, II. 15

Harper-Scott next conducts a thorough Schenkerian analysis of the opera's music, demonstrating its importance to Berlioz's narrative, and in the process unknowingly providing a firm rebuttal of Schmidgall's claim that music cannot describe 'abstract concepts or intellectual processes'. He unpicks a 'striking association' in the opera between keys and certain ideas about marriage, and particularly highlights a conflict between E_b major – which is 'associated with the hysterical attitude that refuses to credit the claims of [marriage]' – and G major – which 'is

⁶⁷ Slavoj Žižek, in Žižek (ed.), *Lacan: The Silent Partners* (London: Verso, 2006), 260. Quoted in Harper-Scott, 'Berlioz, Love, and *Béatrice et Bénédict*', 14.

⁶⁸ Harper-Scott, 'Berlioz, Love, and *Béatrice et Bénédict*', 13.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

Example 1. 4. J. P. E. Harper-Scott, Schenkerian middleground graph of
 ‘Dieu! que viens-je d’entendre’, from Berlioz, *Béatrice et Bénédict*, II. 10.
 (Harper-Scott, ‘Berlioz, Love, and *Béatrice et Bénédict*’, 25).

consistently associated with the idea of marriage and all the political and economic burden that it carries, along with its insistence that human beings settle on a fixed identity’.⁷¹ Following an examination of Béatrice’s aria, ‘Dieu! Que viens-je d’entendre’ (see Example 1.4), which wavers unsteadily between E_b and G so that a sense of the tonic or home key is lost, Harper-Scott concludes that Berlioz, in *Béatrice et Bénédict*, ‘presents a vision of perpetual war’.⁷² In sum, in his article, Harper-Scott constructs a literary, socio-political, and (crucially) musical argument to comprehensively explain how Berlioz, through his story, libretto, and music, goes

⁷¹ Ibid., 20.

⁷² Ibid., 32.

beyond Shakespeare to present marriage as arbitrary, violent, and unnatural. He therefore shows that, while *Béatrice et Bénédicte* is usually considered an inoffensive and conventional reading of Shakespeare, it is actually a radical interpretation, with messages that might rebound on its source material, its own time, and today's society.

Grimley, in his essay on Sibelius's *Tempest* music, also employs an impressively interdisciplinary methodology in order to reach ambitious and pertinent conclusions. He argues that Sibelius's *Tempest* offers 'a radical new reading' of Shakespeare's play, in which 'landscape, and particularly the storm, emerges as a mode of immanent critique', and 'Prospero is revealed not as a magus, or superhuman being, far less as a dramatic representation of Shakespeare himself, but rather as a mere agent for a more powerful and elemental medium: the rushing winds of the storm'.⁷³ One way in which Grimley's methodology might be considered even more rounded than Harper-Scott's is in his incorporation of Shakespeare scholarship from his chosen piece's era and location. According to Grimley, Sibelius's understanding of Prospero and *The Tempest* may have been informed by the work of Danish critic Georg Brandes. Brandes (and, by implication, Sibelius) read Shakespeare's plays autobiographically, and saw Shakespeare-Prospero as 'a model for the modern man'.⁷⁴ For Brandes, Prospero was 'a Zarathustra-like figure, both a prophet at the dawn of a new age (or "brave new world") [... and] a lone wanderer: roles that Sibelius himself would also happily embrace at various points in his diary entries'.⁷⁵ Grimley refers to Sibelius's biography and diary entries, noting the composer's 'propensity toward a Prospero-like exile', 'his recurrent crises of confidence and moments of self-doubt and creative angst', and his 'repeated descriptions of the natural world and his fascination with landscape'.⁷⁶ He therefore argues that Sibelius identified closely with Prospero-

⁷³ Grimley, 'Storms, Symphonies, Silence', 220.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 196.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 189-221.

Shakespeare, ‘eliding art and life in a manner that would become paradigmatic in much of his later work’.⁷⁷

Grimley provides an analysis of ‘The Rainbow’ to demonstrate how the natural world plays an integral role in Sibelius’s *Tempest*, as it does in many of the composer’s works from this period (see Example 1.5). ‘The Rainbow’, he states, is a prime example of Sibelius’s ‘Klang’ concept; that is to say, it is an attempt to capture ‘an elemental sense of sonority’.⁷⁸

The number begins with a bass drone or pedal (bassoons, horns, double basses) that strongly recalls the opening of the Fourth Symphony: the prominent pitch classes C, D, and G \flat refer explicitly to the symphony’s basic motto. This dark timbral layer provides an acoustic ground while simultaneously blurring any firm sense of tonality: as in the symphony, the low scoring creates a rich spectrum of overtones and resonant upper partials. The imitative entries of the cellos and upper strings fill in the C-G \flat pitch space with the whole step-half-step pattern of octatonic collection II; the double basses, however, invert this intervallic space, descending toward G \flat in purely whole-tone steps. Sibelius thus establishes a distinct modal layering (octatonic above, whole tone below) to emphasize the symmetry of the underlying tritone pair C-G \flat [...] The enharmonic transformation of this G \flat (F \sharp) in measure 12 marks the approximate midpoint of the number, and the beginning of the rainbow’s brightening (intensified by the entry of the timpani, trombones, trumpets, and upper wind). The rising upper string figure now ascends from F \sharp , while the bass descends toward C, although, characteristically, the final measures remain anchored on a first inversion chord, suspending any definitive sense of tonic arrival: indeed, the whole number is properly a study in modal contrast, intervallic space, and timbral modulation.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Ibid., 188.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 210.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 209.

The image shows a musical score for 'The Rainbow' (no. 23) from Sibelius's *The Tempest*. The score is in 12/8 time and marked 'Poco Adagio'. It features staves for cellos, horns, bassoons and double basses, and violas, violins, and con sord. Dynamics include *pp* and *ppp sempre*. The score is divided into three systems, with measures 4 and 7 marked at the beginning of the second and third systems respectively.

Example 1.5. Sibelius, *The Tempest*, 'The Rainbow' (no. 23).

(Grimley, 'Storms, Symphonies, Silence: Sibelius's *Tempest* Music', 210).

Grimley then situates Sibelius's *Tempest* within the context of the composer's late works and artistic 'late style' in general, describing the composer's final compositions as 'different journeys across the same basic terrain' of which the *Tempest* is highly representative.⁸⁰ He astutely picks out musical links between Sibelius's *Tempest* and Brahms's First Symphony (a work with 'late' features, despite its title), and the composer's own Sixth and

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 220.

Seventh Symphonies. He particularly highlights a ‘sense of rupture’ in all of these works (‘Durchbruch’, or breakthrough, to use the Adornian term), and notes that this feature is most apparent in Sibelius’s setting of Prospero’s ‘Ye elves of hills’ monologue (see Example 1.6), which ends with the famous line ‘I’ll drown my book’.⁸¹ Sibelius, according to Grimley, seemingly read this speech as ‘an anguished and enraged leave-taking’, in contrast to Brandes, who interpreted it as a more prosaic farewell from Shakespeare to his stage.⁸²

A snarling sequence of chromaticized nature sounds – the most dissonant music in the whole work – [is] interrupted suddenly at [bar] 11, the moment when Prospero breaks his staff and resigns his magic powers, returning ambivalently to his former role as Duke of Milan. The music that follows is a 16-measure adagio, the simplest music in the whole score, a cadential hymn in B major, and a passage that returns to the austere aristocratic mode associated with Prospero in the entr’acte between Acts 1 and 2.⁸³

Citing Adorno, Grimley notes how Sibelius, like Beethoven in his late works, does not draw together his ‘deserted and alienated’ landscape into a coherent image: ‘It is hard to retain any sense of Prospero-like authority at the end of this work’.⁸⁴ He concludes by reemphasising the link between the isolated, resigned Sibelius and the Zarathustra-like Prospero, but also broadens his discussion to discuss humanity’s relation to nature in general. Sibelius’s moral is that ‘by turning our gaze upward and attending to the sounds of the weather around us, we also become aware, like Prospero, of our own contingency and transience. We are shaped by the meteorological environment just as much as we seek to control the elements around us’.⁸⁵ Grimley, then, provides a detailed study of a Shakespearian musical piece, which explains its

⁸¹ Ibid., 216.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 219.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 220-1.

strings, woodwind, horns

8

cresc.

heavy brass

lower woodwind, double basses

10

poco a poco più *fff*

12

Adagio (strings only)

mf

Example 1. 6. Sibelius, *The Tempest*, Prospero's monologue (no. 32), bars 8-15.

(Grimley, 'Storms, Symphonies, Silence: Sibelius's *Tempest* Music', 217).

relation to its composer's life, his understanding of Shakespeare, his other works, and broader issues in music historiography. He furthermore manages to offer a technical yet relatively accessible reading, which demonstrates how music based on Shakespeare's work can offer new insights into its source play, and makes clear why this music – which up until now has remained relatively overlooked – is of vital importance to the modern world.

Text + Event

Grimley's and Harper-Scott's essays are fine models for scholars seeking to produce erudite and comprehensive interdisciplinary work, and their arguments and methods are undoubtedly meticulous and persuasive. Still, it might be argued that the level of music analysis in both articles is a little too complicated for an accessible interdisciplinary study, and renders them somewhat intimidating for readers of a non-musicological background. Large quantities of musical detail are not often essential to the explanation of a piece of music, and an even more inclusive methodological balance between music and literature might be struck, to allow readers the chance to appreciate works thoroughly, but without having to achieve what could seem like unattainably high levels of specialist comprehension.

In particular, Harper-Scott's Schenkerian graphs might be considered unapproachable even for musicologists who lack high levels of Schenkerian training. Harper-Scott's graphic analyses might be made suitable for a wider audience through just a little alteration and simplification, and several of his points about pitch competition, large-scale tonal movement, and so on, could well be made without recourse to these diagrams. It might seem churlish to critique an article from an academic music journal in this fashion: Harper-Scott is, after all, writing for his audience, and might well have adopted a different approach for a different format. Furthermore, simple Schenkerian methods and graphs are actually fairly easy to understand; in fact, they could be considered more palatable for beginners than regular notation, which demands knowledge of other parameters such as rhythm and dynamics. There is no reason to exclude Schenkerian methods from an interdisciplinary investigation automatically:

the key is to ensure that these methods are employed in an approachable and intelligible fashion.⁸⁶

Similarly, Grimley's description of 'The Rainbow' might be modified slightly, so that a few off-putting phrases such as 'octatonic collection II', 'enharmonic transformation', and 'first inversion chord' are removed, replaced, or clarified. Otherwise, Grimley's style of musical analysis is ideal for an interdisciplinary study, since it does not demand too much prior training from a reader. His analyses are illuminating and unarguably musicological, but by and large only demand that a reader be able to pick out certain pitches, understand scales such as 'octatonic' and 'whole tone', and observe parameters such as scoring and timbre. With a reasonable level of intellectual investment, his essay should be readily understood by a variety of readers. Even if a reader does not understand every word of his analyses, they should still be able to grasp generally how the music works.

Harper-Scott and Grimley largely rely on the opinions of literary scholars for their interpretations of Shakespeare's text, a deference that is the inevitable result of crossing over into another academic field. Interdisciplinary scholars are always going to be reliant upon those experts in other fields who are more familiar with certain aspects of an object of analysis. In fact, engaging with demanding, existing scholarship from a number of fields and 'repackaging' it for a new argument and a new audience is one of the most essential ingredients of such writing. Sanders, for instance, sometimes nicely circumvents her own lack of musical training by drawing judiciously on the work of musicologists to offer rounded, enlightening analyses. In her brief explanation of Elgar's symphonic study, *Falstaff*, for example, she draws on Grimley's work to explain how the choice of key (C minor) is crucial to the tragic presentation of Falstaff, given its 'pre-existent tragic connotations in the musical lexicon'.⁸⁷ She also highlights how a

⁸⁶ See 'I will dress myself in green' in Chapter 5 of this thesis for a Schenkerian discussion of a scene in Tippett's *The Knot Garden*.

⁸⁷ Grimley, 'Falstaff (Tragedy): Narrative and Retrospection in Elgar's Symphonic Study', unpublished conference paper. Quoted in Sanders, *Shakespeare and Music*, 53.

melodic refrain in the clarinet associated with Falstaff returns late in the piece to indicate ‘melancholy, loss, and nostalgia’, and Falstaff’s death.⁸⁸

Harper-Scott and Grimley contrast with Sanders, however, by demonstrating a willingness to step out of their immediate scholarly field and fully engage with another discipline. They incorporate their own close readings of Shakespeare’s work into their arguments, whereas Sanders rarely offers an original musical opinion. On the rare occasion when she does, her reading does not incorporate close musical examination, which results in unpersuasive and incomplete (although not necessarily incorrect) assessments. My exploration of Tippett’s *The Knot Garden*, which comprises the second half of this thesis, will seek to emulate and improve on Harper-Scott’s and Grimley’s examples, albeit with an inevitable individual slant and an appreciation of the better aspects of work by literary scholars such as Sanders. It will offer proper engagement with music; not subjective aural speculation à la Schmidgall, Parker, and Abbate, but analysis of notes and structures. It will also seek to combine the discipline of music analysis with a range of other fields, including critical theory, social history, theatre studies, and psychoanalysis, to provide a close reading of this *Tempest* opera that simultaneously situates it within broader musical, literary, theatrical, and historical perspectives. It will treat the opera as a Shakespearian adaptation that can offer new insights into *The Tempest*, a prism through which a receiver can view elements such as Tippett’s biography and the social-cultural-political climate in which it was created, and an enduring text that might have something significant to impart to modern audiences.

I am almost exclusively focusing on one Shakespearian piece in this thesis, and my discussion of *The Knot Garden* will be relatively exhaustive, longer than any other previous scholarly discussion of the opera. It is not my intention to imply that all analyses of Shakespearian or literary music, or operas in general, must be this detailed. I am well aware that it is not possible for every study of an artistic work to be as rigorous as this one, and that writing

⁸⁸ Ibid. Frustratingly, Sanders does not provide the reader with an illustration of this melody, or refer in any detail to its contour, harmonisation, etcetera.

about one piece in considerable detail is a rare luxury. It just so happens that Tippett and *The Knot Garden* require extensive scholarly re-evaluation, and a doctoral length study offers an excellent opportunity to address lacunae on this piece and its composer, and to employ an expansive methodology. Undoubtedly, scholars such as Schmidgall and Sanders are partly denied the chance to be meticulous by their remits, which are to produce broad, entertaining overviews on the topics of ‘Shakespeare and opera’ and ‘Shakespeare and music’ respectively. Sanders’s chapter on ‘Shakespeare in the Opera House’, for example, offers a frenetic fly past an assortment of works by Wagner, Goetz, Bellini, Gounod, Salieri, Nicolai, Verdi, Vaughan Williams, Barber, Reimann, Adès, and Thomas. Similarly, in the second half of his monograph, Schmidgall conducts a whistle-stop tour through dozens of operas, and even some unfinished operas. Such general groundwork is undoubtedly necessary, and helpful for identifying trends or surprising deviations within a topic, along with potential areas for further investigation. Surveys such as these are also excellent for introducing an academic topic to the public, offering a stimulating and largely undemanding entry into a new subject, and hopefully prompting a reader to undertake further study into pieces that have intrigued them. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that this sort of ‘conveyor-belt’ scholarship leaves a reader only partially enlightened, and often frustrated. There is never time for nuanced or detailed discussion of a particular composer, piece, or group of pieces. With each example, a reader gets the equivalent of a sweet, rather than a full meal: a tasty, exciting, but ultimately insubstantial morsel.

Furthermore, Schmidgall’s and Sanders’s brief explorations of numerous pieces are concentrated representations of their methodology, and one is able to discern what sort of form a longer analysis by them would take. The main point of this chapter has not been to endorse lengthy explorations of individual pieces over shorter summaries. Rather, the chapter has aimed to demonstrate that whatever form an investigation of a musico-literary piece might take – a page-long snippet, a short chapter, a 30-page article – it must pay due respect and attention to all of the key facets in a multi-elemental work. A scholarly exploration cannot just state its interdisciplinarity on the basis that it is dealing with an interdisciplinary subject: it must be

interdisciplinary itself, and incorporate learned and proficient discussion of literature, music, and any other subject with which its author alleges engagement. In the words of Horton, ‘any meaningful engagement between disciplines has to be predicated on a thorough appreciation of their specificity’.⁸⁹ To borrow and modify the famous colloquialism, an interdisciplinary scholar must be a jack-of-all-trades; it certainly helps, however, if they can master a few of these trades, and they absolutely cannot be a novice in any. The inclusion of certain disciplines – psychoanalysis, sociology, ecology, and so on – in a scholarly investigation of literary music is an optional luxury dependent on space and a writer’s inclinations. What is non-negotiable is the inclusion of music analysis, textual analysis, and historical context (musical, literary, theatrical, cultural, and social), and engagement with relevant pre-existing scholarship on the musical piece and its source material. Combining both musical and literary ‘event’ factors – such as biography, history, production design, contemporaneous theatrical performances, reviews – with ‘text’ factors – such as libretto, score, play text – should result in a detailed, nuanced, and revealing analysis, which is more enlightening than one that only focuses on the ‘event’ or the ‘text’.

⁸⁹ Horton, ‘In Defence of Music Analysis’.

Chapter 2

SHAKESPEARE AND MODERN BRITISH OPERA

To date, Shakespeare-opera scholarship has largely focused on Verdi, Britten, and, to a lesser extent, Berlioz. In his 1965 essay, ‘Shakespeare in the Opera House’, Winton Dean sets the tone for later scholarship by paying short shrift to any opera composed outside of Italy and the years 1816 (Rossini’s *Otello*) to 1893 (Verdi’s *Falstaff*). Dean declares that ‘nearly all good Shakespeare operas have either been written by Italians or followed Italian methods’, and that ‘Shakespeare opera reached its climax in late nineteenth-century Italy’.¹ He therefore devotes around one sixth of his overview to Verdi, since *Otello* (1887) and *Falstaff* are ‘the only two [Shakespeare operas] that rank as works of art with the plays themselves’.² Gary Schmidgall, in *Shakespeare and Opera*, similarly valorises Verdi’s works and glosses over Shakespeare operas from other composers.³ Resultantly, a number of operas – particularly non-canonical, twentieth century works – are missing from Schmidgall’s overview. Julie Sanders, when she devotes extra attention to a select few Shakespeare operas in the case studies that follow her main chapter on ‘Shakespeare in the Opera House’ in *Shakespeare and Music*, does not offer an extended consideration of any of the lesser-known operas from various periods and locations mentioned in her survey.⁴ Rather, she too chooses to focus on Verdi’s three Shakespeare operas – *Macbeth*

¹ Winton Dean, ‘Shakespeare in the Opera House’, *Shakespeare Survey* 18 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 84.

² *Ibid.*, 83.

³ See Gary Schmidgall, *Shakespeare and Opera* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). Schmidgall’s monograph should really be titled ‘Shakespeare and Verdi’, since it is mostly an ode to the work of his favourite composer, in which he attempts to bolster Verdi’s reputation by establishing him as Shakespeare’s operatic equivalent.

⁴ See Julie Sanders, ‘Shakespeare in the Opera House’ and ‘Giuseppe Verdi and Benjamin Britten: Case Studies in Shakespearean Opera’ in *Shakespeare and Music: Afterlives and Borrowings* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 96-134.

(1847; rev. 1865), *Otello*, and *Falstaff* – along with Benjamin Britten’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1960), which is discussed in relation to Purcell’s *The Fairy Queen* (1692). Albright, meanwhile, devotes half of his *Musicking Shakespeare* to Verdi’s *Macbeth* and Britten’s *Dream*. The other operas Albright explores are *The Fairy Queen* and Berlioz’s *Romeo and Juliet* (1839), both of which are well-known works in their own right.⁵

Sanders’s book in particular is an introductory offering aimed at a non-specialist audience, so criticism of her selections – regularly performed and widely known as they and their composers are – is perhaps unfair. Educating audiences about these works could be considered more beneficial than introducing them to, say, Thomas’s *Hamlet* (1868), Goetz’s *The Taming of the Shrew* (1874), Berio’s *Un re in ascolto* (1984), or, for that matter, Tippett’s *The Knot Garden*. Nevertheless, to anybody familiar with the literature on Shakespeare and opera, or indeed operatic historiography in general, Sanders’s selections are predictable. Overall, Albright’s and Sanders’s books are lost opportunities, which conserve the Shakespeare-opera status quo and consolidate the existing performance and scholarly repertoires. Albright’s adherence to a traditional, nineteenth-century dominated canon is particularly puzzling, given that several of his other publications discuss twentieth-century modernism in music, literature, and the visual arts. Albright could have chosen from any number of works in this period that have, in his words, ‘go[ne] beyond the comfort zone of the operatic medium’ under Shakespeare’s influence.⁶

An array of Shakespeare operas from different times and places might form the basis of innumerable further scholarly investigations, and there is now an opportunity to build on the plethora of existing literature on Verdi and Britten, highlight less famous works, and offer a

⁵ See Daniel Albright, *Musicking Shakespeare: A Conflict of Theatres* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2007). The edition of *Great Shakespeareans* edited by Albright likewise concentrates on stalwart composers: Berlioz, Verdi, Wagner, and Britten. See Albright (ed.), *Great Shakespeareans: Berlioz, Verdi, Wagner, Britten* (London: Continuum, 2012).

⁶ Albright, *Musicking Shakespeare*, 30. See also Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and the Visual Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); *Modernism and Music: An Anthology of Sources* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); *Putting Modernism Together: Literature, Music, and Painting, 1872-1927* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015).

more thorough, integrated history of Shakespearian opera, which might challenge accepted narratives in both Shakespearian and operatic history.⁷ This thesis, for instance, and the current chapter in particular, will attempt to explore just one especially notable area that the extant literary and musical scholarship has so far not adequately answered: how Shakespeare's plays helped to establish and develop a national operatic tradition within the ideological contexts of modern Britain.

Ironically, given his centrality to the modern British operatic repertory, Shakespeare was one of the reasons why opera failed to take root properly in Britain prior to the twentieth century. While operetta and opera from overseas enjoyed some success, native British opera was often criticised for being a malformed hybrid and imitating foreign styles to the detriment of national theatrical qualities. In the words of Nicholas Temperley,

it should not cause surprise that a nation with a powerful school of drama, where music enjoyed an established but subordinate place, tended to resist encroachments from a form in which it seemed that dramatic truth was so readily sacrificed to musical ends [...] There was a justifiable feeling that all-sung opera and recitative were alien to English language, culture and temperament.⁸

In the mid-eighteenth century, for example, Samuel Johnson famously described opera as 'an exotic and irrational entertainment', neatly summarising the general British attitude to this strange, foreign, musical art form.⁹ Britain's lack of contribution to the operatic repertory during the genre's first few centuries led Alfred Einstein to remark that, even in the 1920s, 'English

⁷ According to Christopher R. Wilson, there are around 300 operas based on Shakespeare's work. See Wilson, et al., 'Shakespeare, William', *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*. <http://tinyurl.com/qy8cecg>. Accessed 31/03/2017.

⁸ Nicholas Temperley, 'Great Britain', *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera, Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*. <http://tinyurl.com/o6rr3r7>. Accessed 31/03/2017.

⁹ Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets 2* (1783; Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1968), 160.

opera [was] an almost unimaginable idea' on the continent.¹⁰ Over the course of the twentieth century, however, an impressive lineage of British opera emerged. As Christopher Mark observes, since the Second World War in particular, 'few British composers of any substance have been able to resist the siren call of what is still probably the most risky of all compositional undertakings'.¹¹

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, several of these composers chose to draw on the work of Britain's most renowned playwright for their musico-theatrical endeavours. Shakespeare's popularity with audiences and critics has proved to be both a blessing and a curse for his British musical adapters. Basing an opera on an already well-known and well-loved British work might be thought helpful for composers wishing to engage audiences, since it immediately overcomes the hurdle of unfamiliarity, perhaps predisposes audiences to liking the new version, and in some cases allows for considerable critical and financial success. Undoubtedly, the adaptation – exploitation, even – of Shakespeare's work has played a major role in establishing British opera at a national and global level. Nevertheless, the shadow of Shakespeare looms large over anybody reinventing his work, and composers and librettists have often had to face unduly harsh criticism for daring to engage with the national 'bard', whether they leave his language and stories intact or not. Artists are often left in a catch-22 situation of either setting Shakespeare's words exactly and being accused of unoriginality and/or corrupting the plays with music, or of offering a new take on the original text that will almost inevitably be regarded as impertinent and inferior.¹² British composers are particularly susceptible to such criticism, since they are not protected by the barrier of translation, and suffer more immediate comparison with Shakespeare's language.

¹⁰ Alfred Einstein, 'Holst's *The Perfect Fool*: Some Thoughts of a German Musician', *Monthly Musical Record* 53 (1923), 198.

¹¹ Christopher Mark, 'Opera in England: Taking the Plunge', in Mervyn Cooke (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 209.

¹² For a discussion of this attitude in Schmidgall's *Shakespeare and Opera*, see 'Cakes and ale' in Chapter 1 of this thesis. Taruskin highlights the same issue in the reception of Chaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* by 'Pushkin lovers'. See 'P. I. Chaikovsky and the Ghetto', in *Defining Russia Musically* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 48-60. Such critics, Taruskin states, demonstrate 'a magnificent incomprehension of what the music in an opera does' (53).

Nevertheless, despite the hurdles faced by composers when dealing with Shakespeare's reputation, and regardless of their works' critical and commercial popularity, British Shakespearian operas have consistently offered new, unconventional readings of Shakespeare's plays that sometimes prefigure or contravene literary and other performance traditions, and furthermore offer considerable insight into their socio-political climates. War, community, patriotism, economics, psychology, identity, AIDS, labour, aging, family, and more – modern British Shakespeare operas have grappled with some of the major issues of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In particular, these works have regularly explored gender and sexuality in a candid and radical fashion, sometimes in accordance with their society and their theatrical and screen peers, but sometimes well in advance of their time. Opera is by no means unique in foregrounding these matters in Shakespeare, but it is striking how so many of these works have focused on such issues and helped bring them to the forefront of public consciousness and Shakespearian interpretation. Furthermore, and sometimes relatedly, it is remarkable that many of these works have an autobiographical quality, with composers apparently responding in a deeply personal fashion to facets of Shakespeare's drama. Issues of Shakespearian adaptation, British operatic history, gender, sexuality, and autobiography coalesce in Tippett's *The Knot Garden*, which will be considered in detail in the second half of this thesis. First, though, it is necessary to explore these trends in preceding and ensuing British Shakespeare operas, in order to situate both these works and *The Knot Garden* properly within the contexts of recent British history, British operatic history, and British Shakespearian adaptation.

Feminine Falstaff: Gustav Holst, *At The Boar's Head* (1925)

In the 1920s, Holst and Vaughan Williams, two advocates of English cultural nationalism who are perhaps more noted for their symphonic pieces rather than their operatic work, turned Falstaffian material and traditional folk song into substantial pieces for the stage. According to one reviewer, at this time there was 'still a certain amount of scepticism as regards opera and its future in Britain. Some believe that opera is alien to the British temperament and cannot take

root here [...] and should only be given once a year, like a village fair'.¹³ One good reason for drawing on Shakespeare, according to Holst, was that setting Shakespeare's words to music would allow him to avoid the criticisms levelled at his previous opera, *The Perfect Fool*: 'As the critics have decided that I can't write a libretto, the words [for my new opera] have been written by Shakespeare'.¹⁴ Despite its esteemed librettist, though, Holst's *At The Boar's Head* – based on tavern scenes from *Henry IV 1 & 2* – was not an unmitigated success. While some critics described the wedding of Shakespearian text and unrelated English folk tunes as 'an extremely interesting experiment' and 'a miracle of ingenuity', others noted how the music was 'distinctly the handmaiden of the text'.¹⁵

According to Sanders, Holst pointedly turned to Shakespeare's Henriad in 'the post-Great-War era of residual patriotism, a period also defined by a deep-seated and traumatic sense of loss following devastating battles such as those at Paschaendale [*sic*] and the Somme'.¹⁶ Holst himself experienced the Great War at a distance, since – much to his frustration – he was barred from military service on the grounds of ill health.¹⁷ It is perhaps significant, then, that his Shakespearian war opera features no battlefield action whatsoever. Instead, Holst turns attention onto a marginal but important domestic location in *Henry IV*: The Boar's Head tavern, a site of anarchic revelry that 'serves in some sense as an alternative to and a critique of the political world'.¹⁸ Holst's tavern is a rambunctious and proudly English environment characterised by hearty singing and heavy drinking. Its miniature world, however, is perpetually threatened with

¹³ F. Bonavia, 'At The Boar's Head', *Music & Letters* 6, no. 3 (1925), 269.

¹⁴ Gustav Holst, quoted in Imogen Holst, 'Holst's *At The Boar's Head*', *The Musical Times* 123, no. 1671 (1982), 321.

¹⁵ Bonavia, 'At The Boar's Head', 270.

¹⁶ Sanders, "'In Windsor Forest and At The Boar's Head": The "Falstaff Plays" and English Music in the Early Twentieth Century', *Shakespeare Survey* 60 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 191. Sanders explores Holst's and Vaughan Williams's operas in combination with Elgar's 1913 *Falstaff* overture. For more on the significance of Falstaff in early twentieth-century Britain, see J. P. E. Harper-Scott, 'Elgar's Invention of the Human: *Falstaff*, Opus 68', *19th-Century Music* 28, no. 3 (2005), 230-53.

¹⁷ John Warrack, 'Holst, Gustav Theodore', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. <http://tinyurl.com/h9hjove>. Accessed 31/03/2017.

¹⁸ David Skott Kastan, in Kastan (ed.), *The Arden Shakespeare (Third Series): King Henry IV Part 1* (London: Arden, 2002), 74.

interruption by the outside menace of war and politics. The Boar's Head therefore stands as a metaphor for a post-war Britain distressed by recent events, longing to regain a lost, pre-war, patriotic innocence, and looking hesitantly towards the future.

Holst's opera explores the complex reactions of male soldiers at the moment when they are recruited to fight, but also highlights the experiences of those women left behind. A line sung to Falstaff by his lover, the prostitute Doll Tearsheet, 'thou art going to the wars; and whether I shall ever see thee again or no, there is nobody cares', seems particularly applicable to the families and friends of soldiers used as cannon fodder in the previous decade. By being solely set in one of the only locations in the *Henry IV* plays where women have a prominent voice, Holst's opera arguably goes further than its source play in its critique of patriarchal culture. Although it is a male-dominated and sometimes misogynistic place, The Boar's Head is also, in the words of Jean E. Howard, a 'sexualised scene of female entrepreneurship', in which women's economic and bodily freedom is personified by the characters of Mistress Quickly (the tavern's proprietor) and Doll. According to Howard, 'the sexually independent woman and the economically independent woman form a threatening combination: a challenge both to gender hierarchy and the system of social stratification distinguishing man from man'.¹⁹ Although they have forceful personalities, the women in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* are still pushed to the margins, speaking less than four percent of the plays' lines.²⁰ Yet, as Valerie Traub points out, *Henry IV* is not entirely resistant to feminist interpretation. She argues that the plays do not simply exclude women, but

stage the exclusion of women from the historical process (an exclusion that *is* the historical process), thus exhibiting the kinds of repressions a phallogentric culture requires to maintain and reproduce itself. By means of this staged exclusion, the Henriad represents a marginal discourse,

¹⁹ Jean E. Howard, 'Forming the Commonwealth: Including, Excluding, and Criminalizing Women in Heywood's *Edward IV* and Shakespeare's *Henry IV*', in Jean R. Brink (ed.), *Privileging Gender in Early Modern England* (Kirkville: Truman State University Press, 1993), 119.

²⁰ Kastan, *King Henry IV Part 1*, 73.

if only to demonstrate the containment of that discourse. This containment, however, is neither final nor total. We thus see not only the ‘rehearsal’ of power stressed by new historical critics but also the possibility of the destruction of dominant sixteenth-century ideologies of gender, sexuality, and power. In short, male dominated as it is, the Henriad contains within itself the means for its own meta-critique.²¹

Holst’s opera pays far more attention to the women of *The Boar’s Head* than its source, and – by highlighting ‘their’ setting, their stories, and their abandonment – starkly demonstrates their current containment and exclusion from the mainstream historical process. In the words of David Scott Kastan, *At The Boar’s Head* illustrates how it is ‘only metaphorically [that] women participate in the historical action, and then tragically suffering its consequences rather than shaping them’.²² Yet, to quote Traub, the opera does not suggest that women’s containment is either final or total. Like Vaughan Williams’s contemporaneous Falstaff opera, *At The Boar’s Head* seemingly reflects a post-war, Suffragist Britain in which women were beginning to exercise more opinion and agency.

The conclusion of *At The Boar’s Head* is one example of several moments in the opera when the masculine, public, political world attempts to impose itself on the feminine, private, carnivalesque space of the tavern. Falstaff has just learned that he is to be summoned to war, and his disappointment is obvious: he sings his line ‘Now comes in the sweetest morsel of the night, and we must hence and leave it unpicked’ emotionally, *senza misura*, over a series of rich, extended, suspended chords (see Example 2.1). There is a semitone D \flat /D clash between his vocal melody and the accompaniment on ‘sweetest’, which ironically undermines this word. A descending bass motion also adds to the deflation of this moment. Falstaff sings a sad ‘farewell’ to Doll and Quickly that further emphasises the D \flat /D semitone interval and spans a jarring tritone. A military march, first heard after Hal’s ‘Devouring time’ aria – which is sung just

²¹ Valerie Traub, ‘Prince Hal’s Falstaff: Positioning Psychoanalysis and the Female Reproductive Body’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (1989), 459.

²² Kastan, *King Henry IV Part 1*, 73.

104 FALSTAFF
sensa misura
 89 *ad lib.* *p dolce* *Andante*

Now comes in the sweetest morsel of the night, and we must hence, and
 leave it unpicked. Farewell, hostess; farewell, Doll. You see, my good wenches, how

Example 2.1. Holst, *At The Boar's Head*,

‘Now comes in the sweetest morsel of the night...’ (Falstaff).

before the Prince goes to war, and combines Sonnets 19 (‘Devouring time, blunt thou the lion’s paws’) and 12 (‘When I do count the clock that tells the time’) to dwell on the depressing inevitability of mortality and military duty – insistently interrupts. The march’s chordal fanfare supports Falstaff’s D₄ melody, but is undercut dissonantly by a G pedal note; again, then, the grating tritone interval is prominent. When Falstaff sings ‘Farewell Doll’, he wrenches into a B diminished chord over a C pedal. The tonal clashes at this point undermine Falstaff’s ensuing claims to be a ‘man of merit’ and ‘action’, and exemplify his inner fear and sorrow at being summoned away from the safety of the tavern

Doll’s impassioned, free, *forte* outburst over extended chords – ‘I cannot speak; if my heart be not ready to burst, – well, sweet Jack, – have a care of thyself’ (see Example 2.2) – then demonstrates how ‘it is the women who feel acutely the sense of emptiness and loss that will remain behind once the men of the tavern have departed for London and the wars’.²³ After her

²³ Sanders, “‘In Windsor Forest...’”, 193.

DOLL *ad lib. senza misura cresc.* *f (a tempo)*
 I can-not speak; if my heart be not rea-dy to burst,— well, sweet Jack,— have a

(*cresc.*) *f*

HOSTESS *dim.* *p* 91
 Well, fare thee well; _____

care of thy-self.

FALSTAFF *p*
 Fare - well, — fare - well. _____

91 *Andante maestoso* ♩ = 80
mf

(Falstaff and Bardolph go out, the latter holding a light for his master)
 (The stage is almost dark)

morendo

HOSTESS,

Example 2.2. Holst, *At The Boar's Head*, 'I cannot speak...' (Doll).

goodbye, Falstaff and Bardolph depart to an ominous A-major version of the military march over a clashing C pedal note and minor subdominant and dominant chords. Doll and Mistress Quickly are now left alone on stage, meaning that the audience is allowed to see the left-behind and often-overlooked women's reaction to the onset of war. Mistress quickly sings a quiet, moving, B-major goodbye to Falstaff, before the sinister march figure returns, this time in G# minor over a C pedal (see Example 2.3).

Adagio ♩ = 50
pp dolce

I have known thee these twen - ty - nine years, come peascod - time; but an

ppp una corda

stacc.

92

rall. Andante maestoso

hon - ester and truer - heart - ed man, - well, fare thee well. well. well.

rall. tre corde mf

Example 2.3. Holst, *At The Boar's Head*, 'I have known thee...' (Mistress Quickly).

Unexpectedly, however, Bardolph peeps back through the door, and whispers to Mistress Quickly, 'Bid Mistress Tearsheet come to my master'. Mistress Quickly then pushes Doll out, frenziedly singing 'run, Doll, run', and the opera abruptly ends in C major. With this surprising '*coup-de-théâtre*', then, Falstaff and Doll provide one 'final, joyous act of [sexual] resistance to the *[R]ealpolitik* world outside and a fantastic alternative redemption of time to that promised by Hal in his [...] dark, determined aria'.²⁴ Right until the opera's last moments, Falstaff – unlike Hal, who eventually 'lose[s] his protean subjectivity and take[s] up the fixed identity of his legendary self' – 'embod[ies] a constant resistance to interpolation', partly because of his cowardice, and partly because of his prioritising of sexual pleasure over military duty.²⁵ Holst's Falstaff, then, like Shakespeare's, is a man who 'stand[s] for aspects of male identity which are not accommodated by or accounted for by traditional patriarchal structures of

²⁴ Ibid., 194.

²⁵ Hugh Grady, 'Falstaff: Subjectivity Between the Carnival and the Aesthetic', *The Modern Language Review* 96, no. 3 (2001), 612.

identity'.²⁶ He 'articulates the individual's assertion of his own heterogeneous and contradictory identity in the face of homogenizing [masculine] social norms and stereotypes.'²⁷ In future years, Shakespeare operas by Britten, Tippett, and Oliver in particular would sustain Holst's post-World War I challenge to traditional ideas of masculinity.

Alice's green sleeves: Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Sir John in Love* (1929)

Vaughan Williams's take on *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Sir John in Love*, had probably been gestating since 1912, when the composer provided incidental music for a performance of the play in Stratford-upon-Avon.²⁸ In the preface to the vocal score, Vaughan Williams signals his awareness that he is 'entering into competition with four great men – Shakespeare, Verdi, Nicolai, and Holst'.²⁹ Vaughan Williams felt that Verdi's *Falstaff* was let down by Boito's 'medicated' Shakespeare translation, and Sanders argues that he 'consciously [pits] his operatic work in opposition to Verdi, positioning it in the public consciousness as one whose dramaturgic practice and musical aesthetics stem from English performance traditions and cultural inheritances rather than continental European ones'.³⁰ Shakespeare's work was integral to the educational, political, and cultural movement to rediscover 'Englishness' during this period, a concept which Georgina Boyes describes as 'a mythical construct, one that offered an image of a "fantasized rural community" of maypoles, harvest homes and social harmony, alongside an idealised landscape of cob cottages and hedgerows'.³¹ *The Merry Wives of*

²⁶ R. A. Martin, 'Metatheater, Gender, and Subjectivity in *Richard II* and *Henry IV Part I*', *Comparative Drama* 23, no. 3 (1989), 263.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ See Roger W. H. Savage, 'Alice Shortcake, Jenny Pluckpears, and the Stratford-upon-Avon Connections of Vaughan Williams's *Sir John in Love*', *Music and Letters* 89, no. 1 (2008), 18-55.

²⁹ Ralph Vaughan Williams, quoted in Sanders, "'In Windsor Forest...'", 189.

³⁰ Vaughan Williams, 'Verdi: A Symposium', quoted in Eric Saylor, 'Dramatic Applications of Folksong in Vaughan Williams's Operas *Hugh the Drover* and *Sir John in Love*', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 134, no. 1 (2009), 58; Sanders, "'In Windsor Forest...'", 190.

³¹ Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 30. Quoted in Sanders, "'In Windsor Forest...'", 186.

Windsor, a detailed and affectionate portrait of English village life, found particular resonance in this milieu.

Much recent historicist criticism on *The Merry Wives* focuses on ‘the local detail and specificity of the play’s representations of domesticity and female agency’.³² According to Jonathan Goldberg, such criticism ‘is virtually devoid of and resistant to the kind of feminist critique about the limitations of women thereby represented [... It] conclude[s] that so long as women are able to hold onto some property as their own, their domestic[ity] is tolerable’.³³ The claim made by this criticism is that the wives, ‘being embodiments precisely of the sex-gender system that regulates female desire to marital property, seek to protect their reputations against Falstaff’s unwanted approaches and do so by exercising their domestic powers’.³⁴ For domestic critics, ‘it seems [...] that married women don’t have a sexuality to affirm; rather, what they uphold is their domesticity and, indeed, the domestication of their desires’.³⁵ Writers such as Goldberg and David McCandless, however, interpret the play rather differently, detecting within it a variety of subversive sexualities. McCandless, for instance, argues that ‘*The Merry Wives of Windsor*, traditionally considered a celebration of heterosexual bonds preserved by unusually empowered women, may also be queerly construed as a spectacle of emasculation that valorizes female domination and covertly vents a subversive homoeroticism’.³⁶

Both Goldberg and McCandless highlight Act III, Scenes 2 and 3 as an instance of, to use McCandless’s words, ‘subversive homoeroticism’ and ‘female domination’. In Scene 2, just before Meg Page enters the Ford household, Frank Ford says to her, ‘I think if your husbands were dead, you two would marry’. ‘Be sure of that’, she provocatively responds, before adding,

³² Sanders, “‘In Windsor Forest...’”, 184.

³³ Jonathan Goldberg, ‘What Do Women Want? *The Merry Wives of Windsor*’, *Criticism* 51, no. 3 (2009), 371.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 369.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ David McCandless, ‘Queerly Wiving it in Windsor’, in Evelyn Gajowski and Phyllis Rackin (eds.), *The Merry Wives of Windsor: New Critical Essays* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 211. McCandless’s chapter also explores Alison Carey’s 2012 play *The Very Merry Wives of Windsor*, which imagines ‘a kind of lesbian utopia that assimilates men as eunuchs’ (211).

‘two other husbands’. Goldberg notes that ‘the occasion for Ford to voice his supposition that the wives prefer each other as their objects of desire is simply that one wife has come to visit the other’ – a relatively innocuous occurrence.³⁷ In Ford’s mind, however,

this situation is one in which Alice is ‘as idle as she may hang together’ [...] that is, he imagines her yearning for female company and also assumes that she is distinctly unoccupied with (not to mention unsatisfied by) the domestic labor, doing the laundry or scrubbing the floors, that the domestic critics imagine keep her happily occupied and powerful in her sphere of occupations, ruling his purse.³⁸

‘Ford’s line’, according to Goldberg, ‘opens the prospect of female-female sociality in the play, forms of female solidarity that do not wed them to their brooms and laundry baskets’.³⁹ Goldberg furthermore notes that ‘the first figure to be invested with the deployment of sexuality, one of the first to be “sexualized”, was the “idle” woman’. Fitting the bill, too, is the woman who visits the house’.⁴⁰ This scene therefore raises ‘the sphere of women with women doing things that men don’t understand and can’t do, things that are irrational and sexual, women engaged as go-betweens, trafficking among and with themselves’.⁴¹ In the next scene, Alice and Meg comprehensively outwit Falstaff (who is attempting to seduce and swindle them), and trap him in a laundry basket.

According to Sanders, *Sir John in Love* is a ‘gender conscious’ and ‘feminocentric’ interpretation of *The Merry Wives*, notable for ‘the set-piece moments [Vaughan Williams] accords his female characters in terms of song, [and] his notably unindulgent deployment of the great baritone part of Falstaff – who is offstage for large parts of the opera and made to play an

³⁷ Goldberg, ‘What Do Women Want?’, 376.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

9 Andante moderato (2 slow beats) (Zwei langsame Takte)*

Mrs. F. Fr. F.

'A - las, my love, you do me wrong to
O Du mein Lieb, mein Herz schlägt bang, weil

Andante moderato (2 slow beats) (Zwei langsame Takte)

p *pp*

Example 2.4. Vaughan Williams, *Sir John in Love*, III. 3, 'Greensleeves' (Alice Ford).

equal role with the witty, self-aware Windsor women'.⁴² To go further, however, certain moments within Vaughan Williams's reading of *The Merry Wives*, such as its 'Greensleeves' scene, arguably align well with Goldberg's and McCandless's readings. The 'Greensleeves' scene mirrors Act III, Scene 3 of Shakespeare's play, but with the addition of the aforementioned song. While Act III, Scene 2 of *The Merry Wives* is absent from *Sir John in Love*, its threat of female homosociality and sapphism arguably remain, in part thanks to Vaughan Williams's deployment of folk music material. The scene takes place in the Ford household, and begins with Alice Ford, Meg Page, and Mistress Quickly arranging their scheme. Just before Falstaff enters, Alice begins to sing 'Greensleeves' in F minor (see Example 2.4), 'chang[ing] from scheming to [fake] seductive'.⁴³

Greensleeves is a song persistently (and probably erroneously) credited to Henry VIII, who allegedly composed it for his lover and future execution victim, Anne Boleyn. It is therefore usually considered a 'male' song of courtly lamentation and seduction. Arguably, then, Alice's performance of the song immediately violates traditional gender roles, seemingly putting her in the position of seducer rather than seduced, troubadour knight rather than lady. Alice, however, is not singing 'Greensleeves' earnestly: she has seen through Falstaff's plan, and the ludicrousness of both the traditional male position occupied by her bumbling would-be-

⁴² Sanders, "In Windsor Forest...", 190.

⁴³ Saylor, 'Dramatic Applications of Folksong...', 70.

seducer, and her traditional female position of sublime sexual fantasy object.⁴⁴ Alice's choice of 'Greensleeves' might be a comment on *The Merry Wives*' plot, since the song refers to a woman assumed to be sexually promiscuous (Alice), but who rejects the melodramatic ardour of her suitor (Falstaff).

Alternatively, Alice's song, which is addressed to the 'lady Greensleeves' rather than any man, could have lesbian connotations. It can be assumed that the object of Alice's song is sexually experienced, since, in the Renaissance, green was a colour associated with female promiscuity: a woman could get 'green sleeves' by 'rolling in the grass with a sexual partner'.⁴⁵ Perhaps, then, the quotation of 'Greensleeves' hints at sublimated lesbian desires between the merry wives; at the very least, it might be said to emphasise the homosocial bond between Alice Ford and Meg Page. As Goldberg notes, 'if there is [a] triangle in the play consisting of Mrs. Ford, Mrs. Page, and Falstaff, it's worth noting the asymmetry in this configuration: although Falstaff offers himself indifferently to both women as though they were identical, he actually only attempts Mrs. Ford, each time interrupted by Mrs. Page [... W]ithin the triangular scheme, [Mrs. Page] would thus seem to be Falstaff's rival for Mrs. Ford'.⁴⁶

Following Alice's rendition of 'Greensleeves', Falstaff joins in, repeating the song's refrain (see Example 2.5). According to Saylor, Falstaff here attempts to demonstrate 'sympathy' with Alice, but 'the fact that they sing ['Greensleeves'] separately shows this is illusory – true sympathy between the two would be suggested if they finished the song together in harmony'.⁴⁷ Falstaff is furthermore denied the satisfaction of imitating Alice's *terce de picardie* perfect cadence; instead, he stumbles upon a surprising i - V - ♭VI cadence into D♭ (see Example 2.6). This failed cadence might perhaps demonstrate his lack of control over

⁴⁴ For more on courtly love and sexual difference, see Slavoj Žižek, 'Courtly Love or Woman as Thing', in *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality* (London: Verso, 1994), 89-112.

⁴⁵ Meg Lota Brown and Kari Boyd McBride, *Women's Roles in the Renaissance* (Westport: Greenwood, 2005), 101.

⁴⁶ Goldberg, 'What Do Women Want?', 378.

⁴⁷ Saylor, 'Dramatic Applications of Folksong...', 70.

FALSTAFF (voice off stage)
FALSTAFF (hinter der Scene)

Mrs. F.
Fr. F.

who but my la - dy Green - sleeves? Green - sleeves is all my joy,
Grün liebt auch mein Mäd - chen. Grün ist mei - ne Lieb - lings - farb'

Example 2.5. Vaughan Williams, *Sir John in Love*, III. 3, 'Greensleeves', Falstaff's entry.

Falstaff suddenly perceives Mrs. Ford who is apparently asleep
Falstaff sieht plötzlich Frau Ford die anscheinend schläft

10 Poco più mosso

FAL.
FAL.

who but my la - dy Green sleeves? Have I
Grün - liebt auch - mein Mäd - chen. Poco più mosso So hab ich

f appassionato p

Example 2.6. Vaughan Williams, *Sir John in Love*, III.3, 'Greensleeves', Falstaff's final cadence.

proceedings, the insincerity of his song, or his lack of knightly valour. Falstaff then spies an apparently sleeping Alice. At this point, *Sir John* deviates from *The Merry Wives*, in which Alice is not asleep when Falstaff enters. The tone here is somewhat disturbing, with Falstaff gradually approaching the 'unconscious' Alice with the intention of kissing her, singing 'Ah! those lips, so sweetly swelling/ Do invite a stealing kiss'. The threatening libidinousness of this moment is emphasised by the rocking, impressionistic chordal accompaniment underscoring Falstaff, which suggestively rises by whole-tones as he approaches, and is rarely consonant with his melody (see Example 2.7).

Alice awakes at the peak of Falstaff's melodic line, and, 'simulating great passion', proclaims her love for him (see Example 2.8). She and Falstaff sing imitatively, but never in sync, and still with an unstable, tonally and rhythmically ambiguous accompaniment. The effect

leaning over her
sich über sie lehrend

FAL.
FAL.

Ah! those lips — so sweet-ly swell - ing, Do in-
Ah, der Líp - pen süs - ses Schwel - len la - det

He is now quite close and tries to embrace her
Er ist ganz nahe gekommen und versucht sie zu umarmen

FAL.
FAL.

- vite — a steal - ing kiss; Now will I but
mich — zu ei - nem Kuss; Nun will ich, doch

pp
cresc.

Example 2.7. Vaughan Williams, *Sir John in Love*, III. 3, 'Ah! those lips...' (Falstaff).

Pretending to start out of sleep
Tut als ob sie erwache

Mrs. F.
Fr. F.

A - las, a - las, O sweet Sir John,
O Gott, O Gott O süs - ser John

FAL.
FAL.

ven - ture this? now let me die, for I have
nein, ich muss? lass ster - ben mich ich leb - te

fp
fp

simulating great passion
mit gespielter Leidenschaft

Example 2.8. Vaughan Williams, *Sir John in Love*, III. 3, 'Alas, alas...' (Alice Ford).

is akin to a mutually faked orgasm, with the disunified, phony vocal ejaculations of both parties undercut by a rocking, descending accompanying motion: perhaps the musical equivalent of a post-coital refractory stage. Falstaff's line, 'now let me die', also suggests *la petite mort*. Mistress Quickly (who is not present in the equivalent Shakespeare scene) and Meg Page then interrupt Falstaff and Alice, and the three women enact their ruse, leading Falstaff to believe that Mr Ford has returned. The women move through a variety of key areas during their

Shaking their fists at Falstaff.
Sie ballen ihre Fäuste gegen Falstaff.

They press down lid.
Sie stemmen sich a den Deckel.

Mrs. P.
Fr. P.

Mrs. F.
Fr. F.

Mrs. Q.
Fr. Q.

simile

Example 2.9. Vaughan Williams, *Sir John in Love*, III. 3, ‘you dissembling knight!’

(Alice Ford, Meg Page, Mistress Quickly).

quickfire, back-and-forth conversation, giving the impression that they are in complete control of the situation and musically leading Falstaff a merry dance. Finally, after they have confronted Falstaff about his identical love letters to Meg and Alice, they proclaim, in unison A_♭ major, ‘you dissembling knight!’, before shutting the basket lid on Falstaff and completing his humiliation at their hands (see Example 2.9). In Vaughan Williams’s opera, then, female sexuality and domesticity combine to ensnare the hapless fat knight.

A queer wood: Benjamin Britten, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1960)

Some thirty years later, the next major British Shakespeare opera would take the overt sexuality of *Sir John in Love* to another level; although, somewhat ironically, this opera was written by a composer who disliked Vaughan Williams’s patriotic, pastoral outlook. Britten regarded Parry’s, Holst’s and Vaughan Williams’s ‘school’ of folk-art composition as parochial,

‘superficial and insincere’, and a failure.⁴⁸ According to Tippett, he and Britten were ‘instinctively together’ in their quest to escape the charge of English provincialism and establish themselves as composers of international standing.⁴⁹ Yet, while both turned away from Shakespearian subjects that might be considered nationalistic or bucolic, they still ended up composing arboreal operas, albeit with a focus on urban gender, sexuality, and psychology, rather than rustic life. Today, Britten’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is by far the most regularly performed and well-covered British Shakespearian opera (although Adès’s *The Tempest* is now promising to join it permanently in the worldwide repertory). My coverage of it here, then, will be relatively brief, in a deliberate, only semi-playful attempt to destabilise Britten’s position as the cornerstone of the ‘Shakespeare and opera’ and ‘Shakespeare and British opera’ narratives – a move that this thesis as a whole performs more broadly.

Despite its success, Britten’s *Dream* has not entirely escaped the sort of criticism levelled at other British Shakespeare operas. Britten and Peter Pears set Shakespeare’s text faithfully (albeit in a necessarily cut version), and while Schmidgall praises the ‘authenticity’ of the libretto, owing to its ‘complete reliance on [Shakespeare’s] original language’, Andrew Clements disagrees, writing that ‘the most successful Shakespearean operas [...] are those that put some distance between their texts and the original plays [...] *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, which recycles goblets of the original play, is one of [Britten’s] less successful stage works’.⁵⁰ It is possible that Jan Kott also criticises the conservatism of Britten’s opera in his radical, sexualised reading of the play from 1965 – although it is unclear if Kott is referring specifically to a production of Britten’s *Dream*, or using ‘operatic’ in a general, adjectival manner.

⁴⁸ Benjamin Britten, ‘England and the Folk-Art Problem’ (1941), in *Britten on Music*, ed. Paul Kildea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 31-5.

⁴⁹ Michael Tippett, quoted in Humphrey Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten: A Biography* (London: Faber & Faber, 1993), 197.

⁵⁰ Schmidgall, *Shakespeare and Opera*, 288; Andrew Clements, ‘*The Tempest*’, *The Guardian*, 11/02/2004. <http://tinyurl.com/o3r2ux3>. Accessed 31/03/2017. Britten’s *Dream* contains a single original line, ‘Compelling thee [Helena] to marry with Demetrius’, to overcome the problem of cutting the opening scene in Athens.

The *Dream* is the most erotic of Shakespeare's plays. In no other comedy or tragedy of his, except *Troilus and Cressida*, is the eroticism expressed so brutally. Theatrical tradition is in the case of the *Dream* particularly intolerable, just as much in its classicist version, with tunic-clad lovers and marble stairs in the background, as in its other, operatic variation, with flowing transparent muslin, and rope-dancers. For a long time theatres have been content to present the *Dream* as a brothers Grimm fable, completely obliterating the pungency of the dialogue, and the brutality of the situations.⁵¹

Regardless of the opera's original staging, however, other critics have noted how Britten's opera offers a subversive and erotically charged reading, which is far removed from the conventional aesthetic of the stage *Dreams* Kott criticises.⁵² According to Sanders, the work of Shakespeare critic C. L. Barber was influential in this respect: 'Barber associates [Shakespeare's] *Dream* not only with midsummer fertility rites but also with the sexual games of Mayday celebrations [...] Britten's and Pears's opera, with its saturnalian forest and heightened sexuality, appears to respond to these contemporary critical framings of the play'.⁵³ Britten cut the opening Athenian scene from Shakespeare's play, meaning that his opera takes place almost entirely in the Fairies' magical wood. He therefore concentrates on the dangerous and weird Fairy realm, in some ways establishing its strangeness as the norm and Athenian court life – which makes a brief appearance towards the end of the opera – as 'other'. In the words of Philip Brett,

⁵¹ Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, 2nd ed., trans. Boleslaw Taborski (London: Methuen, 1967), 175.

⁵² It could be argued that Britten's opera foreshadows Peter Brook's famous 1970 RSC production of the *Dream*. Inspired by Kott's reading, Brook likewise foregrounded the sexual undercurrents of the play, particularly in Titania's relationship with Bottom, and turned the forest into an adult and dangerous place. For more on this production, see R. A. Foakes (ed.), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 22-3.

⁵³ Sanders, *Shakespeare and Music*, 128. See also C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959).

Slow and mysterious (♩) (*lento misterioso*)

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello div.

Doublebass div.

Example 2.10. Britten, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* opening, 'The wood – deepening twilight'.

as the curtain rises on Britten's opera we cannot fail to notice a crucial difference from the play. Even without the scenery we know that we are already, in more senses than one, in the woods. It is almost impossible to resist the association with breathing and sleep, or at the least with the wood as a primeval force, that is so powerfully suggested by the eerie sound of the *portamenti* strings [(see Example 2.10)]. We open at once into a world of dreams – clearly of the post-Jungian variety – the “real” world of the opera. In Britten's scheme it is the court of Duke Theseus that seems unreal and limiting, the final entry of the fairies marking a return to ‘normal’ [... The wood is] a completely private world, a world of possibilities rather than of limitations. The folk-festival or May-games aspect of Shakespeare's play, then, has been matched by a contemporary notion of *misrule*, the world of the libido.⁵⁴

The weirdness of the wood is highlighted by its musical association with uncanny children's choirs and curious, Oriental percussion, and particularly by its King, Oberon, being cast as a countertenor, ‘far from the ardent tenor [hero] of the romantic era and as close as one can get

⁵⁴ Philip Brett, ‘Britten's Dream’, in *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, ed. George E. Haggerty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 116. Brett's mention of Jungianism hints at a previously unexplored link between Britten's work, which has not been considered from a Jungian perspective, and Tippett's explicitly Jungian operas.

nowadays to the *primo uomo* of eighteenth-century *opera seria*, the castrato'.⁵⁵ According to Brett, in his biographically tinged reading of the opera, 'along with [this] historical reference [...] goes the association of unmanliness, and thus of gender liminality, that haunts the modern image of the homosexual. Squeaking in a falsetto voice, [Britten's] emasculated, misogynistic, boy-desiring Oberon is almost literally a figure of the closet'.⁵⁶ Oberon's very first entry demonstrates his emasculation and oddness, when his surprising countertenor voice is immediately overpowered by that of his soprano wife, who leaps an eleventh to belt a high A (see Example 2.11). Throughout their opening, competitive duet, the similarity of Oberon's and Titania's coloratura-inflected vocal lines suggests that they share a certain femaleness, but that Titania's identity is more assured and complete (see Example 2.12).

Brett further argues that Britten also puts conventional heterosexuality under scrutiny in his opera, since the quartet of Athenian lovers are characterised in a relatively monotonous musical manner. The human couples sing lines that are 'eternally syllabic, in even notes': 'This is a sure sign in Britten's musical language [...] that although they are conventionally "good", there is something wrong with them, or limited about them'.⁵⁷ In Lysander and Hermia's 'I swear to thee' duet in Act I, for instance, the couple's proclamations of love become increasingly overwrought and tedious, as they press determinedly through all of the twelve major triads (see Example 2.13). Arguably, however, Britten is not just criticising heterosexuality through his quartet of lovers. Rather, their musical limitedness and indistinguishableness might form part of a broader critique about, in Kott's words, 'the exchangeability of love partners' in the modern world:

⁵⁵ Ibid., 118.

⁵⁶ Ibid. Brett is undoubtedly correct to highlight the traditional association of homosexuality with effeminacy – a trend that persists to this day. Nevertheless, his own alignment of homosexuality with femininity (in other words, sexuality with gender) could itself be considered outdated. Nowadays, the 'gender liminality' of Britten's Oberon might invite consideration of this character, the source play, and Britten's other 'liminal' characters from a transgender perspective.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 119.

TYTANIA
TITANIA

III met by moon - light, Jealous O - ber - uns
Wie schlimm bei Mond - licht Tref - fen wir - uns

OBERON

III met by moon - light, Proud Ty - ta - ni -
Wie schlimm bei Mond - licht Tref - fen wir - uns

Example 2.11. Britten, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act I,
'Ill met by moonlight...', (Titania and Oberon).

T.
O.

The sea - sons al - ter: *brilliant*
Die Zeit folgt nicht mehr: *brilliant*

The sea - sons al - ter: the spring,
Die Zeit folgt nicht mehr: Der Lenz,

brilliant

the sum - mer, the angry winter change their wonted liv'ries,
der Som - mer, der zornige Winter tau - schen ih - re Kleider,

The chiding autumn change their wonted liv'ries, and the mazed
Der Herbst, der Kühle, tau - schen ih - re Kleider, und verwirrt die

the mazed world, By their increase, now knows not which is which;
verwirrt die Welt, Durch den Wandel, kennt nicht mehr ih - re Zeit.

world, Welt, By their increase, now knows not which is which,
Welt, Durch den Wandel, kennt nicht mehr ih - re Zeit.

Example 2.12. Britten, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act I, 'The seasons alter...' (Titania and Oberon).

Her.

I swear to thee, I swear,
ich schwär' es dir, ich schwär'

L.

dim. I swear to thee, I swear to thee, I swear,
ich schwär' es dir, ich schwär' es dir, ich schwär'

VI. I

VI. II

Example 2.13. Britten, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act I, 'I swear to thee...' (Lysander and Hermia).

Commentators have long since noticed that the lovers in this love quartet are hardly distinguishable from one another. The girls differ only in height and in the colour of their hair [...] The boys differ only in names. All four lack the distinctness and uniqueness of so many other, even earlier Shakespeare characters. The lovers are exchangeable. Perhaps this was [Shakespeare's] purpose? The entire action of this hot night, everything that has happened at this drunken party, is based on the exchangeability of love partners [...] This mechanical reversal of the objects of desire, and the interchangeability of lovers is not just the basis of the plot. The reduction of characters to love partners seems to me to be the most peculiar characteristic of [Shakespeare's] cruel dream; and perhaps its most modern quality. The partner is now nameless and faceless. He or she just happens to be the nearest.⁵⁸

'The reduction of characters to love partners' in a private, disorientating setting would likewise be a major theme in Tippett's *Tempest* opera a decade later.

Rotten and putrefying: Humphrey Searle, *Hamlet* (1968)

In between *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Knot Garden*, another Shakespeare opera emerged. Searle, like Britten in many of his works, was concerned with the political theme of 'the individual and society', and was drawn to Shakespeare's most revered play for this reason.⁵⁹ 'Hamlet', he states, 'is at odds with his surroundings and feels that he has been denied his rights. This is why younger people today are in particular sympathy with [him]'.⁶⁰ Searle's *Hamlet* is one of the least popular of all Shakespeare operas, being widely ignored by scholarship, record labels, and opera houses since its premiere in Hamburg in 1968. Perhaps *Hamlet's* unpopularity is attributable to its serial construction, which might render it somewhat unapproachable for audiences. Stuart Hamilton, for example, writes that, in this *Hamlet*, one

⁵⁸ Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, 176.

⁵⁹ Humphrey Searle, in 'Humphrey Searle's *Hamlet*. The Composer Talks to Martin Kingsbury', *The Musical Times* 110, no. 1514 (1969), 369.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 370. Searle's opera was released in 1968, a momentous year of political and student protest across the world. The composer specifically cites contemporaneous stage *Hamlets* starring David Warner and Nicol Williamson for attracting young audiences (370).

Example 2.14. Searle, *Hamlet*, 'To be or not to be' tone row.

(Stephen Walsh, 'Two Hamlets', 8).

'longs for [Searle's] music to stop so one can listen to [Shakespeare's] overpowering words – not an ideal reaction in the opera house'.⁶¹ Stephen Walsh argues that the opera is hampered further by Searle's serialist music being 'ruled by the shape of the spoken phrase', which results in 'colourless' writing that does not sufficiently differentiate between characters and emotions.⁶²

All of the music in *Hamlet* is based on a single tone row, which is heard in its 'authentic form' in the opening lines of Hamlet's 'To be or not to be' soliloquy (see Example 2.14).⁶³ As well as highlighting what is arguably Shakespeare's most famous piece of writing, Searle's decision to generate his whole opera from this kernel of suicidal thought emphasises how 'the question of death and mourning runs from one end of *Hamlet* to the other. No one in this play really speaks about anything else'.⁶⁴ Searle, through using this generative motif, arguably boils the whole of *Hamlet* down to the Freudian conflict between the 'life instinct' and the 'death drive', which the prince fixates on at this moment. The importance of Hamlet's tone row also means that all of the characters and action in the opera could be considered projections from his perspective, generated by his desires, neuroticism, and nihilism. In the words of Simon Critchley and Jamieson Webster, Hamlet's grief, seen so clearly in 'to be or not to be', means

⁶¹ Stuart Hamilton, 'Searle's *Hamlet* in Shakespeare's Tongue', *Opera* (April 1969). <http://tinyurl.com/p6jwq2b>. Accessed 31/03/2017.

⁶² Stephen Walsh, 'Two Hamlets', *Tempo* 89 (1969), 9.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶⁴ Simon Critchley and Jamieson Webster, *The Hamlet Doctrine* (London: Verso, 2013), 130.

that ‘all the objects that surround him are degraded and rendered fungible: women are whores, stepfathers are liars; mothers are criminals; the world is rotten and putrefying’.⁶⁵

Searle’s *Hamlet* might not seem like a full-blown feminist revision of the play, since it appears to be just as phallogentric and singularly focused as its source. The misogynistic Prince is still its central character, and his theme generates the music of everything around him, including Ophelia’s and his mother’s themes. Yet it could be argued that Searle’s opera, because it is entirely and perceptibly constructed from Hamlet’s personal, ‘artificial’ serialist row, actually highlights and musically stages the subjective sexism that is a feature of Shakespeare’s play.⁶⁶ The proliferation of Hamlet’s theme through the opera makes plain the one-sidedness of his and the play’s discourse, and highlights how both Ophelia and Gertrude are not allowed full stories and rounded personalities. Instead, they are perceived as one-dimensional objects of Hamlet’s desire. Lee Edwards argues that, in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, ‘we can imagine Hamlet’s story without Ophelia, but Ophelia literally has no story without Hamlet’.⁶⁷ Similarly, in Searle’s opera, Ophelia has no theme without Hamlet, and might therefore be considered no more than a ‘metaphor of male experience’.⁶⁸ She is, as Critchley and Webster point out, ‘always taken as something to be used, as *bait*. No one ever asks her what it is that *she* wants’.⁶⁹

Searle’s Ophelia is not simply a shrinking innocent or figment of Hamlet’s sexual desire, however. According to Walsh, she has an ‘ability to match repartee with Hamlet’ that

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁶⁶ The association of a serialist motif with one character and their attempts to impose the ‘symbolic order’ is also an integral feature of *The Knot Garden*. For more on this subject, see ‘“Prospero, man of power”’: Mangus-Freud-Schoenberg’ in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

⁶⁷ Lee R. Edwards, ‘The Labors of Psyche: Towards a Theory of Female Heroism’, *Critical Inquiry* 6, no. 1 (1979), 36.

⁶⁸ Elaine Showalter, ‘Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism’, in Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (eds.), *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory* (London: Methuen, 1985), 80.

⁶⁹ Critchley and Webster, *The Hamlet Doctrine*, 147. Critchley and Webster borrow the term ‘bait’ from Lacan, who first described Ophelia in this manner in his 1959 seminars on *Hamlet*. See Lacan, Jacques-Alain Miller and James Hulbert, ‘Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*’, *Yale French Studies* 55/56 (1977), 11-52. Showalter’s ‘Representing Ophelia’ is a response to what Showalter sees as Lacan’s failure to keep to his promise to focus on Ophelia in his reading of the play. For further explanation on Lacan’s ideas on sexual difference and relationships, see ‘Tippett, Jung, Lacan’ (Chapter 3) and ‘Faber: midlife crisis man-child’ (Chapter 5) in this thesis.

gives her ‘a substance, a warmth and (above all) a suggestion of experience’.⁷⁰ Furthermore, Searle frequently underpins Ophelia’s theme with ‘forceful orchestral figures, showing her not at all to be the wilting creature of some productions’.⁷¹ It would be difficult to argue that Searle’s opera supports Critchley’s and Webster’s provocative thesis that Ophelia is ‘the true tragic hero’ of *Hamlet*.⁷² Nevertheless, this opera might find some kinship with feminist productions of the last half century, in which Ophelia is sometimes ‘a powerful figure who rebels against [her] family and [Hamlet’s] social order’.⁷³

Visible divinity, invisible whores: Stephen Oliver, *Timon of Athens* (1991)

A. D. Nuttall describes *Timon of Athens* as ‘the strangest of Shakespeare’s plays’.⁷⁴ Co-authored, oddly structured, and relatively unknown, this ‘problem play’ about a philanthropist turned misanthropic hermit might well be thought an odd choice for operatic adaptation. Stephen Oliver, however, was drawn to the play for these very reasons, considering it ‘an opera libretto’.⁷⁵

[*Timon*] is a draft of a Shakespeare play [...] It’s unfinished in the sense that it’s not polished [...] There are a lot of loose ends. So I felt that setting it to music was not a blasphemy, as perhaps it might be if you did Macbeth or Othello – unless you’re Italian!⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Walsh, ‘Two Hamlets’, 10.

⁷¹ Searle, in ‘Humphrey Searle’s *Hamlet*. The Composer Talks to Martin Kingsbury’, 370.

⁷² Critchley and Webster, *The Hamlet Doctrine*, 152. Critchley and Webster point out that ‘unlike Hamlet’s feigned antics, Ophelia’s psychosis is real; where Hamlet grieves, cannot act but simply acts out, Ophelia’s grief produces her acts of madness, and she follows her desire all the way to death’ (152).

⁷³ Showalter, ‘Representing Ophelia’, 88.

⁷⁴ A. D. Nuttall, *Shakespeare The Thinker* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2007), 321. *Timon of Athens* was a collaboration between Shakespeare and Middleton.

⁷⁵ Stephen Oliver, from ‘An Interview with Paul Griffiths in 1984’, in Ruth Oliver and James Oliver (eds.), *Friendships in Constant Repair: Perspectives on the Life of Stephen Oliver* (Leicester: Matador, 2010), 71.

⁷⁶ S. Oliver, from ‘Interview with Werner Bleisteiner’, in R. Oliver and J. Oliver (eds.), *Friendships in Constant Repair*, 84.

Timon was Oliver's last work prior to his death from AIDS in 1992. This Shakespeare opera, like Tippett's, appears to have been a deeply personal undertaking, and several of the composer's friends and relatives have drawn parallels between him and his tragic protagonist.⁷⁷ Adam Pollock, for instance, writes that one of Oliver's favourite phrases was 'it's only money', and emphasises the composer's 'exceptional generosity'. It is 'not surprising', he states, that Oliver's 'last major work was an opera based on *Timon of Athens*'.⁷⁸ Graham Vick believes that 'there was a huge identification' between Oliver and Timon, while Graeme Jenkins argues that 'a certain anger about dying too young was behind the emotion within [*Timon*'s] music'.⁷⁹ Tim Rice remembers that Oliver 'was delighted when I told him that [...] the [autobiographical] aspect of the piece [was what] struck me most strongly', while Oliver himself stated in an interview that *Timon* was the work he was 'born to write'.⁸⁰ An *Independent* review of the opera, meanwhile, was headlined 'Oliver bares his soul'.⁸¹ It is nevertheless questionable whether *Timon* is a self-portrait of Oliver, however tempting it might be to link a composer's final work to his death.⁸² Oliver mentions that he actually first thought of a *Timon* opera when he read all of Shakespeare 'twenty to twenty five years ago', so it may just be that he had wanted to write this piece for a long time.⁸³ Furthermore, the opera almost appeared several years prior to Oliver's AIDS diagnosis and death, when it was commissioned by Scottish Opera before being dropped.⁸⁴

⁷⁷ See 'Dov-Ariel: Tippett Androgyne' and 'You know Fresca, we really belong to each other' in Chapter 5 of this thesis for explanations of especially personal aspects in *The Knot Garden*.

⁷⁸ Adam Pollock, in Deborah Cassidi (ed.), *Favourite Heroes and Holy People* (London: Continuum, 2008), 176.

⁷⁹ Graham Vick and Graeme Jenkins, in R. Oliver and J. Oliver (eds.), *Friendships in Constant Repair*, 131 & 133.

⁸⁰ Tim Rice, in R. Oliver and J. Oliver (eds.), *Friendships in Constant Repair*, 153; S. Oliver, in 'Interview with Werner Bleisteiner', 83.

⁸¹ Independent headline quoted by C. H. Oliver in *Friendships in Constant Repair*, 9.

⁸² For more on this topic, see Gordon McMullan, *Shakespeare and the Idea of Late Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). See 'The Prospero fallacy?' in Chapter 3 of this thesis for a discussion on the role of biography in interpretations of art and *The Tempest* in particular.

⁸³ S. Oliver, in 'Interview with Werner Bleisteiner', 83.

⁸⁴ S. Oliver, in 'An Interview with Paul Griffiths in 1984', 72.

Still, the composer's illness, and his acute awareness of the effects of AIDS on an individual and community, does appear to have exercised a profound influence on the final version of his work.⁸⁵ In particular, prompted by his personal experiences, Oliver was keen to explore broader ideas of friendship and God in the face of death. According to Oliver, his *Timon*, unlike Shakespeare's, 'gets religion before his death [...] The eternal suddenly becomes very real to him'.⁸⁶ Yet *Timon's* 'God' is not a deity, but a friend – Mutius, his former servant (Flavius in Shakespeare's original).⁸⁷ Oliver therefore considered his *Timon* to be about 'a man who goes out to the desert to find God and discovers that God is other people'.⁸⁸

[*Timon*] is a very bleak story: a man losing his faith in other men [...] I felt there was something that I could add to the story [...] I thought that [I] could give *Timon* a vision of what happens when you are left alone, and the comfort of human affection is taken away from you, and you're in the desert; and he might turn to a vision of God. But because I don't believe in God, I can't let him become a saint – which is the obvious conclusion to the story. And I have to make him disappointed that the image of God, the vision that comes to him is, in fact, another man – a man who has always been kind to him, has always behaved well, is a decent ordinary man – and it is that which drives him to despair – the fact that you can't hate mankind, that you need men, you need other people even to leave the world. I have lived for the last ten years, as we all have, in an atmosphere where my generation is dying rather rapidly. AIDS has decimated my acquaintances, friends, and lovers, and I think, although all men must die in more or less horrible manners – and I am not claiming a special tragic situation about this, everyone is going to die – but nevertheless, it concentrates your mind on what value friendship has, and how you very much need to rely upon your friends and also to sit very lightly [... Friendship] isn't contractual, it's

⁸⁵ Oliver had cared for his ailing partner, Hugh, when he was dying of AIDS (see Maria Bjornson, in R. Oliver and J. Oliver (eds.), *Friendships in Constant Repair*, 115-16).

⁸⁶ S. Oliver, in 'An Interview with Paul Griffiths in 1984', 72.

⁸⁷ Mutius is a name taken from another Shakespeare play, *Titus Andronicus*. It is the name of Titus's son, whom he accidentally kills near the beginning of the play.

⁸⁸ S. Oliver, quoted in Anthony B. Dawson and Gretchen E. Minton (eds.), *The Arden Shakespeare: Timon of Athens* (London: Arden, 2008), 41.

not like marriage or parents or children where you have duties and responsibilities – indeed you sign contracts in marriage. Friendship is more like what the church calls grace: something freely given and freely accepted and lays no duties on either side.⁸⁹

Oliver's conflation of Timon's predicament with his own inevitable death in this passage is striking, and A. N. Wilson recalls being 'rather surprised to discover, talking to another friend of [Oliver's] after [his] funeral, that he was a believer in God. I had never guessed this from our talks, but apparently the idea was fundamental to his *Timon of Athens*, that the love of God was discoverable by our love of other people'.⁹⁰

Oliver's opera also ties in with a notable resurgence of interest in Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* during the late capitalist era. Recent historicist literary scholarship, following Marx's statement that Shakespeare, in *Timon*, 'depicts the real nature of money' as both 'visible divinity' and 'common whore',⁹¹ considers *Timon* to be reflective of Elizabethan-Jacobean nervousness about the 'growing and rapacious power of capitalism',⁹² and an era of 'financial panics, bank runs, and depressions'.⁹³ In the words of Nuttall, 'we are dealing with a society, and hence with a literature, which has discovered the instability of money'.⁹⁴ Directors and scholars have been increasingly drawn to *Timon of Athens* over the past couple of decades, perhaps because its depiction of a 'pointedly deformed society with a pointedly deformed

⁸⁹ S. Oliver, in 'Interview with Werner Bleisteiner', 84-5.

⁹⁰ A. N. Wilson, in R. Oliver and J. Oliver (eds.), *Friendships in Constant Repair*, 3. Oliver's opera shares this personal investment, questing for 'God', and ultimate espousal of friendship and empathy with *The Knot Garden* and Tippett's other late operas. Oliver describes his music as 'not unlike Tippett really, in that you recognise there are key centres but how you adjust the chords is a different matter [...] If you were thinking of a shorthand, I think that's what you might say, it's that sort of music' (in 'Interview with Werner Bleisteiner', 92).

⁹¹ Karl Marx, 'The Power of Money', *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (Moscow: Progress, 1959), 42.

⁹² Maria T. M. Prendergast, "'Unmanly Melancholy': Lack, Fetishism, and Abuse in *Timon of Athens*", *Criticism* 42, no. 2 (2000), 211.

⁹³ Michael Chorost, 'Biological Finance in Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*', *English Literary Renaissance* 21, no. 3 (1991), 355.

⁹⁴ Nuttall, *Timon of Athens* (London: Harvester, 1989), 67.

cultural poetics' has something to say about the current Western world.⁹⁵ Both Peter Brook, in 1974, and Nicholas Hytner, in 2012, for instance, focused on *Timon's* potent applicability to a contemporary world of regular financial crashes, political instability, commodity fetishism, and celebrity worship.⁹⁶ Oliver thought that *Timon's* story of men who 'told their money and let out/ Their coin upon large interest', as the military captain Alcibiades puts it, 'could be [about] modern business somewhere in Trump Tower or somewhere'.⁹⁷ He notes that 'we've just had a huge scandal [... where] a bank [BCCI] has just completely disappeared, leaving hundreds of thousands of people in the most terrible debt – that doesn't become less modern, does it?'⁹⁸ Some things, it seems, never change.

Shakespeare's play about economic mismanagement and deceit is set in an almost uniformly male environment: the only women in the play are some masque musicians and a couple of prostitutes, who speak the grand total of six lines between them. *Timon's* Athens is a warped society in which women are almost entirely absent from public life, money is fetishized and imbued with female biological properties, and sex with women spreads diseases that cause sterility. As John Jowett notes, despite the absence of women, the 'idea of the female in this all-male world has a disturbing and strong presence'.⁹⁹ Some commentators have therefore argued that the play depicts early seventeenth century 'anxieties about male identity [that] may be traced to shifting notions of gender construction triggered by the decline of feudalism and the rise of capitalism'.¹⁰⁰ According to Maria Prendergast, for instance, 'the lack of female characters [in *Timon*] and the overabundance of slanderous comments about them are complex

⁹⁵ John Jowett, in Jowett (ed.), *The Oxford Shakespeare: Timon of Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 45.

⁹⁶ For more information on Brook's 1974 *Timon*, see Albert Hunt and Geoffrey Reeves, 'Popular Shakespeare: *Timon d'Athènes*, *Mesure pour Mesure* and *Antony and Cleopatra*', in *Directors in Perspective: Peter Brook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 215-33. For a discussion of Hytner's 2012 production, see Paul Mason, 'Timon of Athens: the Power of Money', *The Guardian*, 20/07/2012. <http://tinyurl.com/qj68sjf>. Accessed 31/03/2017.

⁹⁷ S. Oliver, in 'Interview with Werner Bleisteiner', 85.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁹⁹ Jowett, *Timon of Athens*, 36.

¹⁰⁰ Prendergast, "'Unmanly Melancholy'", 216.

and contradictory responses to a fantasy of male autonomy inscribed in early Jacobean culture'.¹⁰¹ Prendergast points out that, in traditional patriarchal culture, women play the 'crucial' role of 'mediator' – that is to say, scapegoat and object of exchange between men; for example, through marriage and in misogynistic language and literature. Women, therefore, for all their lack of actual agency, 'define homosocial relations' and give 'substance to male identity'.¹⁰² Hence, 'male early modern culture, for all its fantasies of absolute autonomy, was ultimately unable to efface the category "woman"'.¹⁰³ *Timon of Athens*, however, enacts a fantasy homotopia, 'effectively effac[ing] women'.¹⁰⁴ It displays the 'male cultural fantasy of absolute autonomy based on the disavowal of the crucial role that women play as mediators within traditional homosocial culture', and demonstrates the 'desire to replace mediations by women with mediations by objects' – particularly the object of gold, or money.¹⁰⁵ Ironically, the result of this narcissistic 'drive to repress women's subjectivity' is 'the disintegration of homosocial bonds and, consequently [...] Athenian culture itself'.¹⁰⁶

The moral of Prendergast's article seems to be that the exploitation and demeaning of women, while unpleasant, is acceptable if it prevents the collapse of a 'successful' patriarchal capitalist society. For her, the problems in Timon's Athens stem not from a lack of proper equality and participatory female voices, but from a lack of objectified and subjugated women: 'if Timon is nothing, if his court is nothing, it is [...] because the play lacks women – the sex that, in a traditional aristocratic culture, gives substance to male identity and homosocial exchanges'.¹⁰⁷ It is highly questionable whether women's 'crucial' function as 'mediators' grants them much 'subjectivity'. In any case, Prendergast's interpretation does not hold because

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., 221 & 212.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 221.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 210.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 218.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 212.

women are not completely absent from the play. In particular, she overlooks the prostitutes, considering them only ‘external projections of [Timon’s] internalized, malignant, image of women’, rather than actual people.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, at the beginning of the play, Timon effectively buys a woman for his servant Lucilius, giving her father money so that he does not prevent the marriage. It appears, then, that all women are potentially subject to prostitution in this play. Timon’s Athens is not a male-only society, as Prendergast submits, but a society in which patriarchal capitalism has run riot, and women have been fully suppressed and reduced to their function as ‘mediators’. It does not augur well for the prospect of societal reformation that Alcibiades, who ends the play by marching on Athens, is the client of these prostitutes.

Oliver actually removes Alcibiades’s prostitutes from his opera, meaning that the captain’s reputation is unsullied and there is perhaps more hope for Athens’ future.¹⁰⁹ Their removal also means, however, that the opera contains no female voices, and is therefore even more homosocial than the play, with its entirely male cast creating an environment of ‘stringent muscular melancholy’ and a ‘fractured community of [male] experience within [a] limited pitch range’.¹¹⁰ The sharp boy voices of some of Timon’s servants serve to highlight the ‘limited’ uniformity of the male range, the absence of authentic female voices, and the correlative ‘quality of emotional life as restricted and dangerously unsure’.¹¹¹ Through its music, therefore, Oliver’s *Timon* arguably emphasises ‘the limited resources of male selfhood’ and ‘the failure of the male community’.¹¹² Crucially, too, the scene in which Timon barter for Philotus’s

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 217.

¹⁰⁹ Perhaps the reason for Oliver’s removal of the prostitutes is that Timon, in Shakespeare’s play, encourages the women to enter Athens and spread venereal disease (‘Be a whore still: they love thee not that use thee;/ Give them diseases, leaving with thee their lust./ Make use of thy salt hours: season the slaves/ For tubs and baths; bring down rose-cheeked youth/To the tub-fast and the diet’). Such a reference would arguably not have sat well in Oliver’s opera, with its allegorical and personal focus on death and friendship in the wake of the AIDS epidemic.

¹¹⁰ Jowett, *Timon of Athens*, 100. Other examples of recent all-male British operas include Britten’s *Billy Budd* (1951) and Styles’s *Macbeth* (2015). See ‘Recent efforts: Goehr, Styles, and Tchaikowsky’ in this chapter for a short analysis of the latter work.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 37.

¹¹² Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare’s Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 166.

daughter on behalf of his servant is retained, so a female element is not entirely erased. It remains apparent – perhaps even more than in Shakespeare’s play – that women are silent, monetised objects. Oliver also preserves some of Timon’s misogynistic rants against female sexuality (‘Maid, to your master’s bed: your mistress is o’ the brothel/To general filths convert, green virginity/Do it, do it, do it in your parent’s eyes’). While Timon’s misogyny might simply reflect his general hatred of humankind, it seems shockingly incongruous and unmotivated; as Jowett writes, it has ‘no anchorings in the misfortunes that have befallen him, which arise specifically through his [financial] dealings with men’.¹¹³ There is also an irony to it, since in some ways Timon is a ‘replacement [for] the [play’s and opera’s] missing female element’.¹¹⁴ Timon is ‘a gender ambivalent source of liquid fecundity’: he embodies both male patronage and female bounty, and is therefore a ‘sexually ambivalent’, ‘androgynous’, and ‘hermaphroditic’ character.¹¹⁵ Timon, like Hamlet, is also accused of ‘unmanly’ (in other words, female) ‘melancholy’ in both Shakespeare’s play and Oliver’s opera.

Prendergast asserts that Shakespeare’s *Timon* ‘presents us with no male substitute for the desired woman’.¹¹⁶ This assessment is true to a certain extent, since there is no openly homosexual coupling in the play. As Jody Greene points out, however, *Timon* is a text that ‘insistently thematize[s] the slippage between male friendship and sodomy’ that defined Elizabethan patronage.¹¹⁷ Its ‘homoeconomics’ is linked to a ‘obsessively recur[ring]’ language

¹¹³ Jowett, *Timon of Athens*, 44.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* See ‘Dov-Ariel: Tippett Androgyne’ and ‘I will dress myself in green’ in Chapter 5 of this thesis for a discussion of androgyny and hermaphroditism in *The Knot Garden*.

¹¹⁶ Prendergast, “‘Unmanly Melancholy’”, 212.

¹¹⁷ Jody Greene, “‘You Must Eat Men’: The Sodomitic Economy of Renaissance Patronage”, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 2 (1994), 178. As Greene notes, Elizabethan ‘sodomy’ differs from the contemporary idea of ‘homosexuality’. In the Renaissance vocabulary, ‘sodomy’ refers to any act of ‘debauchery’ that threatened ‘that most basic unit of the social fabric, the procreative, married, sexual couple’. It was, therefore, also a term ‘frequently invoked to describe heterosexual non-procreative sex’. Nevertheless, according to Greene, this broad meaning should not distract from the fact that sodomy still primarily referred to male-male sexual activity, which was ‘conceived as a threat to the stability of social communities (the family, the state, the court, and, not least, the market)’ (186).

of ‘oral imagery’.¹¹⁸ Greene therefore argues that ‘*Timon* is an all-male drama in which the boundaries of friendship and sodomy collapse’.¹¹⁹ Oliver’s opera retains some of Shakespeare’s crudely suggestive language – ‘How many men eat Timon’, comments the cynical philosopher Apemantus during the third of Act I’s three banqueting scenes. It also, however, features a tender presentation of homosexual love in an Act I duet between Timon and Alcibiades. The scene opens with Alcibiades appearing for the first time and passionately declaring to Timon, ‘Sir, you have saved my longing, and I feed most hungrily on your sight’. He enters forcefully, on a *ff* high D, stretching to a high E before descending, and his ‘longing’ is musically depicted through rising string and brass (see Example 2.15). The chromatic, descending brass that underpins his oral imagery might suggest that Alcibiades is no better than Timon’s other flatterers. Notably, however, Alcibiades feeds on Timon’s image, not his wealth.

In return, Timon sings a paraphrase of Shakespeare’s Sonnet 91 (‘Some glory in their birth...’). Like Holst, then, Oliver inserts a Shakespearian sonnet quotation into his main source material for dramatic effect. Sonnet 91 is part of the ‘Fair Youth’ sequence, in which the poet expresses his love for a young man: unrequited homosexual desire is therefore implicit in this quotation. Sparse, quiet piano and high woodwind orchestration accompanies Timon’s song, and the combination of the piano’s open fourth chords and snaking, elusive chromaticism with descending, piercing, held flute and oboe notes suggests a dangerous, exotic deviance. This atmosphere is emphasised through a lack of tonal stability and little synchronicity between Timon and his accompaniment (see Example 2.16). Timon pointedly pauses over the line ‘some [glory] in their wealth, their wealth’, before moving on, with greater motion, to tell Alcibiades ‘your love is better than high birth to me, prouder than garments, higher than strength, richer than wealth’. His final line, ‘Boasting you, I boast the pride of men’, is sung to another rising figure (see Example 2.17).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 172 & 184.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 186.

38.

Alc.:

you have saved

my longing,

and I feed

most hungerly on your sight.

37

Example 2.15. Oliver, *Timon of Athens*, I. 1, 'Sir, you have saved my longing...' (Alcibiades).

40. **38** Largo (♩ = 69)

Tim:

38

TIMON:

Tim:

Some glo- ry in their birth, some

in their skill, **39** some in their

Example 2.16. Oliver, *Timon of Athens*, I. 1, 'Some glory...' (Timon).

allarg

Tim: Some in their wealth, their wealth.

poco meno mosso accel . .

40 But your love is better than high birth to

42. accel.

Tim: me, prouder than garments, higher than strength, rich - er than

Example 2.17. Oliver, *Timon of Athens*, I. 1, 'But your love...' (Timon).

41
allarg Grave (♩ = 52)

Tim: wealth, and boasting you, I boast the

Allegro (♩ = 138)
42

ALCIBIADES (relieved):

Alc: No fortune fall to me that

Tim: pride of men.

Example 2.17 (cont.) Oliver, *Timon of Athens*, I. 1, 'But your love...' (Timon).

A 'relieved' Alcibiades then once again sings fervently over the passionate string orchestration that defined his first entry. 'My heart is ever at your service', he declares, and a rising scale motion features once again (see Example 2.18). According to Matthew Rye, the preponderance of such figures in *Timon* provides a 'strong sense of organic unity', and he associates them with 'moments when Timon is expressing his trust in friendships'.¹²⁰ Rye

¹²⁰ Matthew Rye, 'Oliver's *Timon of Athens*', *The Musical Times* 132, no. 1779 (1991), 228.

Alc. in my brain. My

Alc. heart is ever at your ser - vice.

Example 2.18. Oliver, *Timon of Athens*, I. 1, 'My heart is ever at your service' (Alcibiades).

acknowledges, however, that their meaning is not fixed, and it might also be that they are indicative of the concepts of desire and release in various forms throughout the opera. In the closing moments of Timon's and Alcibiades's duet, the orchestra drops out completely, Alcibiades lovingly tells Timon 'I am joyful, joyful at your sight', and Timon smiles (see Example 2.19).

In Oliver's opera, then, Timon's and Alcibiades's relationship is far more than the 'sensual friendship' euphemistically described by Anthony B. Dawson and Gretchen E. Minton.¹²¹ In this sense, the opera aligns with Michael Langam's production of *Timon of Athens*

¹²¹ Dawson and Minton, in Dawson and Minton (eds.), *Timon of Athens*, 41.

Alc.: I am joyful, joy - ful

[TIMON smiles.] **46** Allegro molto (♩ = 144)

Alc.: of your sight.

Fla.: FLAMINIUS: My lord, Lord

46 f mf

Example 2.19. Oliver, *Timon of Athens*, 'I am joyful...' (Alcibiades).

at the Stratford Shakespeare festival in the same year, which incorporated an 'erotic friendship' between these two characters.¹²² It is also significant that Alcibiades assists Timon with his suicide, which in contrast to Shakespeare's play takes place on stage. Prendergast notes that

unlike so many of Shakespeare's other plays [*Timon*] demystifies the fantasy of male autonomy without offering any powerful and seductive paradigm to replace it. And perhaps this is why readers, critics, spectators, and directors so often have problems with this play: it has traced, too

¹²² For more on this production, see Royal Ward, 'Timon of Athens', *Shakespeare Bulletin* 9 (1991), 28-31.

successfully, the pathological trajectory of the fantasy of absolute male autonomy, leaving us with no alternative fantasy to replace it and with no sense of cathartic [*sic*] resolution.¹²³

There is, by contrast, a sliver of hope and optimism in Oliver's *Timon*, in the form of the gay relationship between Timon and Alcibiades, and the act of male friendship provided by Mutius. The opera does provide a 'cathartic resolution', with the audience allowed to see Timon's death, and Alcibiades literally penetrating Timon in an act of mercy. From a certain point of view, then, the opera could be said to look towards a world entirely without women, who are made redundant even from their roles as romantic partners and sexual gratifiers, and offered no place in the 'alternative fantasy' sketched out by Timon and Alcibiades. The moral of Oliver's early 1990s opera seems to be that modern patriarchal capitalism is certainly exploitative, demeaning, and corruptive, but homosociality, homoeroticism, and indeed homosexuality offer some respite and hope for a brighter future. In this *Timon*, then, male 'homo-ness', in its different forms, is both problem and solution, and the focus on male friendship and homosexuality means that the potentially feminist message of Shakespeare's play is obscured.

'The island's full of noises': Thomas Adès, *The Tempest* (2004)

Oliver's *Timon* met with a poor reception, being 'mauled by the critics and [London] Coliseum acoustics'.¹²⁴ The next major British Shakespeare opera, however – which was based on the same play as *The Knot Garden* – would have no such troubles in finding acclaim, becoming a worldwide sensation and probably the most successful British opera of the twenty-first century. One newspaper editorial described the premiere of Adès's *The Tempest* as 'British opera's equivalent of the [2003] England World Cup rugby win': 'Only time will tell whether the first night of *The Tempest* in 2004 was a moment to set alongside the first night of *Peter Grimes* in

¹²³ Prendergast, "Unmanly Melancholy", 222.

¹²⁴ Pollock, in R. Oliver and J. Oliver (eds.), *Friendships in Constant Repair*, 126.

1945 in the history of British music. But it felt that way in the theatre'.¹²⁵ Other reviewers commented that *The Tempest* 'has the potential to be one of the most enduring new operas', and declared it 'the strongest Shakespeare opera since Aribert Reimann's *Lear*'.¹²⁶ Following the success of its initial run, *The Tempest* was revived at Covent Garden in 2007. It has also been performed around the world in locations including Strasbourg, Copenhagen, Santa Fe, Frankfurt, Lübeck, Quebec City, and New York. A 2012 Metropolitan Opera production (see Figure 2.1) was broadcast to 1800 cinemas in 55 countries, and has been made available on DVD.¹²⁷ As with Britten's *Dream*, the established popularity of this opera, coupled with this thesis's predominant focus on *The Tempest* in subsequent chapters, means that my exploration of it here will be comparatively swift.

Adès wanted to 'approach Shakespeare as if foreign', and avoid the 'one-dimensional' 'Ersatz' of Britten's *Dream*: in his words, he did not want to fall into the trap of '[h]ere's a famous speech by Shakespeare, let's make a nice tune and set it to that'.¹²⁸ There is something distinctly Freudian about the way Adès emphatically distances himself from Britten's alleged influence, disparaging his predecessor's work as childish and portraying himself as a more mature composer, particularly when adapting Shakespeare. In a way, he echoes Britten's own rejection of Vaughan Williams from several decades earlier.

I liked Britten's operas when I first heard them, at fourteen, fifteen years old, which I think is the right time [...] I find [*Peter Grimes*] an embarrassing opera from start to finish [...] It's a good idea for an afternoon radio play or something, but it's not *Wozzeck* is it? It wants to be. It doesn't have universal grandeur. It's like watching a TV drama [... In Britten] there is something

¹²⁵ Anon., 'The Tempest Triumphs', *The Guardian*, 12/02/2004. <http://tinyurl.com/cw8vwtf>. Accessed 31/03/2017.

¹²⁶ Erica Jeal, 'The Tempest', *The Guardian*, 14/03/2007. <http://tinyurl.com/qbdx8jv>. Accessed 31/03/2017; Alex Ross, 'Storm Warning', *The New Yorker*, 22/10/2012. <http://tinyurl.com/m8aq6w7>. Accessed 31/03/2017.

¹²⁷ Anon., 'Thomas Adès', *Faber Music*. <http://tinyurl.com/p8e5y4j>. Accessed 31/03/2017.

¹²⁸ Adès, in Adès and Tom Service, *Full of Noises* (London: Faber & Faber, 2012), 124-5.

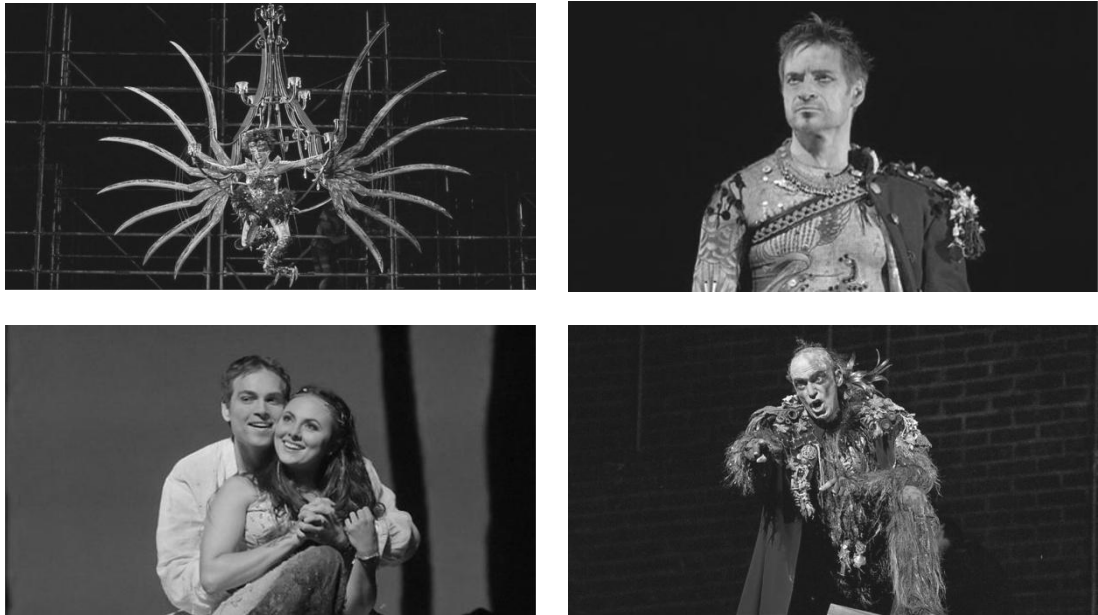


Figure 2.1. Adès, *The Tempest* – Metropolitan Opera, 2012 (Ken Howard).

unnatural in the relationship between the words and the music [...] It's too much like people singing a bad play in English [... *A Midsummer Night's Dream*] is like a school play [...] It's a string of very thin ideas one after another [...] There is something 'Let's make an opera' about the whole thing [...] I'm absolutely not going to compare myself to Benjamin Britten.¹²⁹

Given Adès's comments, it is unsurprising that Meredith Oakes's libretto for *The Tempest* is not a Britten-esque employment of Shakespeare's original text, but a rhyming couplet 'translation of Shakespeare [...] a translation that [is] faithful to the spirit and atmosphere of the original'.¹³⁰ In the words of Clements, the libretto is

not a reworking of Shakespeare's play, not an exercise in filleting, and not a commentary upon it either. It is best described as a paraphrase, a condensation of its extraordinary poetry into a language that is still rich, but is much more grounded in modern demotic. Memories of the original constantly break through – Ariel sings of 'Five fathoms deep' rather than 'Full fathom

¹²⁹ Ibid., 118-27.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 158.

five', while Caliban's island is 'full of noises/ sounds and voices'. The effect is to create a tension that depends upon some knowledge of the original.¹³¹

Nevertheless, Adès's Shakespeare opera was still reviewed by some critics as (to borrow his words) 'people singing a bad play in English'. Rupert Christiansen actually censures Adès for 'ducking the challenge that Britten rose to in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*'.¹³² Anthony Holden, too, criticises Oakes's libretto, calling it 'pop, pastiche paraphrase amid Bardic soundbites' and 'demotic doggerel': 'What is the point of adapting our greatest poet', asks Holden, 'if you're not going to use his words?'¹³³

Apart from its libretto, Adès's *Tempest* is perhaps most notable for its foregrounding of Ariel and Caliban, which concords with other stage and literary versions of the play from recent times.¹³⁴ Adès's Prospero is a 'fallible, vulnerable being. He can still conjure storms and immobilize enemies, but he no longer shapes the wills of others [...] As in many revisionist theatrical productions, this Prospero is a man of genius but also a brooding neurotic. In operatic terms, he comes to resemble one of Verdi's controlling fathers, or, even more closely, Wagner's disempowered Wotan'.¹³⁵ Ariel, as Tom Service notes, is integral to the opera: 'her presence [is] everywhere felt in the sonic aetheria of Adès's music for the island'.¹³⁶ Adès casts Ariel as a stratospheric coloratura soprano, with the extremity of this vocal range demonstrating Ariel's otherworldliness, the fluidity of this originally male character's gender, and possibly Ariel's distress at the exploitation of his/her labour by Prospero (see Example 2.20).

¹³¹ Clements, 'The Tempest'.

¹³² Rupert Christiansen, 'Blissfully Calm After the storm', *The Telegraph*, 11/02/2004. <http://tinyurl.com/potowwj>. Accessed 31/03/2017.

¹³³ Anthony Holden, 'A Truly Prosperous Prospero', *The Observer*, 15/02/2004. <http://tinyurl.com/pswko7h>. Accessed 31/03/2017.

¹³⁴ See 'Tempestuous times' I and II in Chapter 3 of this thesis for a discussion of *The Tempest*'s recent stage and literary history.

¹³⁵ Ross, 'Rich and Strange: Thomas Adès's *The Tempest*', *The New Yorker*, 01/03/2004. <http://tinyurl.com/6nraea>. Accessed 06/04/2017. See "'Prospero, man of power": Mangus-Freud Schoenberg' (Chapter 4) and 'Prospero's a fake' (Chapter 6) in this thesis for an analysis of Tippett's treatment of Prospero.

¹³⁶ Service, CD liner notes for Adès, *The Tempest* (EMI, 2009), 8.

84

rit. - - - - - molto

♩ = 120

ARIEL *ff*

Shall I be

Prosp.

foes shall mourn and his griev-ing fa-ther think him drowned

col 8 bassa

Ariel

paid? My wage I

ff *cantab.*

Prosp.

Paid? Dare you ask it?

f *mf* *p* *f* *pp* *p*

Example 2.20. Adès, *The Tempest*, I. 5, 'Shall I be paid?' (Ariel).

Adès also affords some of his most tonal and affecting music to Caliban, implicitly acknowledging the renovation of the character's reputation over the previous century, and encouraging an audience's sympathy for him: Andrew Porter even comments that 'Caliban is pretty well the protagonist' of Adès's opera.¹³⁷ Although Adès's music for *The Tempest* meanders around conventional tonality, Caliban's 'Friends don't fear' aria is in a blazing A major, a key which Adès considers the key of 'the Earth' – Caliban (earth) is thus musically

¹³⁷ Andrew Porter, 'Who Wakes to Dream Again', *The Times Literary Supplement* 5264 (2004), 2.

(*accel.*) *cresc.* ----- 170 (*accel. sempre*) -----

$\text{♩} = \text{♩} = \text{c.128}$ ($\text{♩} = 64$)

p *f*

It's a ghost, a ghost

sempl. (quasi senza vib.)

Friends don't fear The

f

It's a ghost

f

It's a ghost

p *f*

It's a ghost, a ghost

f

It's a ghost

ghost, It's a ghost

f

ghost, It's a ghost

ghost, It's a ghost

legatissimo, molto sost.

cresc.

p *trem. sempre*

12

6 6 *sim.*

8 *loco*

pp *mf* *pp*

Red.

sim. always
 $\frac{1}{2}$ *Red.*

Example 2.21. Adès, *The Tempest*, II. 2, 'Friends don't fear...' (Caliban).

contrasted with Ariel (air).¹³⁸ At the beginning of his aria (see Example 2.21), Caliban emerges from the midst of the court ensemble, singing a surprising high A that brings all the other characters to an immediate admiring standstill. The orchestra supports Caliban fully, suggesting a primal and special connection between Caliban and his island home. Different timbres emerge from the orchestra, and there are subtle fluctuations in dynamics and tempo, which, along with tremolando strings, encapsulate the ‘thousand twangling instruments’ of Shakespeare’s original speech. The effect of Caliban’s aria, in the words of Alex Ross, is ‘of light flooding the scene, of warmth rushing in’;¹³⁹ or, as Oakes’s Caliban puts it, ‘It’s as if the clouds had opened’. In a twist, Adès’s *Tempest* ends with Caliban, rather than Prospero, taking centre stage and inviting the audience to consider whether what they have seen was all a projection of his (or their) imagination (‘Who was here?/ Have they disappeared?’), while Ariel disappears into the ether, singing elongated vowel sounds.

Recent efforts: Goehr, Styles, and Tchaikowsky

In the past few years, three new Shakespeare-inspired British operas have emerged:¹⁴⁰ *Promised End* (based on *King Lear*), which was composed by Adès’s teacher, Alexander Goehr, and performed by English Touring Opera in 2010; Luke Styles’s *Macbeth*, performed by Glyndebourne and the Royal Opera House in 2015; and *The Merchant of Venice*, from Polish-born composer André Tchaikowsky, which was written in Britain between 1968 and 1982 and finally received its first UK performance from Welsh National Opera in September 2016, having initially been rejected by English National Opera at the time of its creation.¹⁴¹ Owing to

¹³⁸ Adès, in *Full of Noises*, 162.

¹³⁹ Ross, ‘Rich and Strange’. See ‘The soulove of Flora and Dov’ in the conclusion of this thesis for a short discussion of the importance of tonality in Adès’s *Tempest* and *The Knot Garden*.

¹⁴⁰ Unfortunately, Ryan Wigglesworth’s *The Winter’s Tale* (2017) was not released in time for inclusion in this thesis.

¹⁴¹ Tchaikowsky’s Polish nationality might prompt questions about *The Merchant of Venice*’s inclusion in an overview of modern British Shakespeare operas. Tchaikowsky, however, born in 1935, lived in Britain for almost half of his life, from 1960 until his death in 1982. His opera furthermore has an English libretto, and was intended for English National Opera. The short summary offered in this chapter also

a lack of scholarly and musical material on these operas, my discussion of them here will be comparatively brief – another thesis or monograph will perhaps be able to unravel one or all of them more thoroughly. Their presence here, however, aptly demonstrates Shakespeare's continued influence on the modern British operatic repertory; and even short explorations highlight the persistent centrality of issues such as psychology, gender, sexuality, and autobiography in British operatic versions of Shakespeare's work, along with the ongoing heightened scrutiny faced by his British musical adapters.

According to Goehr, his reasons for adapting *King Lear* were personal. The play, he states, is 'about old men who get it wrong when they have power and influence – and then get into a mess [...] As an incipient old man myself, that's what interested me about the story'.¹⁴² Goehr's *Promised End* (see Figure 2.2) is set to a condensed version of Shakespeare's play arranged by renowned Shakespeare scholar Frank Kermode. Goehr and Kermode chose to stick with Shakespeare's words, believing that Adès's *Tempest* was weakened by Oakes's libretto, which 'reduced the greatest poetry in the world to doggerel'.¹⁴³ Kent, Cornwall, and other smaller characters are, however, eliminated from the opera, while Cordelia and the Fool are combined into a single performing role (which is sometimes the case in stage performances of *Lear*), meaning that attention is focused on Lear, Gloucester, and their relationship with their respective children.

Goehr's and Kermode's adaptation was not, however, a critical success, for now familiar reasons. Christiansen, for instance, comments that the concision of the opera – which is structured in 24 short scenes – reduces *King Lear* 'to the dimensions of a cartoon, in which everything moves so fast that no character or emotion has any opportunity to establish itself, let alone develop [...] One is left with the frustrating sense that the score is enclosing rather than

makes plain how Tchaikovsky's opera shares a number of features with other British operas from this era – Britten's, Tippett's, and Oliver's in particular.

¹⁴² Goehr, quoted in Service, 'Alexander Goehr Takes on *King Lear* for His Swansong', *The Guardian*, 23/09/2010. <http://tinyurl.com/pt2vu4x>. Accessed 31/03/2017.

¹⁴³ Ibid.



Figure 2.2. Goehr, *Promised End* – ETO, 2010 (ETO).

enlarging the text'.¹⁴⁴ Other reviewers disapproved of how understanding the opera seemingly required some prior knowledge of Shakespeare's play. Claire Seymour, for example, argues that the 're-ordering of various episodes destroys the narrative coherence and makes it near impossible for anyone lacking knowledge of the original play to follow the psychological development', while Clements states that '*Promised End* seems more like a commentary on the play than an operatic version of it, and presupposes far too much knowledge of the original'.¹⁴⁵ Again, the decision to meddle musically with Shakespeare was criticised. Clements insists that 'the speeches in *Lear* were meant to be spoken not sung, and the wrought arioso of Goehr's vocal writing is no substitute for their meaning and expressive power'.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, Seymour

¹⁴⁴ Christiansen, 'Promised End, ETO, Linbury Studio Theatre, Review', *The Telegraph*, 11/10/10. <http://tinyurl.com/owtsjd8>. Accessed 31/03/2017.

¹⁴⁵ Claire Seymour, 'Promised End – English Touring Opera', *Opera Today*, 12/10/2010. <http://tinyurl.com/osdp8ym>. Accessed 31/03/2017; Clements, 'Promised End', *The Observer*, 10/10/2010. <http://tinyurl.com/naydrfw>. Accessed 31/03/2017.

¹⁴⁶ Clements, 'Promised End'.

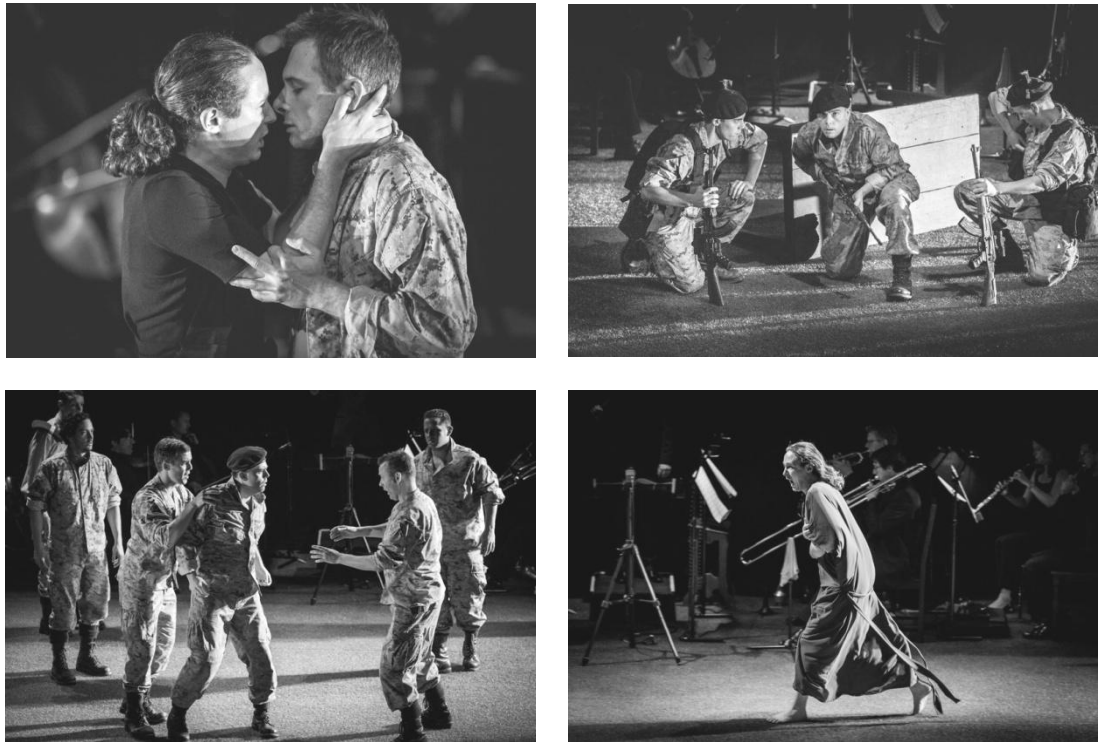


Figure 2.3. Styles, *Macbeth* – ROH, 2015 (Robert Workman).

states that ‘Goehr’s rather spiritless arioso simply does not convey the rich depths and meanings embodied in the sounds and rhythms of the spoken play’, which ‘interrogates essential questions of human existence’.¹⁴⁷

Luke Styles’s radical distillation of *Macbeth* (see Figure 2.3) is ‘a nimble, intense 70-minute drama focusing on the psychological over the supernatural’.¹⁴⁸ Most notably, Styles’s concentration on his eponymous protagonist’s psychology saw Shakespeare’s witches, the instigators of the play’s action, excluded from the opera entirely. Intriguingly, like in Oliver’s *Timon*, the cast for Styles’s *Macbeth* – including, surprisingly, Lady Macbeth and Lady Macduff – is all male, apparently in a reflection of Shakespearian theatrical practice. Arguably, this decision also emphasises the militaristic machismo of Macbeth’s world; this theme was made particularly clear in the opera’s initial run, which set the action in a modern British army

¹⁴⁷ Seymour, ‘*Promised End*’.

¹⁴⁸ Charlotte Valori, ‘Sound and Fury: Luke Styles’s *Macbeth*, Glyndebourne’, *Bachtrack*, 12/09/2015. <http://tinyurl.com/q8ruf4b>. Accessed 31/03/2017.

camp in the Middle East. Casting Lady Macbeth as a tenor arguably reduces her isolation and otherness within the drama, but might equally prompt rumination on any number of latent issues, such as her gender construction, homosexual tensions in Shakespeare's original, and homosociality and homosexual practice in modern military environments – issues that Shakespeare scholarship and stage performances have so far left largely unexplored.¹⁴⁹

Strangely, however, Lady Macbeth's famous 'unsex me here' line is omitted from Ted Huffman's libretto, seemingly reducing the potency of this casting decision somewhat; she is also musically associated with the traditionally feminine musical sounds of flute and harp.¹⁵⁰ Perhaps, however, the combination of feminine musical timbres and male voice type 'unsexes' Lady Macbeth in a non-linguistic fashion, and encapsulates her aggressive and unnerving combination of feminine and masculine traits. The decision to omit Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene might also have surprised audiences, but the opera's most audacious adjustment occurs at its end, when Macbeth survives and sings Malcolm's invitation 'to see us crowned at Scone'. Charlotte Valori suggests that this ending means Macbeth 'has been effectively reincarnated as the victorious Malcolm'.¹⁵¹ In contrast to Seymour's comments on *Promised End*, Valori compliments Style's alterations, since an audience's familiarity with Macbeth can be assumed, and actually 'makes games of this sort [...] possible'.¹⁵² Like Goehr, however, Styles was predictably criticised by some reviewers for writing unmemorable music that hampered Shakespeare's text; according to George Hall, for example, 'instead of defining the individuality of the characters, [Style's music] feels generic'.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Stephen Orgel, for one, notes how *Macbeth* has an 'astonishingly male-oriented and misogynistic tone' (*The Authentic Shakespeare and Other Problems of the Early Modern Stage* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 69. For a discussion of homosociality in *Macbeth*, see Rebecca Ann Bach, 'The "Peerless" Macbeth: Friendship and Family in *Macbeth*', in Nick Moschovakis (ed.), *Macbeth: New Critical Essays* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 104-17.

¹⁵⁰ Barry Millington, 'Macbeth, Opera Review: Not the Scottish Play as We Know It', *Evening Standard*, 10/10/2015. <http://tinyurl.com/ohelsnq>. Accessed 31/03/2017.

¹⁵¹ Valori, 'Sound and Fury'.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ George Hall, 'Macbeth Review – an Audacious Operatic Reduction', *The Guardian*, 10/09/2015. <http://tinyurl.com/pybcx35>. Accessed 31/03/2017.



Figure 2.4. Tchaikowsky, *The Merchant of Venice* – WNO, 2016 (Johann Persson).

Tchaikowsky's *The Merchant of Venice* (see Figure 2.4) also received some criticism for its setting of Shakespeare's words. Glyn Pursglove, for instance, writes that Tchaikowsky, 'at his best [...] writes a vocal line which respects the emphases and patterns of Shakespeare's verse and uses the orchestra to "colour" the text emotionally. Sometimes, however, the music overwhelms the text and robs it of most of its verbal power'.¹⁵⁴ Generally, however, Tchaikowsky's opera was received warmly, with John O'Brien's English libretto – based on Shakespeare's words – garnering unusually high praise. Pursglove, for example, describes the libretto as 'a masterly piece of reduction' that 'omits material deemed redundant and likely to obscure what really matters in the play. The result is that we can see more clearly, such obfuscations removed, what is most important'.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Glyn Pursglove, 'André Tchaikowsky Makes an Important Contribution to Shakespearean Opera with His *Merchant of Venice*', *Seen and Heard International*, 20/09/2016. <http://tinyurl.com/jlkgpqc>. Accessed 31/03/2017.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

One significant element highlighted by O'Brien and Tchaikowsky is the gendered nature of the play's two locations, Venice and Belmont. WNO Artistic Director David Pountney states that 'the world of Venice' – like Timon's Athens – 'is male, mercantile, malevolent, intolerant, and rooted in money'.¹⁵⁶ Belmont, meanwhile, is 'female, exotic, fanciful, and rooted in love and *music*'.¹⁵⁷ As Pursglove notes, Tchaikowsky articulates this gendered contrast musically. 'The music throughout most of the scenes in Venice [is] edgily aggressive, with prominent writing for the brass', and dissonant harmonies.¹⁵⁸ The music for the scenes in Belmont, meanwhile, is 'much smoother and more lyrical, [with] strings and woodwinds, rather than brass, being foregrounded'.¹⁵⁹ Portia's transformation into a 'man' in Venice, both through her dress and her cruel attitude towards Shylock during Antonio's trial, is therefore given an extra musical dimension, with her personality shown to be a mere reflection of her surroundings. Portia's simultaneous loss of humanity and adoption of the Venetian musical language reveals a distasteful, hitherto masked 'male' aspect of her personality, and, in the words of Pursglove, makes it seem as if she is 'infected by the very air of [Venice]'.¹⁶⁰

Tchaikowsky's setting of Shakespeare, like those of several other composers in this chapter, also seemingly allowed him to explore aspects of his own personality and life. O'Brien,

¹⁵⁶ David Pountney, 'Shakespeare and Opera', WNO *Shakespeare 400* programme (Autumn 2016), 6.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. For discussions of gender, homosociality, homosexuality, and homophobia in *The Merchant of Venice*, see: Edward J. Geisweidt, 'Antonio's Claim: Triangulated Desire and Queer Kinship in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*', *Shakespeare* 5, no. 4 (2009), 338-54; Seymour Kleinberg, 'The Merchant of Venice: The Homosexual as Anti-Semite in Nascent Capitalism', in Stuart Kellogg (ed.), *Essays on Gay Literature* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1985), 113-26; Alessandra Marzola, 'Which Is the Woman Here, and Which the Man?: Economy and Gender in *The Merchant of Venice*', *European Journal of English Studies* 1, no. 3 (1997), 291-309; Karen Newman, 'Portia's Ring: Unruly Women and Structures of Exchange in *The Merchant of Venice*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1987), 19-33; Susan Oldrieve, 'Marginalized Voices in *The Merchant of Venice*', *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature* 5, no. 1 (1993), 87-105; James O'Rourke, 'Racism and Homophobia in *The Merchant of Venice*', *ELH* 70, no. 3 (2003), 375-97; Steve Patterson, 'The Bankruptcy of Homoerotic Amity in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (1999), 9-32; Joseph Pequigney, 'The Two Antonios and Same-Sex Love in *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice*', *English Literary Renaissance* 22, no. 2 (1992), 201-21; and Alan Sinfield, 'How to Read *The Merchant of Venice* Without Being Heterosexist', in John Drakakis and Terence Hawkes (eds.), *Alternative Shakespeares 2* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 122-39.

¹⁵⁸ Pursglove, 'André Tchaikowsky...'

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

for instance, believes that setting *The Merchant* allowed Tchaikowsky – who was Jewish and a survivor of the Warsaw ghetto – ‘to look at a whole lot of fairly crucial things in his life’ through the character of Shylock, the ostracised Jewish merchant.¹⁶¹ As well as drawing on his Jewish background for his opera, it is also possible that Tchaikowsky – like Britten, Tippett, and Oliver – in some way reflected his experience of homosexuality in the mid-to-late twentieth century in this work. His Antonio, in line with recent scholarly and theatrical interpretations, is openly gay, with an unrequited love for Bassanio lying at the root of his melancholy.¹⁶² Like Britten’s Oberon, Tchaikowsky’s Antonio is a countertenor, with his unusual voice apparently reflective of his ‘outsider’ sexuality. ‘Even more important’ from an autobiographical perspective, according to Tchaikowsky’s friend Pountney, is that Antonio, ‘like Tchaikowsky himself, [is] depressive’.¹⁶³ Pountney therefore considers Tchaikowsky’s Antonio to be a ‘sympathetic personal self-portrait of [Tchaikowsky’s own] private mental state’, while his Shylock is ‘an image of the mountain of cliché, prejudice, and preconception that [Tchaikowsky’s] origins heaped upon him’.¹⁶⁴ This *Merchant*, then, like several modern Shakespearian and non-Shakespearian British literary operas – *Peter Grimes*, *The Knot Garden*, and *Timon of Athens* among them – particularly highlights the experience of ‘male character[s] trapped by social conventions [...] manipulated and misunderstood by those around [them]’, and there appears to be some link between Tchaikowsky’s artistic creations and their creator.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ John O’Brien, quoted on *andretchaikowsky.com*. <http://tinyurl.com/z9nrf4b>. Accessed 31/03/2017.

¹⁶² See n. 158, above.

¹⁶³ In a potential nod to *The Knot Garden*, the WNO production of Tchaikowsky’s *Merchant* began in a psychoanalyst’s office. The production furthermore made use of a labyrinth garden setting for Portia’s casket challenge in Act II.

¹⁶⁴ Pountney, ‘Shakespeare and Opera’, 7.

¹⁶⁵ David Beard, ‘The Shadow of Opera: Dramatic Narrative and Musical Discourse in *Gawain*’, *Twentieth-Century Music* 2, no. 2 (2005), 194.

Shakespeare's work has helped to shape the face of British opera over the last century, still does so today, and presumably will continue to do so in forthcoming years, so long as his reputation as Britain's foremost cultural icon remains intact. British librettists and composers inevitably invite intense scrutiny upon themselves when they engage with Shakespeare's work in his home country and mother tongue, and the myriad criticisms seen in this chapter from music journalists and scholars indicate that the creators of these operas are usually left in a lose-lose situation. Damned if they stick with Shakespeare's words and spoil them with music (Holst, Britten, Searle, Goehr, Styles, Tchaikowsky), and damned if they dare to change them (Tippett, Adès). Nevertheless, the creators of modern British opera have continually returned to these plays, eager to exploit their continuing relevance, latent themes, and the undoubted popularity of Shakespeare's work with audiences.

These works, like innumerable other Shakespeare operas, are far more than just 'cakes and ale' music combined with 'virtuous' readings of Shakespeare. British adapters of Shakespeare's work – just like their international counterparts, it must be said – have rarely been afraid to twist Shakespeare's plays to suit their needs and their time. These works, therefore, should not be left out of the narratives of Shakespearian performance or adaptation, any more than they should be left out of the histories of Shakespearian opera or British music. They offer considerable insight into their socio-political situations, and rarely lag behind their theatrical or screen equivalents in their interpretations of Shakespeare. The foregoing overview has demonstrated that even those operas that have been received as relatively unproblematic adaptations – such as *Sir John in Love*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Tempest* – actually proffer several moments of radical interpretation. Furthermore, it is the music of these operas that most often reveals the more unconventional aspects of their Shakespearian readings.

Issues of gender and sexuality have been at the forefront of the majority of modern British Shakespeare operas, from Holst's exploration into post-war gender roles and Vaughan Williams's suggestive *Merry Wives*, right through to Adès's androgynous alien Ariel and Style's all-male *Macbeth*. It is important not to overstate the role of British operas in

highlighting issues of gender and sexuality in Shakespeare. Undoubtedly, these themes are already a feature of Shakespeare's work, a fact that literary critics have thoroughly recognised in the past few decades. Furthermore, stage and screen presentations of Shakespeare's work have likewise highlighted gender and sexuality, as the overview of *The Tempest* in the next chapter will demonstrate. Yet it is remarkable that modern British Shakespeare operas have generally confronted these issues in an uncompromising and sometimes controversial fashion. In some ways, the lineage of modern British Shakespeare operas is also a potted overview of ideas about gender and sexuality in twentieth and twenty-first century Britain, and the analyses in this chapter have demonstrated how composers such as Vaughan Williams, Britten, Oliver, and Tchaikowsky have used the subversive potential of music – in other words, its ability to describe abstract concepts and intellectual processes in a non-linguistic fashion – to undercut and support dramatic action, and to interrogate sexual desire, heteronormativity, and gender identity.

In order to retain a sense of wider musicological and historical perspective when discussing British Shakespeare operas (and music more generally), it is also important not to over-speculate about, or place too much emphasis on, potential autobiographical elements. Nevertheless, it appears that several of these pieces – including Holst's, Britten's, Goehr's, and Tchaikowsky's – might incorporate some degree of personal experience. They therefore invite a wider consideration of biographical factors in twentieth-century British operas, opera in general, and art *tout court*. In particular, Oliver's *Timon of Athens* seems to be a piece built upon deep personal investment, even if, as the preceding discussion of this opera indicates, it is difficult to make such statements with any degree of absolute certainty. *Timon* might well reflect its composer's life, character, or beliefs in some fashion, but it is also a piece with far wider resonance. It is, in sum, a personally informed, historically contingent meditation on the effects of the AIDS crisis, homosociality, and patriarchal capitalism in the early 1990s. Like Tippett's *The Knot Garden*, many of the operas discussed in this chapter, and many others throughout

history, it therefore embodies a tension between the particular and the ‘universal’, the personal and the public.¹⁶⁶

Timon is also an example of a recent British Shakespeare opera that has, for whatever reason, sunk without trace. Sometimes, like in the cases of Oliver, Searle, and Goehr, operatic adaptations of Shakespeare have made little impact on the British or international repertoires. Other works, however, such as *Sir John in Love*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *The Tempest*, have garnered considerable acclaim and a foothold in the British and international repertoires, and have helped to define the course of British music and opera over the past hundred years. The lineage of Vaughan Williams, Britten, and Adès is arguably not unique to British Shakespeare opera, and is probably indicative of a general popular understanding of the historiography of British music. These composers themselves seem to acknowledge their special status through a rejection of their predecessor: Vaughan Williams rejects Verdi’s *Falstaff* in order to reclaim Shakespeare and establish a distinctively British school of opera and music; Britten then rejects Vaughan Williams’s parochialism and aligns himself with Elgar’s international outlook (albeit while avoiding any hint of Elgar’s musical style); and Adès then rejects Britten’s ubiquity and methods, and emphasises his own individuality. Undoubtedly, the ‘anxiety of influence’, to borrow Harold Bloom’s famous phrase, would appear to be an integral feature of twentieth-century British music.¹⁶⁷ The mid-century ‘Manchester School’, for example, were just as eager as Adès to escape the shadow of Britten (and, to a lesser extent, Tippett), as the next chapter will demonstrate.

Somewhere in between the poles of blazing success and abject failure, and outside of the main artery of British music and Shakespearian opera, lie idiosyncratic adaptations such as *At The Boar’s Head* and *The Knot Garden*, written by composers who sit in the shadow of a more famous contemporary. While these works might not have acquired quite the same level of

¹⁶⁶ See the conclusion of this thesis for a consideration of *The Knot Garden*’s blend of personal and ‘universal’ features.

¹⁶⁷ See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

fame or regularity of performance, they have still inspired a certain degree of critical admiration and scholarly exploration, and in their own way highlight critical junctures in British music, opera, and society. Arguably, it is these pieces that are now in most need of further investigation, in order to expand, complement, and challenge the main narratives of British music, opera, and Shakespearian opera, and to move towards a more dialectical and constellatory understanding of recent British musical history, rather than a linear one based on large-scale, commercially successful works, or one divided into ‘pre-Britten’ and ‘post-Britten’. Modern British music is a field that requires considerable scholarly expansion and refreshment, and further illuminating work on the music of Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Britten, Birtwistle, and Adès is of course welcome.¹⁶⁸ Highlighting overlooked works in the narrow sub-topic of ‘British Shakespeare opera’, however, draws attention to the pressing requirement to explore ignored works in recent British opera more generally, such as those by Holst, Walton, Lutyens, Tippett, Maxwell Davies, Goehr, Turnage, Weir, MacMillan, and Benjamin, among others.

There has been little detailed exploration of any of the operas mentioned in this chapter (Britten’s excepted), and these works require far more of the type of multidisciplinary scholarly attention outlined in Chapter 1 and employed here in condensed form. Unfortunately, exploring all of them in full is well beyond the scope of a single thesis, so it is now necessary to move on and focus on one representative work for the first stage of this broader process. Tippett’s *The*

¹⁶⁸ Recent publications on Elgar include: Byron Adams (ed.), *Edward Elgar and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Daniel Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and Matthew Riley, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Recent publications on Vaughan Williams include: Alain Frogley (ed.), *Vaughan Williams Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Frogley and Aidan J. Thomson (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Vaughan William* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Recent publications on Britten include: Brett, *Music and Sexuality in Britten*; John Bridcut, *Britten’s Children* (London: Faber & Faber, 2011); Cooke (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Britten* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Paul Kildea, *Benjamin Britten: A Life in the Twentieth Century* (London: Allen Lane, 2013); Neil Powell, *Benjamin Britten: A Life for Music* (London: Hutchinson, 2013); Philip Rupprecht (ed.), *Rethinking Britten* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Lucy Walker (ed.), *Benjamin Britten: New Perspectives on his Life and Music* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009). Recent publications on Birtwistle include: Robert Adlington, *The Music of Harrison Birtwistle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); David Beard, *Harrison Birtwistle’s Operas and Music Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Beard, Kenneth Gloag, and Nicholas Jones (eds.), *Harrison Birtwistle Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); and Jonathan Cross, *Harrison Birtwistle: Man, Mind, Music* (London: Faber, 2000).

Knot Garden has been chosen for this purpose, because it particularly encapsulates many of the highlighted themes in British Shakespeare opera and musicology, including issues relating to Shakespearian adaptation and alteration, British operatic and cultural narratives, British and global social history, gender and sexuality, and composer autobiography. Furthermore, out of all the aforementioned composers, it is arguably Tippett who has been affected most obviously by the accepted historiographies of twentieth-century British music, and whose Shakespearian work is in most urgent need of recognition, exploration, and re-evaluation. The subsequent chapters of this thesis will attempt to begin the task of addressing these absences in the Tippett literature.

Chapter 3

THE TEMPEST AND TIPPETT: LACUNAE

Tippett considered Shakespeare ‘absolutely universal [...] an enormous cauldron who we pour things into and take things out of’.¹ One of the main models for Tippett’s first opera, *The Midsummer Marriage* (1955), was Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. As Ian Kemp points out, Tippett’s opera ‘has two pairs of lovers in a magic wood [...] interweaves fantasy and reality, and [...] capitalizes on the idea that “midsummer madness” signifies a willingness to accept the workings of the imagination. It is also a dream’.² Of all Shakespeare’s plays, however, Tippett was seemingly most fascinated by *The Tempest*, from the 1960s – the period of his most intense engagement – almost to his death. In 1962, he composed incidental music for a production of the play at the Old Vic theatre, a project that also resulted in *Songs for Ariel* for high voice and piano. He worked on his *Tempest* opera between 1966 and 1969, and *The Knot Garden* premiered at Covent Garden on 2 December 1970. *Songs for Dov* – a composition for tenor and chamber orchestra chronicling the further adventures of the Ariel character from *The Knot Garden* – also premiered during this year. Prospero’s masque in *The Tempest* provides lines for a reconciliatory chorus in Act III of Tippett’s fourth opera, *The Ice Break* (1977): ‘Spring come to you at the farthest/ In the very end of harvest’. Finally, in 1995, Tippett came out of a three-year retirement to write *Caliban’s Song*, his last ever composition, for baritone and piano, as part of the BBC’s tercentenary commemorations of Purcell’s death.³

¹ Michael Tippett, quoted in Meirion Bowen, *Michael Tippett* (London: Robson, 1982), 71.

² Ian Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music* (London: Eulenberg, 1984), 217.

³ Jonathan Rees, ‘Chronology of Tippett’s Life and Career’, in Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Michael Tippett* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), xxx. See “‘We sense the magic net...’: Holy Theatre’ in Chapter 6 of this thesis for Tippett’s thoughts on the significance to modern times of Caliban’s ‘Be not afraid...’ speech.

To date, there has been no extended consideration of Tippett's relationship with Shakespeare, even though he cited the playwright as one of his main inspirations and engaged with his work at several points throughout his career. Furthermore, although Tippett's personal fascination with *The Tempest* is noteworthy and intriguing, it has yet to be addressed by the literature on this composer. The second half of this thesis will attempt to answer the question of what Shakespeare and *The Tempest* meant to Tippett as part of its broader exploration of *The Knot Garden*. Before beginning this task, however, it is necessary to explicate other lacunae in the Tippett literature that require attention. Conspicuously, *The Knot Garden* and its composer are usually only fleetingly mentioned in scholarship that covers *The Tempest*, British music, and opera at this time. This chapter will provide an overview of current narratives surrounding both *The Tempest* and British opera during this period, and consider a number of possible reasons for *The Knot Garden*'s regular absence from the literature. It will also explain why a detailed, interdisciplinary reading of *The Knot Garden*, which particularly interrogates issues of gender, sexuality, and psychoanalysis, and situates the opera within broader musical, cultural, and historical narratives, is a pressing requirement. Such a reading, in short, should allow for more thorough, constellatory understandings of the meanings of Shakespeare and *The Tempest* in modern times, and the history of British music.

Tempestuous times I: colonialism and postcolonialism

From one perspective, *The Tempest*'s prominence in Tippett's output is not that surprising, since, over the last few centuries, *The Tempest* has proved to be one of the most enduringly popular, malleable, and hotly debated of all Shakespeare's plays around the world. Part of the reason why this thesis focuses on a *Tempest* adaptation is that this particular play, even by the standards of Shakespeare's work in general, currently holds a distinctive and somewhat privileged position within both British and global culture.⁴ In the words of Virginia Mason

⁴ A remarkable example of the play's current prominence in Britain was its role in the celebrations of Britishness that took place throughout the Cultural Olympiad in 2012 and peaked with the London

Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, *The Tempest* ‘has been a play for all eras, all continents and many ideologies [...] Rarely, if ever, has a single play inspired so many painters and poets, musicians and film makers, novelists and political writers, to produce such a variety of representations’.⁵ The play’s hermetic treatment of both time and space makes it stand out within the Shakespeare canon, and undoubtedly forms part of its appeal for adapters.⁶ Auden, for instance, who wrote a ‘poetic commentary’ on *The Tempest, The Sea and the Mirror* (1944), describes the play as a ‘mythopoeic work [...] inspiring people to go on for themselves [...] to make up episodes that [Shakespeare] as it were, forgot to tell us’.⁷ If, as Sanders attests, Shakespeare’s oeuvre functions for the modern world ‘in a remarkably similar way to the communal, shared, transcultural, and transhistorical art forms of myth and fairy tale’, then *The Tempest* is arguably today’s predominant and quintessential Shakespearian myth.⁸

The Knot Garden emerged in a time when global critical, artistic, and public fascination with *The Tempest* was at a zenith, in an era of immense cultural and socio-political upheaval across the world, often involving the dismantling of Western empires. For at least the first two

Olympic and Paralympic Games ceremonies. See Erin Sullivan, ‘Olympic Performance in the Year of Shakespeare’, in Paul Edmondson, Paul Prescott, and Sullivan (eds.), *A Year of Shakespeare: Re-living the World Shakespeare Festival* (London: Arden, 2013), 3-11.

⁵ Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, in Vaughan and Vaughan (eds.), *The Arden Shakespeare (Third Series): The Tempest* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 1 & 76. Chaikovsky’s, Sibelius’s, Tippett’s, and Adès’s *Tempest* pieces have already received mention in the course of this thesis, but there have been a few other notable musical *Tempests* over the years. In the 1940s, Vaughan Williams declared that the conclusion to his Sixth Symphony might be best summarised by Prospero’s lines ‘We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded by a sleep’ (quoted in Byron Adams, ‘The Stages of Revision of Vaughan Williams’s Sixth Symphony’, *The Musical Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (1989), 382). Luciano Berio, for his 1984 ‘azione musicale’ *Un re in ascolto* (*A King Listens*), drew on a diverse variety of sources, including *The Tempest* and Auden’s *The Sea and The Mirror*, and conferred the name Prospero upon his lead character. Michael Nyman, who wrote the score for Peter Greenaway’s *Tempest* film, *Prospero’s Books*, would later write an opera-ballet on *The Tempest: Noises, Sounds & Sweet Airs* (1991). The Metropolitan Opera performed *The Enchanted Island*, a pastiche of Baroque opera based on *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, in 2011/12.

⁶ While several Shakespeare comedies take place mostly in one location and across a limited span of time, only *The Comedy of Errors* comes close to *The Tempest*’s Aristotelian unity of time, place, and action. This light-hearted early play, however, perhaps does not prompt the same level of intrigue as *The Tempest*, since it contains fewer backstories, and everything returns to normal once its farcical ‘mistaken identity’ plot concludes.

⁷ W. H. Auden, *The Sea and the Mirror*, ed. Arthur Kirsch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), xi.

⁸ Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 45.

centuries of its existence, *The Tempest* was considered ‘Prospero’s play’.⁹ According to Vaughan and Vaughan, audiences would have ‘accepted Prospero’s wisdom and authority and interpreted the play through his eyes’.¹⁰ Romantic critics, for instance, saw Prospero as a portrait of his creator, who encapsulated the imagination and poetry that they so admired in Shakespeare. For writers such as Coleridge and Hazlitt, Prospero (that is to say, Shakespeare), was ‘a genius, an artist who understood the truths of human nature and whose words could arbitrate morality and wisdom’.¹¹ During the Victorian age, however, an era when ‘the slave was often more important than the master’, Caliban, Prospero’s ‘savage and deformed slave’, began to supersede his master as the most discussed character in *The Tempest*.¹² The reason for this development was that ‘Caliban’s struggle for knowledge and independence mirror[ed] Victorian notions of progress, in which humankind inched towards nineteenth-century European civilization’s full flowering’.¹³ According to Stephen Orgel, ‘as the [Victorian] age progressed, [Caliban] grew more malign, but also less diabolical, more elementally human, at once more richly comic and more deeply tragic’.¹⁴

The twentieth century largely saw a continuation of the nineteenth century’s sympathy for Caliban. In *The Sea and the Mirror*, for example, Auden presents Caliban as wise, artistic, eloquent, and contemplative. Auden’s lengthy poem ends with an ‘extravagantly inventive speech in which the uncivilised Caliban delivers a disquisition [to the audience] on art in a prose style based on the later manner of Henry James’.¹⁵ By contrast, Auden was not sympathetic towards Prospero, whom he portrays as self-absorbed, pensive, and fallible. According to Auden, Prospero’s act of forgiveness at the end of *The Tempest* ‘is more the contemptuous

⁹ Vaughan and Vaughan, *The Tempest*, 84.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹² *Ibid.*, 91.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁴ Stephen Orgel, in Orgel (ed.), *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Tempest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 73.

¹⁵ Kirsch, ‘Introduction’, in Auden, *The Sea and the Mirror*, vii-viii.

pardon of a man who knows that he has his enemies completely at his mercy than a heartfelt reconciliation’:

One must admire Prospero because of his talents and his strength; one cannot possibly like him [...] It never occurs to him that he, too, might have erred and be in need of pardon [...] We cannot help feeling that Prospero is largely responsible for [Caliban’s] corruption, and that, in the debate between them, Caliban has the best of the argument.¹⁶

The debate over Prospero’s treatment of Caliban became especially fierce during the 1950s and 1960s, when colonial powers were being overthrown in Africa and the Caribbean, and the Civil Rights Movement was gathering pace in the United States. *The Tempest* was something of a literary battleground at this time, with scholars and practitioners on both sides of the racial and colonial divide examining the relationship between the colonising Prospero and his two slaves in considerable detail. In 1950, the French psychoanalyst Octave Mannoni published his book *Psychologie de la colonisation*. In 1956, this book was translated into English and given a provocative new title: *Prospero and Caliban*.¹⁷ Mannoni proposes a psychological theory of reciprocally dependent personality types generated by colonialism, using Prospero and Caliban as prototypes. He contrasts the Prospero (or inferiority) complex with the Caliban (or dependency) complex, characterising the coloniser as ‘domineering, callous [and] neurotic’, and the colonised as ‘submissive [...] racked by ambivalence over their acceptance of Western values and their rejection of indigenous culture, and subconsciously resentful of their conquerors and even themselves’.¹⁸ Mannoni asserts that, in *The Tempest*, ‘Caliban does not complain of being exploited; he complains of being betrayed’.¹⁹

¹⁶ Auden, ‘Excerpt from “Balaam and the Ass”’ (1954), in *The Sea and the Mirror*, 57-8.

¹⁷ Mannoni was a student of Lacan, whose psychoanalytic theories will be used extensively in the second half of this thesis.

¹⁸ Vaughan and Vaughan, *The Tempest*, 104.

¹⁹ Octave Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, trans. Pamela Powesland (New York: Praeger, 1964), 106.

Soon after the publication of Mannoni's work, productions and studies influenced by his theories began to proliferate. In 1970, for example, Jonathan Miller directed a Mannoni-inspired production of *The Tempest* at the Mermaid Theatre in London.²⁰ Unsurprisingly, however, intellectuals from Africa and the Caribbean repudiated Mannoni's ideas, perceiving how easily Europeans seeking to thwart decolonisation could exploit Mannoni's paradigm. According to Rob Nixon, 'the insinuation that Caliban was incapable of surviving on his own and did not even aspire to such independence in the first place caused considerable affront and helped spur Third Worlders to mount adversarial interpretations of [*The Tempest*] which rehabilitated Caliban into a heroic figure, inspired by noble rage to oust the interloping Prospero from his island' (see Figure 3.1).²¹ During the 1960s and early 1970s, a succession of writers – including John Pepper Clarke, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, David Wallace, Fernández Retamar, George Lamming, Aimé Césaire, and Kamau Brathwaite – transformed Shakespeare's play in a variety of formats as a way of rebutting notions of indigenous inferiority and 'amplifying their calls for decolonization within the bounds of the dominant cultures'.²² *The Tempest* became 'a founding text in an oppositional lineage which issued from a geopolitically and historically specific set of cultural ambitions', and 'came to serve as a Trojan horse, whereby cultures barred from the citadel of "universal" Western values could win entry and assail those global pretensions from within'.²³

²⁰ David L. Hirst, *The Tempest: Text and Performance* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 50.

²¹ Rob Nixon, 'Caribbean and African Appropriations of *The Tempest*', *Critical Inquiry* 13, no. 3 (1987), 564. See also Alden T. Vaughan, 'Caliban in the "Third World": Shakespeare's Savage as Sociopolitical Symbol', *The Massachusetts Review* 29, no. 2 (1988), 289-313.

²² Nixon, 557-8. See also Aimé Césaire, *Une Tempête* (1969), trans. Richard Miller (New York: TCG, 2002); Roberto Fernandez Retamar, 'Cuba Hasta Fidel', *Bohemia* 61 (1969), 84-97, and 'Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America', *The Massachusetts Review* 15, no. 1/2 (1974), 7-72; George Lamming, *Water with Berries* (1971) (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2016); Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *Islands* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); John Pepper Clark, 'The Legacy of Caliban', *Black Orpheus* 2 (1968), 16-39; Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture, and Politics* (London: Heinemann, 1972); and David Wallace, *Do You Love Me Master?* (Lusaka: NEZCAM, 1977).

²³ Nixon, 'Caribbean and African Appropriations of *The Tempest*', 557 & 578.



Figure 3.1. Caliban in Aimé Césaire's *Une Tempête* (1969),
from the front cover of the English translation (New York: TCG, 2002).

It was not only in colonised countries that the relationship between Caliban and Prospero was dramatically reimagined, however. In 1968, Peter Brook directed a nightmarish, part-improvised *Tempest* at the London Roundhouse. In all likelihood, this visceral interpretation was at least partly inspired by the radical Shakespeare criticism of Jan Kott. Brook endorsed Kott's interpretations of Shakespeare's plays by writing a foreword to Kott's influential 1964 monograph *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, and also drew on the critic's work for his other Shakespearian productions from this period, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (RSC, 1970) and *King Lear* (film, 1971). Kott's study of *The Tempest* ridicules common Romantic assumptions that Prospero's island is an idyllic utopia and the play is about forgiveness and reconciliation. Instead, he sees the island as the site for a series of violent struggles for power: Antonio's usurping of Prospero in Milan; Prospero's defeating of Sycorax; Prospero's enslavement of Ariel and Caliban; Caliban's attempt to overthrow Prospero with Trinculo and Stephano; and Alonso's and Sebastian's plot to murder Antonio for the dukedom

of Milan. Kott describes Caliban's and Prospero's story as 'one of the main, basic – almost obsessional – Shakespearian themes: that of a good and bad ruler, of the usurper who deprives the legal prince of his throne'.²⁴ He grants Caliban a sympathetic reading, describing him as 'one of the greatest and most disturbing of Shakespearian creations [...] a man, not a monster [...] Only Caliban has Shakespeare given passion and a full life history [...] Caliban's history is a chapter from the history of mankind'.²⁵

According to Brook, one of the key questions explored by his production was 'what is the theme of monster about?'²⁶ The response offered suggested that Prospero, like Caliban, was quite capable of acting monstrously, and was arguably responsible for his slave's descent into immorality. Prospero's first interaction with Caliban illustrated some of Caliban's first lines in Shakespeare's play:

You taught me language, and my profit on't
Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language

The Tempest, I. 2.

Prospero then taught Caliban pairs of words such as 'I' and 'you', and 'master' and 'slave', inflicting pain on Caliban to illustrate the final binary with a 'sadistic thumb wrestle'.²⁷ Then, in Margaret Croyden's words, 'Caliban escapes Prospero, climbs the scaffolds, jumps to the platforms, rapes Miranda, and tyrannises the whole island'.²⁸ Prospero's mistreatment of Caliban was therefore portrayed as the instigation for Caliban's bestial nature being unleashed:

²⁴ Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, 2nd ed., trans. Boleslaw Taborski (London: Methuen, 1967), 244.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 269-72.

²⁶ Peter Brook, in Arthur Horowitz, *Prospero's 'True Preservers': Peter Brook, Yukio Nanagawa, and Giorgio Strehler – Twentieth-Century Directors Approach Shakespeare's The Tempest* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 83.

²⁷ Horowitz, *Prospero's 'True Preservers'*, 82.

²⁸ Margaret Croyden, 'Peter Brook's *Tempest*', *The Drama Review* 13, no. 3 (1969), 128.

the company's repetition of one of Prospero's lines, 'This thing of darkness I do acknowledge mine', further suggests that Prospero was fundamentally responsible for Caliban's temperament. In the closing moments of Brook's production, Caliban wrestled with Prospero, overpowering his master while the ensemble intoned 'I am subject to a tyrant'.

Tempestuous times II: psychoanalysis, gender, and sexuality

The work of Mannoni, Brook, and *The Tempest's* African and Caribbean adapters demonstrates the central importance of psychoanalysis to twentieth-century *Tempest* interpretation, and the close alignment of psychoanalytic theories with ideas on colonialism and race. Césaire, for example, labels his *Une Tempête* a 'psychodrama', and uses it to offer a pointed response to the theories of Mannoni, his onetime teacher. This play's use of masks furthermore emulates the title of Frantz Fanon's psychoanalysis of racism and colonialism, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952).²⁹ *Une Tempête* also contains some Surrealist elements, such as Caliban's improvised, stream of consciousness African song-poems, and a scene in which the Yoruba trickster god Eshu interrupts Prospero's masque. According to Lucy Rix, emulating Surrealism's 'foraging into the unconscious' was the ideal way for Césaire to explore his quasi-Jungian idea of the collective 'black unconscious', 'delve into the "black memory" and rediscover the beginnings of a "black history"'.³⁰

Brook's 1968 version of *The Tempest*, meanwhile, saw his company create a succession of grotesque, fragmentary scenarios, incorporating songs, incantation, mime, acrobatics, and music, in order to foreground the dark subconscious of Shakespeare's play. In the words of Vaughan and Vaughan, 'this experimental adaptation, like a nightmare come to life, suggested

²⁹ See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967; first published in French, 1952).

³⁰ Lucy Rix, 'Maintaining the State of Emergence/y: Aimé Césaire's *Une Tempête*', in Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman (eds.), *The Tempest and its Travels* (London: Reaktion, 2000), 240. Césaire was friends with Surrealism's founder, André Breton.

the violent impulses that lay behind the surface of Shakespeare's text'.³¹ Freudian influences are also apparent in *The Sea and the Mirror*, with Auden presenting Caliban as id, 'Prospero's mirrored face – the magus's dark and secret self – [embodying] libidinous forces that are normally repressed behind veneers of civility'.³² The classic sci-fi film *Forbidden Planet* (1956) is a similarly Freudian interpretation of *The Tempest*, with a destructive, invisible force (Caliban) found to be the result of Professor Morbius's (Prospero's) psyche. The RSC's 1982 and 1988 stage productions of *The Tempest* also adopted a psychological approach, showing Ariel and Caliban to be extensions of Prospero's personality. Peter Greenway's film *Prospero's Books* (1991) even supposes that the whole play's events and characters are entirely the creative product of Prospero's reading and imagination. Margaret Atwood's 2016 novel *Hag Seed*, meanwhile, which revolves around a prison performance of *The Tempest*, suggests that the actions of Prospero (or Felix, as he is renamed in the book) are driven by the haunting memory of his dead daughter, Miranda. Adès's 2003 *Tempest* opera ends with a twist on the usual psychological approach, as Caliban takes centre stage and invites the audience to consider whether what they have seen was actually all a projection of his (or their) imagination ('Who was here?/ Have they disappeared?').³³

In recent decades, artists have also relatedly focused on *The Tempest*'s presentation of gender and sexuality. Derek Jarman's 1979 *Tempest* film, for instance, is an overtly sexualised reading, with Ariel a 'feminised gay male' and Caliban 'an ageing "queen" who practices 'obscene rites with his naked mother Sycorax'.³⁴ Paul Mazursky's 1982 film, meanwhile, is set on a modern-day Greek island, and hints strongly at the possibility of an incestuous relationship between Prospero and Miranda. In one scene, Kalibanos asks Philip (Prospero) which one of them is going to have sex with Miranda, but 'Ferdinand's timely arrival, by yacht, resolves the

³¹ Vaughan and Vaughan, *The Tempest*, 116.

³² *Ibid.*, 110-11.

³³ See 'The island's full of noises' in Chapter 2 of this thesis for a short summary of Adès's opera.

³⁴ Vaughan and Vaughan, *The Tempest*, 118.



Figure 3.2. Ariel (Ben Whishaw) in *The Tempest* (dir. Julie Taymor, 2010).

dilemma of Miranda's blooming sexuality and Philip's incestuous temptations'.³⁵ In 2010, director Julie Taymor took the radical step of feminising Prospero, by casting Helen Mirren as 'Prospera'. Taymor's *Tempest* also emphasises the alien gender fluidity of Ariel, played by Ben Whishaw (see Figure 3.2).³⁶ Alex Garland's 2015 film *Ex Machina* is a dark, Asimovian update of Shakespeare's play, in which the Ferdinand figure, Caleb Smith, falls in love with a humanoid robot, Ava (Miranda/Ariel), who has been created by the reclusive, menacing tech entrepreneur Nathan Bateman (Prospero). The film's conclusion sees Ava break free from her room and the island, killing Bateman and leaving Smith stranded.

Despite – or perhaps because of – the apparently patriarchal, heteronormative stance of Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest* has galvanised a number of feminist writers to reshape and refocus the original text in much the same way as postcolonial artists. In 1949, the poet Hilda Doolittle used the absent figure of Claribel to represent the plight of the twentieth-century female artist in her poem 'By Avon River', and several late twentieth-century Canadian

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ For more on Ariel and gender, see 'Dov-Ariel: Tippet Androgyne' in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

novelists used Miranda (or Miranda-like characters) as a conduit for expressing the experience of Anglophone women trapped in a patriarchal structure.³⁷ Some recent adaptations of the play intertwine issues of gender, sexuality, and colonialism, and remind readers that ‘for women as well as men, Shakespeare’s text [is] a catalyst for imaginative reconsiderations of the role of formerly colonized peoples in a post-colonial world’.³⁸ In Marina Warner’s novel *Indigo* (1992), Ariel is an indigenous Arawak who rescues the coloniser Sir Christopher Everard (Prospero) from Caliban’s armed slave rebellion. Ariel bears Everard’s child, and the story continues three centuries later following their descendant, a mulatto Miranda, and her search for a multiracial identity. Elizabeth Nunez’s novel *Prospero’s Daughter* (2006) is set on the Trinidadian island of Chacachacare, and presents a budding relationship between Virginia (Miranda) and Carlos (Caliban). Their young romance is ended, however, by an accusation of rape from Virginia’s colonialist father. In Suniti Namjoshi’s poem ‘Snapshots of Caliban’ (1984), Miranda and Caliban are lesbian lovers whom Prospero is unable to acknowledge. Namjoshi’s later collection of poems, *Sycorax* (2006), imagines the eponymous witch returning to her island following the events of *The Tempest*.

An overlooked *Tempest*

It is apparent from the preceding overview that *The Tempest* has closely interacted with and reflected the tumults and concerns of the recent period of global history. As Vaughan and Vaughan put it,

Whether it is set on a distant planet or a tropical island, the contemporary *Tempest* embodies the pertinent issues of our time: the brutal realities of individual and collective power, the bitter legacy of colonialism and slavery, the difficulty of releasing the female body from male

³⁷ Vaughan and Vaughan, *The Tempest*, 108-10.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

inscription and control, and the misunderstandings and violence that accompany cultural exchange. *The Tempest* has evolved in diverse and sometimes radical ways.³⁹

Arguably, therefore, appreciation of *The Tempest*, its performance history, critical history, adaptations, and appropriations offers a route into understanding contemporary societies and subjectivities. Thorough analyses of modern *Tempests*, such as *The Knot Garden*, should help to provide a fuller picture of the modern world and modern people, and the societies that *The Tempest* has served.

The Knot Garden, as previously mentioned, emerged at a particularly volatile and significant moment in both global politics and *The Tempest*'s performance and reception history, and is one of the most high-profile and idiosyncratic versions of the play from its era. To date, however, it has not received quite as much Shakespearian attention as some of its *Tempest* cousins from this period.⁴⁰ Perhaps this overlooking of *The Knot Garden* is primarily because it is a musical work that might be thought superfluous to Shakespearian performance history, intimidating to literature scholars, or incomparable with stage *Tempests*. Perhaps its name has obscured its status as a *Tempest* adaptation. Alternatively, perhaps *The Knot Garden* remains underexplored because it appeared at a time when colonial and racial reimaginings of *The Tempest* were understandably in vogue, with the play encapsulating many of the ethical conundrums and societal upheavals from this period. While it is arguably less prominent today than in the 1960s and 70s, the colonial and postcolonial narrative has dominated recent *Tempest* scholarship, performance, and historiography, and it is now commonplace for scholars and theatre practitioners to view *The Tempest* as 'the [Shakespeare] play most widely and most controversially linked to issues of colonialism and race'.⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid., 124.

⁴⁰ Edward O'Shea's 'Modernist Versions of *The Tempest*' is probably the only extended consideration of Tippett's work in Shakespeare scholarship. See Patrick M. Murphy (ed.), *The Tempest: Critical Essays* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 543-60.

⁴¹ Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race and Colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 161. *Othello* is the most obviously racial of Shakespeare's plays, but it explores the experience of an isolated,

The Tempest's colonial themes are undoubtedly important: the play was originally based on a number of contemporary sources that chronicled the European colonisation of 'new worlds', and it might well therefore be described as Shakespeare's 'most oblique dramatization of Europe's age of discovery'.⁴² Furthermore, the play's appropriation by cultures seeking to rebuke Western hegemony is indisputably a significant issue, and one deserving of considerable scholarly attention. *The Tempest*, however, like all of Shakespeare's works, is multipartite, containing a plethora of significant and sometimes latent ideas, and its colonial aspects are not the only areas to have been highlighted by scholarship and performance over the past half century. In the past few decades, there have also been *Tempests* such as *The Knot Garden* which, while they might contain certain elements relating to colonialism and race, do not predominantly focus on the Prospero-Caliban dynamic, and are far more concerned with issues of psychology, gender, and sexuality. These works are in need of deeper investigation, so that a more balanced and complete understanding of *The Tempest* and its recent history might be garnered. *The Knot Garden* might even be considered something of an oddity in recent *Tempest* adaptation and performance, since it explicitly deals with the travails of (post)modern urban subjects in the West. A contextual analysis of Tippett's opera might therefore offer a somewhat unconventional perspective on what Shakespeare and *The Tempest* stood for at this time.

An outdated composer? An outdated 'opera'?

Aside from attempting to improve the extant *Tempest* literature, there are also pressing musicological reasons for conducting an analysis of *The Knot Garden*. There is a substantial amount of writing on Tippett, and scholars such as Suzanne Robinson and David Clarke have

powerful black man, whereas *The Tempest* explores the relationship between a colonising master and slaves of indeterminate race. Racially minded interpretations of *The Tempest* have arguably opened the door for a wider investigation of race, colonialism, and postcolonialism in the Shakespeare canon, even in plays not traditionally associated with these topics. See, for instance, the recent RSC productions of *Much Ado About Nothing* (2012), *Julius Caesar* (2012), and *Hamlet* (2016).

⁴² Vaughan and Vaughan, *The Tempest*, 41.

refreshed the literature on this composer since the millennium.⁴³ In comparison to some of the other British composers mentioned in the previous chapter, such as Holst, Maxwell Davies, and Goehr, the corpus of literature on Tippett is actually relatively healthy. More work on Tippett still remains to be done, however, particularly in relation to his operas from *The Knot Garden* onwards, which have received little scholarly attention.

Perhaps the absence of writing on Tippett's later operas is the result of an opinion that these works were written by a composer whose best days were behind him. Derrick Puffett, for instance, in his 'tribute' to Tippett for the composer's ninetieth birthday, writes that 'there is a tragedy of its own in the life of a man who has lived so long and composed so much of his best work early. Tippett joins the ranks of those noble but tragic composers – Elgar, Sibelius, Ives, Duparc – who have lived beyond their time'.⁴⁴ For Puffett, Tippett's first two operas, *The Midsummer Marriage* and *King Priam* (1962) are 'the most rewarding'.⁴⁵ After *Priam*, however, he considers Tippett's work underwhelming, to say the least. According to Puffett, the artistic failure of Tippett's later works is the result of a 'retreat from mythology': a turn away from subjects rooted in pastoral myth and towards explorations of contemporary urbanity. Puffett reserves particular scorn for *The Knot Garden*:

I well remember reading, with mounting dismay, the libretto of *The Knot Garden* when it first came out [...] and wondering what sort of music its author could possibly set it to [...] The music is so unremittingly earthbound, so manifestly local in its implications: the electric guitar, the blues rhythms, the ludicrous attempts at the demotic [...] reminds us of nothing so much as a

⁴³ See, for example: Suzanne Robinson (ed.), *Michael Tippett: Music and Literature* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2002); David Clarke (ed.), *Tippett Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett: Modern Times and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Gloag and Jones (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Michael Tippett*.

⁴⁴ Derrick Puffett, 'Tippett and the Retreat from Mythology', *The Musical Times* 136, no. 1823 (1995), 14.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

composer desperately trying to keep his imagery up to date [...] *The Knot Garden* is a major let down.⁴⁶

Although no other writing on Tippett approaches the lacerating tone of Puffett's article, explorations of Tippett's later operas are conspicuous by their absence even in recent Tippett scholarship, hinting at a tacit general agreement with his point of view. Certainly, *The Midsummer Marriage* and *King Priam* still dominate explorations of Tippett's operas.⁴⁷ Only Kemp's 1984 monograph on Tippett contains substantial work on *The Knot Garden* and *The Ice Break*, while *New Year* (1989), which emerged after Kemp's publication, has received almost no commentary whatsoever. Although Christopher Mark, in his overview of twentieth-century British opera, states that Tippett's whole operatic output is 'remarkable in range and quality', he only focuses on Tippett's first two operas.⁴⁸ Mark agrees with Puffett that these operas 'achieve much of their considerable power from tapping into "collective, mythological material"'.⁴⁹ Kenneth Gloag, in his thirty-page summary of 'Tippett's operatic world', gives over only about two pages to *The Ice Break* and *New Year*, although *The Knot Garden* does receive comparable treatment to *The Midsummer Marriage* and *Priam*.⁵⁰

It is also possible that *The Knot Garden* and *The Ice Break* have received limited scholarly coverage because they emerged in a period that has been depicted as the age of 'anti opera', when this genre was apparently symbolic of bourgeois conservatism and artistic

⁴⁶ Ibid., 7-13.

⁴⁷ See Arnold Whittall, "'Is There a Choice at All?'" *King Priam* and Motives for Analysis', in Clarke (ed.), *Tippett Studies*, 27-54; Clarke, 'Back to Nietzsche? Transformations of the Dionysiac in *The Midsummer Marriage* and *King Priam*' in *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 36-89; Rowenda Pollard and Clarke, 'Tippett's *King Priam* and the Tragic Vision', in Clarke (ed.), *Tippett Studies*, 166-86; Pollard, 'Homeric Resonance: *King Priam* and the *Iliad*', in Robinson (ed.), *Michael Tippett: Music and Literature*, 215-35.

⁴⁸ Christopher Mark, 'Opera in England: Taking the Plunge', in Mervyn Cooke (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 209.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 217.

⁵⁰ See Gloag, 'Tippett's Operatic World', in Gloag and Jones (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Michael Tippett*, 229-63.

regression, and considered off-limits if one wished to be considered an important artist.⁵¹ In 1968, for instance, following several frustrating operatic directorial experiences, Brook cited ‘grand opera’ as a prime example of ‘Deadly Theatre’ – that is to say, theatre that fails to elevate, instruct, or engage audiences. Brooks writes that ‘grand opera [...] is the Deadly Theatre carried to absurdity [...] Everything in opera must change, but in opera change is blocked’.⁵² One set of composers who rejected opera outright at this time – along with all forms of representative art – were serialists such as Boulez, Babbitt, and Carter. Their stance is summed up by Babbitt’s dismissal of the lay audience in his article ‘Who Cares if You Listen?’, and by Boulez’s infamous assertion that ‘the most elegant solution to the problem of opera is to blow up the opera houses’.⁵³ Not all composers at this time shared the serialists’ aversion to stage representation; in fact, Robert Adlington writes that, at the start of the 1960s, many composers ‘were feeling a profound [...] hunger to engage once again with the realm of human affairs, after a decade of obsession with the abstract shaping of the molecules of musical material’.⁵⁴ Yet many music-drama practitioners seemed to agree with the serialists that the elaborate trappings of grand opera were now obsolete. In 1971, for instance, Györgi Ligeti declared ‘I cannot, will not compose a traditional “opera”; for me, the operatic genre is irrelevant today – it belongs to a historical period utterly different from the present compositional situation’.⁵⁵

⁵¹ According to Paul Griffiths, the ‘age of anti-opera’ ends with Ligeti’s ‘anti-anti-opera’, *Le grand macabre*, in 1977. It begins ‘a decade or so before’ (*Modern Music and After*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 191).

⁵² Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (London: Penguin, 1968), 20. Brook also notes that ‘the Deadly Theatre takes easily to Shakespeare’ (12).

⁵³ See Milton Babbitt, ‘Who Cares if You Listen?’, *High Fidelity* 8 (1958), 38-40 & 126; Pierre Boulez, ‘Possibly...’ (1952), in *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, ed. Paul Thévenin, trans. Stephen Walsh (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 113; and Boulez, ‘Opera Houses? Blow Them Up!’, *Opera* 19, no. 6 (1968), 440-50. See also Theodor W. Adorno, ‘Bourgeois Opera’, in David J. Levin (ed.), *Opera Through Other Eyes* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1994), 25-44. According to David Beard, ‘it would be misleading to suggest that Boulez was unambiguously opposed to opera or music theatre’, given his experience as an opera conductor and evidence that throughout the 1960s he had an operatic project in mind (Beard, *Harrison Birtwistle’s Operas and Music Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 5, n. 11).

⁵⁴ Robert Adlington, ‘Music Theatre since the 1960s’, in Cooke (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, 231.

⁵⁵ Györgi Ligeti, quoted in Griffiths, *Modern Music and After*, 191. Just three years after making this statement, Ligeti began work on *Le grand macabre*.

Ligeti's statement seems to sum up the attitudes of several composers from his generation. Rather than 'grand operas', young composers such as Ligeti (*Aventures* and *Nouvelles Aventures* (both 1966)), Kagel (*Staatstheater* (1970)), Berio (*Passaggio* (1963)), Nono (*Intolleranza 1960* (1961)), Stockhausen (*Originale* (1961)), Birtwistle (*Monodrama* (1967), *Down by the Greenwood Side* (1969), and *Bow Down* (1977)), Goehr (*Triptych* (1968-70)), and Maxwell Davies (*Eight Songs for a Mad King* and *Veralii icones* (both 1969)) focused on producing smaller-scale, experimental stage pieces, which have often been grouped together under the umbrella of 'music theatre'.⁵⁶ These works differ from each other quite radically in the way that they combine music, text, drama, dance, and other art forms. Their composers, however, shared a hostility for the conventions of traditional bourgeois performance practice, and a commitment to challenging preconceptions regarding the segregation of composers, librettists, audiences, instrumentalists, singers, and actors. A political aspect is also extremely pronounced in certain pieces, particularly the antagonistic productions of Berio and Nono. According to Arnold Whittall, it was 'possible to imagine in the early 1970s that music theatre might supplant opera itself as the favoured medium of dramatic expression, at least for composers of a progressive turn of mind'.⁵⁷

Even two of the twentieth century's most famous opera composers, Henze and Britten, took extended sabbaticals from the disparaged genre during this period. Henze wrote works such as *The Raft of Medusa* (1968), *The Tedious Way to Natascha Ungeheuer's Apartment* (1971), and *La Cubana* (1974), while Britten focused on his small-scale 'church parables': *Curlew River* (1964), *The Burning Fiery Furnace* (1966), and *The Prodigal Son* (1968). Henze's neglect of opera was apparently the direct result of an increasingly left wing, revolutionary mindset. According to Paul Griffiths, during this period 'the single striking difference in [Henze's] explicitly revolutionary output was the absence of opera, as if that most

⁵⁶ See Griffiths, 'Music Theatre' in *Modern Music and After*, 190-202, and Adlington 'Music Theatre since the 1960s', 225-43.

⁵⁷ Whittall, 'VI: The 20th century', in Howard Mayer Brown, et al., 'Opera (i)', *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*. <http://tinyurl.com/z878m jy>. Accessed 03/04/2017.

bourgeois of musical institutions had to be spurned, and replaced by the alternative concert-hall theatrical forms'.⁵⁸ Whittall, meanwhile, argues that Britten's three church parables 'provide clear evidence of Britten's disenchantment, in the 1960s, with many aspects of conventional opera'.⁵⁹

Tippett did not produce a 'music theatre' piece during the 1960s or 1970s – or even, for that, matter, anything resembling Britten's smaller-scale works. Given this adherence to a reputedly stagnant, bourgeois genre and its venues, it might well be difficult to make a case for Tippett to be regarded as a key, 'progressive' composer of this time, worthy of inclusion in the narratives of contemporary music and theatre. Indeed, neither Adlington nor Griffiths mentions Tippett's work once in their overviews. From their accounts, one gets the impression that the music theatre pieces of the 'Manchester School' (Birtwistle, Goehr, and Maxell Davies) dominated British stage music, while Britten attempted to follow the lead of these young composers by writing smaller-scale works. Certain comments by the Manchester School also seem to encourage a view of Tippett as an obsolete composer. David Lumsdaine, for instance, reports how, at the 1964 Wardour Castle Summer School, which was run by the Manchester group to provide a forum for contemporary music, Goehr remarked "well of course Michael isn't really an important composer". Meaning nobody was going to be following him'.⁶⁰ Anthony Gilbert states that he 'understood perfectly what [Goehr] meant. [Tippett] wasn't in any way radical, he wasn't seminal'.⁶¹ Birtwistle, for his part, jokes that Tippett was only made President of the School because 'he lived around the corner [...] We just invited whoever there was around'.⁶²

⁵⁸ Griffiths, *Modern Music and After*, 193-4.

⁵⁹ Whittall, 'Curlew River', *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*. *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. <http://tinyurl.com/hk2sd6t>. Accessed 03/04/2017.

⁶⁰ David Lumsdaine, quoted in Michael Hooper, 'Gilbert and Lumsdaine', *Wardour Castle Summer School*. <http://tinyurl.com/p7p xp2c>. Accessed 03/04/2017.

⁶¹ Anthony Gilbert, quoted in Hooper, 'Gilbert and Lumsdaine'.

⁶² Harrison Birtwistle, quoted in Hooper, 'Harrison Birtwistle Interview', *Wardour Castle Summer School*. <http://tinyurl.com/jbpga4u>. Accessed 03/04/2017.

It seems, however, that reports of both opera's death in Britain and Tippett's irrelevance to late 1960s and early 1970s British stage music have been somewhat exaggerated. According to Michael Hall, 'unlike the situation on the continent where opera had become *de trop*', among British composers all 'the talk, at least in private, was of opera' – and Tippett was still an integral part of these conversations.⁶³ For all of the Manchester School's flippant comments about Tippett, it is notable that they nevertheless still made him President of the 1964 and 1965 Wardour events. According to Gilbert, Tippett was regarded as a 'kind of deity' at these gatherings.⁶⁴ He was, in the words of David Lumsdaine, 'the one person from [his] generation who [younger composers] were happy with': 'they weren't at all happy with Britten', or other figures such as Walton or Arnold.⁶⁵ Gilbert further observes that there was a 'close bond' between Tippett and the younger generation, in whose work Tippett was 'very interested'.⁶⁶ Birtwistle, for instance, recalls that he visited Tippett regularly at this time,⁶⁷ and in a 1975 interview states that he 'really identif[ied] with Tippett more than anyone'.⁶⁸ Goehr also recalls that, in the 1940s, Tippett's music 'had an overwhelming effect on me. I surely modelled myself on him'.⁶⁹ Birtwistle's and Goehr's comments suggest an intergenerational link between Tippett and the Manchester group that has not yet been fully explored within the extant literature, and which this thesis is unfortunately unable to consider in more detail.⁷⁰

⁶³ Michael Hall, *Harrison Birtwistle* (London: Robson, 1984), 27.

⁶⁴ Gilbert, quoted in Hooper, 'Gilbert and Lumsdaine'.

⁶⁵ Lumsdaine, quoted in Hooper, 'Gilbert and Lumsdaine'.

⁶⁶ Gilbert, quoted in Hooper, 'Gilbert and Lumsdaine'.

⁶⁷ Birtwistle, quoted in Hooper, 'Harrison Birtwistle Interview'.

⁶⁸ Birtwistle, interview with Christopher Ford, *The Guardian*, 09/05/1975, 10.

⁶⁹ Alexander Goehr, *Finding the Key* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), 264-5.

⁷⁰ See Chapter 4, n. 7 and Chapter 6, n. 69 for possible links between Birtwistle's and Tippett's works. Michael Nyman notes Birtwistle's 'irresistible way of fashioning universals out of specifics', suggesting a further point of comparison between Tippett and Birtwistle ('Mr Birtwistle is Out', *Music and Musicians* 18 (1969), 27. Quoted in Philip Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism: The Manchester Group and their Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 57).

Perhaps the Manchester School's avowed admiration for Tippett is why Lumsdaine recalls being 'very taken aback' by Goehr's comment about Tippett's unimportance.⁷¹

At the 1964 Wardour Summer School, Tippett participated in a lively forum on 'Opera Today' alongside his younger contemporaries. Gilbert states that this seminar was the 'key discussion' of the Summer School, since it 'changed the future of British music from that point on'.⁷² During the discussion, Gilbert apparently 'took the bull by the horns by attacking the whole concept of traditional opera in the mid-twentieth century'.⁷³ He specifically asked Tippett why he had written *The Midsummer Marriage*, which 'seemed more like Mozart than anything that could belong in the twentieth century'.⁷⁴ Gilbert argued – 'much to Tippett's annoyance'⁷⁵ – for 'a much more concentrated form of opera', which 'should be relevant to contemporary situations'.⁷⁶ On Gilbert's account, the discussion reached a 'consensus' that 'music theatre' should supersede opera.⁷⁷ This new genre would be 'concise, contain no stage fripperies, no large orchestra, no divas, no gigantic arias. It could include the spoken word, ideally be done in the round, and music and theatre should be integrated for the clear purpose of putting across a socio-political message. In its purest form, the idea of plot could be dispensed with, in which case the content could be abstract'.⁷⁸

Maxwell Davies, Goehr, and Birtwistle did go on to compose several 'music theatre' pieces (*Eight Songs for a Mad King*, *Vesalii icones*, *Monodrama*, *Down by the Greenwood Side*, *Bow Down*, *Triptych*), which offer 'a kind of "rough theatre", in Peter Brook's term, of portable forces'.⁷⁹ In 1967, Maxwell Davies and Birtwistle formed the Pierrot Players – an instrumental

⁷¹ Lumsdaine, quoted in Hooper, 'Gilbert and Lumsdaine'.

⁷² Gilbert, quoted in Hooper, 'Gilbert and Lumsdaine'.

⁷³ Michael Hall, *Music Theatre in Britain: 1960-1975* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2015), 16.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 337.

group dedicated to the performance of their new small-scale, experimental stage works – while Goehr founded the Music Theatre Ensemble. According to Stephen Pruslin, the librettist for Birtwistle's *Punch and Judy* (1967), the words 'music theatre' were 'in the air' at this time, and 'the word "opera", at least temporarily, became *déclassé*'.⁸⁰ It is questionable, however, whether Gilbert's interjection was as impactful as he claims, or if a long-term 'consensus' about the merits of music theatre over opera was established and adhered to. According to Philip Rupprecht, music theatre and opera were actually of 'equal priority' for the Manchester School during this period.⁸¹ Notably, while Tippett was composing *The Knot Garden*, Birtwistle, Maxwell Davies, and Goehr were also working on operas – *Punch and Judy*, *Taverner* (1972), and *Arden Must Die* (1967) respectively – indicating that they were by no means completely averse to this genre, even if they were wary of its reputation and conventions. New 'opera' never disappeared from British musical life, thanks in no small part to the young composers present at this forum. Maxwell Davies, Goehr, and Birtwistle also continued to compose large-scale operas in later decades, including *The Doctor of Myddfai* (Maxwell Davies, 1996), *Arianna* (Goehr, 1995), *The Mask of Orpheus* (Birtwistle, 1986), *Gawain* (Birtwistle, 1991), *The Second Mrs Kong* (Birtwistle, 1994), and *The Minotaur* (Birtwistle, 2008).⁸² Perhaps, like Tippett, these composers were always more concerned with 'find[ing] a new way into the whole opera concept' than with flatly rejecting it.⁸³

⁸⁰ Stephen Pruslin, quoted in Hooper, 'Caroline Mustill (Phillips) and Stephen Pruslin', *Wardour Castle Summer School*. <http://tinyurl.com/zeejmeu>. Accessed 03/04/2017. According to Gilbert, Birtwistle in particular was 'unconvinced about the value of opera' at the time of the 'Opera Today' forum (Gilbert, quoted in Hooper, 'Gilbert and Lumsdaine'). Beard explores *Punch and Judy*'s ambiguous relation to music theatre and opera in 'Punch and Judy: Parody, Allusion, and the Grotesque', *Harrison Birtwistle's Operas and Music Theatre*, 38-78. According to Beard, 'Birtwistle approached opera obliquely', and 'Punch is a complex, ambiguous work that is not clearly positioned pro or contra opera' (5).

⁸¹ Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 337.

⁸² There is a conspicuous absence of Shakespeare in the Manchester School's output prior to Goehr's *Promised End* in 2010. Perhaps one reason for their avoidance of Shakespeare is his synonymy with, to use Brook's words, 'deadly theatre' and 'grand opera'.

⁸³ Gilbert, quoted in Hooper, 'Gilbert and Lumsdaine'.

Intriguingly, Geraint Lewis cites *The Knot Garden* as ‘a convincing example of mid-twentieth-century music theatre’.⁸⁴ Lewis’s statement could be considered a brazen attempt to position Tippett’s Covent Garden, proscenium-arch opera within the fashions of its day, and ensure its inclusion in histories of progressive, mid-century stage music. Nevertheless, he is correct to note that *The Knot Garden* features elements that have been cited as important to the differentiation of music theatre from opera. Firstly, it is important to clarify that, while ‘music theatre has often been distinguished from opera simply on the basis of its reduced scale and the altered performance venues and conventions that this entails’.⁸⁵ Yet ‘a sizing-down in scale should not be taken as indication of a fundamental antipathy to opera [...] There was often a financial explanation behind this turn to the small scale and the less elaborate [...] Scale is a far from wholly reliable indicator of genre’.⁸⁶ The fact that *The Knot Garden* premiered at Covent Garden should therefore not necessarily preclude it from being considered in relation to contemporary music theatre pieces.

Adlington, for his part, cites a ‘propensity for anti-realism’, the explosion of ‘narrative cogency’, and ‘the disintegration of the stage illusion that forms such a central part of traditional theatre’ as key tenets of music theatre.⁸⁷ *The Knot Garden*, however, despite being ‘opera’, not ‘music theatre’, unquestionably contains all of these elements. W. Anthony Sheppard, meanwhile, writes that music theatre composers ‘hoped to create works that would have direct spiritual or political impact in performance. Music theatre was often intended as a transformative device that required a receptive audience willing to engage in the performance, rather than a passive audience expecting to be entertained’.⁸⁸ Again, however, spiritual-political

⁸⁴ Geraint Lewis, ‘*The Knot Garden*’, *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*. <http://tinyurl.com/cv9cpw6>. Accessed 03/04/2017. Lewis’s comment specifically refers to a subsequent smaller, chamber opera version arranged by Bowen in 1983, which is perhaps even closer to Gilbert’s vision of stripped-back music theatre.

⁸⁵ Gilbert, quoted in Hooper, ‘Gilbert and Lumsdaine’.

⁸⁶ Adlington, ‘Music Theatre since the 1960s’, 228.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 229.

⁸⁸ W. Anthony Sheppard, *Revealing Masks: Exotic Influences and Ritualised Performance in Modernist Music Theatre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 6.

impact and the transformation of an engaged audience are integral features of *The Knot Garden*'s dramaturgy (and, it must be added, many other operas prior to and after the advent of 'music theatre').

Furthermore, although *The Knot Garden* in its original form features a full orchestra and large arias, it is also concise (at around eighty minutes), features few 'stage fripperies', contains spoken word elements, is about a contemporary situation, sometimes eschews straightforward plot in favour of abstraction, and integrates music and theatre for the purpose of putting across a socio-political message. As Kemp notes,

The Knot Garden is the most intimate of Tippett's operas [...] Small in scale, the opera is correspondingly swift moving. There are none of the elaborate transitions of *The Midsummer Marriage* or even the interludes of *King Priam*. Its impression of speed is due, paradoxically, to its rapid sequences of stops and starts – abrupt switches from one short, self-contained scene to another, and strident punctuations by means of Tippett's musical equivalent technique of the dissolve [...] These 'dissolves' [...] are striking evidence of Tippett's continuing and productive dialogue with the innovations of contemporary theatre ("theatre" now extended to include film and television [...]) The characters embody contemporary social problems, including homosexuality, race relations and the torture of political prisoners.⁸⁹

The Knot Garden therefore appears to align well with several aspects of Gilbert's music theatre framework. It furthermore incorporates elements of Brook's 'rough' and 'holy' theatres, much like its music theatre cousins from this period.⁹⁰ Perhaps, then, Tippett was not merely annoyed by the 'Opera Today' forum, but took some of Gilbert's and the Manchester School's radical ideas under consideration during the composition of his new work.

⁸⁹ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 402-3. Tippett was highly aware of contemporary theatrical developments. He argues that 'opera, however much it seems to us a mainly musical experience, is always ultimately dependent on the contemporary theatre' (Tippett, 'The Birth of an Opera', in *Moving into Aquarius* (St Albans: Paladin, 1974), 52).

⁹⁰ Brook's ideas in *The Empty Space* were an important influence on Tippett's subsequent works, including *The Knot Garden*. See "'We sense the magic net": Holy Theatre' in Chapter 6 of this thesis for further details.

Arguably, *The Knot Garden* highlights the question of whether opera and music theatre can even be fully separated from each other, or if the latter might more productively be regarded as an experimental, temporary sub-genre whose innovations were subsumed into mainstream works. As David Beard notes, ‘distinguishing between opera and music theatre is not always easy’:⁹¹ both genres, after all, fundamentally seek to combine music, song, acting, and other art forms, so it is perhaps unsurprising that there is slippage between definitions, and assigning works to one category or the other is tricky. Like Birtwistle’s music dramas, in which generic categories ‘are continually blurred and contested’, *The Knot Garden* appears to absorb elements of music theatre into a more traditional operatic setting and explore the productive tension between the two styles.⁹² Perhaps, in the end, Tippett’s work, like Birtwistle’s, proves that ‘generic distinctions are not necessarily important’.⁹³

There is no clear reason why Tippett’s operas from *The Knot Garden* onwards should be left unexplored, or be discounted from the narratives of progressive twentieth-century British and European stage music. In fact, a consideration of this particular opera might be considered essential to an understanding of the state of British music at this time. Tippett’s work should not be ignored because of an entrenched assumption about his later, non-mythological operas’ quality, because of his age at the time of its composition, because he was further into his career than the Manchester School and lucky enough to be able to draw on more resources than his young contemporaries, or because of a questionable generic label. Rupprecht’s words on the Wardour Castle Summer School might well be extended to summarise and critique the current narratives on British music at this particular moment in history: ‘Much of the excitement stem[s] from the Manchester figures [...] Yet one should not overlook Michael Tippett’.⁹⁴ Far from being marooned ‘beyond his time’, Tippett was a highly influential figure in British musical life, and an active, invested participant in debates on music and theatre during this

⁹¹ Beard, *Harrison Birtwistle’s Operas and Music Theatre*, 3.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 255.

period. *The Knot Garden*, composed at the height of arguments around ‘music theatre’ and ‘opera’, arguably encapsulates this dialogue in its structure, as Tippett attempted to ‘find a new way into the whole opera concept’.

The pointless game

Perhaps the most frequent trope in the musicological scholarship that does exist on Tippett is comparison with Britten, his great friend and contemporary. Britten and Tippett are arguably the most famous pairing in British art music, being widely regarded as the two outstanding composers of the generation that achieved fame in the post-war era.⁹⁵ It is by no means unbeneficial to draw comparisons between them, especially given their friendship and the closeness of their experiences, artistic approaches, and careers. Whittall, for instance, who has spent several decades studying both composers, notes that Tippett and Britten ‘complement and illuminate each other in striking and distinctive ways’, since they ‘respon[ded] to similar and, at times, identical situations and circumstances’.⁹⁶

Tippett and Britten were born within a decade of each other (Tippett in 1905, Britten in 1913), grew up in the same county (Suffolk), and came from similarly middle-class, artistic backgrounds. They both identified as homosexual, left wing, and pacifist, and shared an international outlook and a passion for early English music (Purcell in particular). Both also had a notable working relationship with a famous poet contemporary – Tippett with Eliot, and Britten with Auden. Furthermore, both strongly believed ‘that music should be useful, and that the composer should play a practical role in society’.⁹⁷ They were firm friends for forty years until Britten’s death in 1976; Britten and his partner Peter Pears even visited Tippett in prison

⁹⁵ In his *Grove* dictionary entry on Britten, Brett notes and continues the tendency to conveniently assess British composers in contemporaneous couples by immediately mentioning Tippett and stating that he and Britten are ‘among several pairs of composers who dominated English art music in the twentieth century’ (Philip Brett, ‘Britten, (Edward) Benjamin’, *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*. <http://tinyurl.com/pnmqlg7>. Accessed 06/04/2017). Examples of other commonly paired composers are Elgar and Parry, and Holst and Vaughan Williams.

⁹⁶ Whittall, *The Music of Britten and Tippett* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1.

⁹⁷ David Matthews, *Michael Tippett* (London: Faber & Faber, 1980), 70.

after he had been sentenced for refusing to undertake non-combatant military duties. They were remarkably fulsome in their praise for one another, unbothered – publicly, at least – by the constant comparisons made by critics. Tippett, for example, describes Britten’s compositional achievements as ‘staggering’, and calls Britten ‘the most purely musical person I have ever met and I have ever known’.⁹⁸ Britten, meanwhile, in his tribute for Tippett’s sixtieth birthday, remarks that ‘whenever I see our names bracketed together (as they often are, I’m glad to say) I am reminded of the spirit of courage and integrity, sympathy, gaiety and profound musical independence which is yours, and I am proud to call you my friend’.⁹⁹ Tippett wrote *Boyhood’s End* (tenor and piano, 1943) for Britten and Pears, while Britten dedicated *Curlew River* to Tippett.

Whittall argues that the clear contrasts in Tippett’s and Britten’s musical languages are the direct result of their careers running in parallel, since Britten’s swift rise to fame forced Tippett to search for a strikingly individual compositional style.

Britten was a challenge to [Tippett ...] Tippett may never have been likely to strive for a less explicitly mainstream stylistic and technical amalgam than that which Britten was deploying to such effect immediately after 1935, but he seems gradually to have defined his own relation to the established and emerging polarities between radical and conservative in ways which reinforced the differences between his own personal compositional voice and that of his contemporaries, especially Britten.¹⁰⁰

Whittall notes that, musically, Tippett and Britten can both be regarded as ““conservative” or “neo-classic” according to the harsh criteria of the avant-garde’.¹⁰¹ He emphasises, however,

⁹⁸ Tippett, ‘Benjamin Britten’, in *Music of the Angels: Essays and Sketchbooks of Michael Tippett*, ed. Bowen (London: Eulenberg, 1980), 81.

⁹⁹ Britten, in Kemp (ed.), *Michael Tippett: A Symposium on his Sixtieth Birthday* (London: Faber & Faber, 1965), 30

¹⁰⁰ Whittall, ‘Tippett and Twentieth-Century Polarities’, in Gloag and Jones (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Michael Tippett*, 5.

¹⁰¹ Whittall, *The Music of Britten and Tippett*, 11.

that there are clear distinctions between Britten's and Tippett's musical styles, and contrasts Britten's 'economical intensity' with Tippett's more 'flamboyantly decorative' idiom.¹⁰² Britten, he concludes, works with extended tonality and emancipated dissonance, but remains faithful to pitch hierarchies, 'however all-thematic or proto-serial his textures'. 'In Britten', he writes, 'progressive "conservatism" remains triumphantly fresh and satisfying'.¹⁰³ Tippett is characterised as a more 'radical spirit', who uses emancipated consonance: his music 'constantly skirts the perils of the arbitrary or the random, but the sheer force of personal conviction and a musical identity of great expressive vitality and depth ensure remarkable success [... Tippett's] music challenges the conventions of structural coherence in a way Britten's never does'.¹⁰⁴

Whittall's conclusions are based on lengthy and detailed analytical study. His work represents the best of Britten and Tippett scholarship: he uses the composers' biographical similarities and shared social and artistic concerns as a springboard for extended musical comparison and contrast, and does not resort to hackneyed clichés about either composer. Too much commentary on Tippett and Britten, however, tends to cast them bluntly as polar opposites. In a typical assessment, Britten is presented as a naturally gifted young prodigy with instinctive technical mastery and endless inspiration, whose compositions were perfectly formed, intimidatingly clever, and immediately comprehensible. Tippett, contrastingly, is presented as a bungling novice, whose lack of technical knowledge and ambition to become an all-round artist could result in works of either brilliant imagination or embarrassing ineptitude, and who only hit his compositional stride in mid career. In the words of Ivan Hewett, 'to read some commentators, you'd think Tippett was nothing more than an amiable amateur with pretensions to visionary depths, incurably deficient in technique, who in later years had an embarrassing crush on African-American street culture and tried to transplant it into his operas –

¹⁰² Whittall, 'Tippett and Twentieth-Century Polarities', 5.

¹⁰³ Whittall, *The Music of Britten and Tippett*, 300.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

with toe-curling results'.¹⁰⁵ It is possible that Hewett's comment relates to Norman Lebrecht's 2005 article, 'Michael Tippett: A Composer to Forget', which, as its title suggests, is a withering dismissal of Tippett's achievements. Lebrecht describes Tippett as 'an inglorious exemplar of English amateurism', and contrasts him with Britten in a predictable manner.

Britten's music was tightly disciplined, never a note out of place, its topics timeless yet always contemporary, its resonance global. Tippett's scores sprawled all over the page, his themes were vague and parochial, his style archaic or contrived [...] Set beside any of his contemporaries, radical or conservative, British, American or European, Tippett fails the driving test of coherence.¹⁰⁶

John Amis, in an attempt to praise Britten and Tippett by comparing them with great masters of the past, provides another typical example of stereotyping, saying that 'Ben corresponded with Mozart, Michael with Beethoven. Ben worked his compositions in his head; Michael laboriously with pen and paper. Ben always knew where he was going with every bar of the piece in advance; Michael had the plan but wrestled with his material'.¹⁰⁷ Tippett admits that he envied Britten's apparently God-given gifts and compositional fluency, and states that he had to 'learn like hell' to keep up with his young friend. He emphasises, however, that such 'indiscriminate couplings' do a great disservice both to himself and Britten (not to mention Mozart and Beethoven), and tersely states that 'we weren't Mozart and Beethoven, and I know exactly what I'm going to do before I do it'.¹⁰⁸ He also speaks up on Britten's behalf,

¹⁰⁵ Ivan Hewett, 'Michael Tippett: A Visionary in the Shadow of His Rival', *The Telegraph*, 19/10/2012. <http://tinyurl.com/q8l2t62>. Accessed 03/04/2017.

¹⁰⁶ Norman Lebrecht, 'Michael Tippett: A Composer to Forget', *La Scena Musicale*, 22/12/2004. <http://tinyurl.com/o6aptew>. Accessed 06/04/2017.

¹⁰⁷ John Amis, quoted in Humphrey Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten: A Biography* (London: Faber & Faber, 1993), 196.

¹⁰⁸ Tippett, quoted in H. Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten*, 194-5. Although he praises Britten here, Tippett does not miss out on an opportunity to forward his own claims to greatness at Britten's expense: 'I have to ask, did I lose out by not having his fluency. And one part of me says no, I gained [...] It's possible that [my music] became more interesting'.

emphasising that his friend's success is not the effortless product of prodigious genetic talent, but the result of 'phenomenal productivity arising from the combination of great gifts with continuous hard work'.¹⁰⁹

'The pointless game of Tippett versus Britten', to borrow Brett's phrase, has generally meant that the scales of critical and public favour have always been more heavily weighted towards one composer or the other, never both at the same time.¹¹⁰ Given the overwhelming popularity of Britten today, especially following the centenary celebrations of his birth in 2013, it is perhaps surprising to learn that over the past several decades there have been several seesaw fluctuations in the critical reputations of both composers. Puffett recalls how, in the early 1960s, 'Britten was the "establishment" British modern composer, the "father figure" one loved, imitated in one's own youthful compositions and eventually rebelled against'.¹¹¹ Then, in the mid 1960s, 'it all changed [... Tippett] went on to flourish – in critical esteem, at least. Britten on the other hand entered a period, lasting until his death, in which he was looked on rather less kindly by the critics (who had, if anything, gone overboard in their praises of him a few years before)'.¹¹² Donald Mitchell similarly writes that, among music students in the early 1970s, 'any mention of Britten would provoke a dismissive response [...] He was absolutely "out" [...] And the views of my students, of course, reflected those of a whole generation of young composers, not only in England but elsewhere'.¹¹³ Tippett, meanwhile, came to be regarded as the elder statesman of British music, even becoming something of a celebrity. Puffett remembers that this was a time when "'Turn On to Tippett'" became a motto on T-shirts, [and] the composer began to give interviews on television'.¹¹⁴ In the years after Britten's death in 1976, Tippett, in

¹⁰⁹ Tippett, 'Benjamin Britten', 79.

¹¹⁰ Brett, 'Britten, (Edward) Benjamin'. For an example of 'the pointless game', see the provocative headline of Hewett's article promoting the English Touring Opera's 2014 performance of *King Priam*: 'Why Tippett's *Priam* Trumps Britten's *Requiem*', *The Telegraph*, 29/01/2014. <http://tinyurl.com/obzosq9>. Accessed 03/04/2017.

¹¹¹ Puffett, 'Tippett and the Retreat from Mythology', 6.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 7.

¹¹³ Donald Mitchell, quoted in H. Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten*, 534.

¹¹⁴ Puffett, 'Tippett and the Retreat from Mythology', 7.

Whittall's words, 'achieved the unambiguous prominence of a leader within a spectrum of compositional activity in which the generation of the 1930s was in turn finding itself complemented by younger minimalists and those more conservative and more radical'.¹¹⁵ Writing on and by Tippett also emerged from the 1960s onwards, at no less a rate than that on Britten.

The years since Tippett's death in 1998 have seen a change in fortunes, however, and he has fallen behind Britten in terms of both scholarly attention and global public acclaim. In recent popular musicology, Tippett often only receives mention in order to bolster the achievements of Britten, who synecdochically represents British music as a whole during the twentieth century. Alex Ross's *The Rest is Noise*, Richard Taruskin's *The Oxford History of Western Music*, and Carolyn Abbate's and Roger Parker's *A History of Opera*, for example, only fleetingly mention Tippett but devote whole sections to Britten.¹¹⁶ In *The Rest is Noise*, Ross simply uses Tippett to support his assertion that 'the art of composition skewed gay' in twentieth-century Britain.¹¹⁷ Similarly, Brett presents Britten as the more politically important of the pair, saying that it was 'Britten's achievement (reinforced rather than contradicted by Tippett) that British art music during his years of ascendancy came to embrace what was indelibly "queer and left and conshie"'.¹¹⁸ Such historiography arguably does a disservice to Tippett, who was arguably more openly 'queer and left and conshie' than Britten, and who by the late 1960s and early 70s was just as, if not more popular with audiences and critics, and possibly more influential on the next generation of British composers.

¹¹⁵ Whittall, 'Tippett and Twentieth-Century Polarities', 6.

¹¹⁶ See Alex Ross, "'Grimes! Grimes! The Passion of Benjamin Britten', in *The Rest is Noise* (London: Fourth Estate, 2007), 447-82; Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music: Music in the Late Twentieth Century*, 'History or Society?' (<http://tinyurl.com/p8pcx5y>) and 'Social Themes and Leitmotives' (<http://tinyurl.com/oaapdqw>). Accessed 03/04/2017; and Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, 'Enduring Modernism: Britten', in *A History of Opera: The Last Four Hundred Years*, rev. ed. (London: Penguin, 2015), 526-31.

¹¹⁷ Ross, *The Rest is Noise*, 450.

¹¹⁸ Brett, 'Britten, (Edward) Benjamin'.

Tippett is far from being the only British composer to have faced comparison with Britten, and his struggles to escape Britten's shadow are indicative of a wider trend in the coverage of British music. Robert Saxton, for example, comments that, in the years since Britten's death, the British media and public 'never seem to get over looking for the next Benjamin Britten [...] It's a stupid game'.¹¹⁹ Adès, perhaps more than any other recent British composer, has been burdened with Britten's mantle. Since his early career, and especially since the success of his first opera, *Powder Her Face* (1995), Adès has been trying to shed the tag of 'the new Benjamin Britten', a label that exasperates him – though he has arguably done himself no favours in this regard by taking on stewardship of the Aldeburgh festival and composing a large-scale Shakespearian opera. In fact, Dominic Wells points out, Adès's association with Britten 'is based almost solely on extramusical rather than musical connexions [...] for of the many musical influences alluded to in Adès's oeuvre Britten is scarcely found at all [...] There are many other composers in Adès's music whose voices are more prominent than Britten's. Adès is especially interested in the music of Janáček, Ligeti, Messiaen, Nancarrow and Stravinsky, and his music reflects this'.¹²⁰

There is undoubtedly a possibility that scholarship and the media will reduce British composers other than Britten to the level of also-rans, who either contributed to Britten's development or trailed in his wake.¹²¹ Britten's status in British culture might even be compared with Shakespeare's, given how both now dominate scholarship and the repertory in their respective national fields, both have at least one site dedicated to the performance of their works (the RSC and the Globe, and Aldeburgh), and both have recently been the subject of extensive anniversary celebrations. Whittall even comments that the last few decades have seen the

¹¹⁹ Robert Saxton, quoted in Vivien Schweitzer, 'For Britain's Rising Star, Thomas Adès, Big Expectations', *The New York Times*, 24/03/2008. <http://tinyurl.com/nqz57p4>. Accessed 03/04/2017.

¹²⁰ Dominic Wells, 'Plural Styles, Personal Style: The Music of Thomas Adès', *Tempo* 56, no. 260 (2012), 4.

¹²¹ This state of affairs is apparent in Abbate and Parker's *A History of Opera*, which includes no mention of composers such as Holst, Vaughan Williams, Goehr, Maxell Davies, or Birtwistle. Only Britten, Adès, and Turnage warrant a mention, presumably because of their current commercial popularity.

development of a Shakespeare-esque ‘Britten industry’ in Britain.¹²² Arguably, explorations of British operas that do not resort to comparison with Britten are therefore necessary, in order to shed light on lesser-known works and expand the repertory, to ensure that other composers’ pieces are evaluated fairly, to garner a more rounded picture of modern British music, and to resist the perpetuation of unfair stereotypes.

Nevertheless, the collective work of Britten and Tippett does have the potential to cast a revealing light on a tumultuous period in British history, and exploring the divergent yet complementary works of both composers in a balanced, dialectical manner could provide a rounded and clear picture of British opera, society, and culture within the ideological context of mid-to-late twentieth-century Britain. Separating Tippett from Britten, in short, might not be entirely warranted or helpful. According to Mark, ‘composers like Robin Holloway, Jonathan Harvey, Oliver Knussen, Judith Weir, and Mark-Anthony Turnage [...] who have come to prominence in an era of unprecedented pluralism, display a degree of indebtedness to one or both of Britten and Tippett’.¹²³ In that case, it is important to gain a clear understanding of the individualities and similarities of the works of these two important and contemporaneous artists through thoughtful comparison and contrast. In the words of Service, when it comes to Britten and Tippett, it is important to remember that ‘Britten’s music is not *Britain*’s music, despite how it might feel [..., and] we don’t have to choose one or the other’.¹²⁴ We can choose both.

Music and sexuality in Tippett

Given the present imbalance in scholarship on Britten and Tippett, there is a pressing requirement to reevaluate Tippett’s works – particularly his later operas – in the same manner that scholars have been approaching Britten’s music for decades. The differing levels of investigation into Britten’s and Tippett’s oeuvres is particularly glaring in musicology that

¹²² Whittall, ‘Tippett and Twentieth-Century Polarities’, 3.

¹²³ Mark, ‘Opera in England: Taking the Plunge’, 221.

¹²⁴ Tom Service, ‘Holst and Tippett: Musical Visionaries at the Proms’, *The Guardian*, 15/08/13. <http://tinyurl.com/oxuor3w>. Accessed 03/04/2017.

focuses on issues of biography, gender, and sexuality.¹²⁵ Despite the similarities in Tippett's and Britten's circumstances and sexualities, the former's operas have not received anywhere near the same sort of attention as the latter's, and almost twenty years on from Tippett's death there has still not been an adequate exploration of how his life, his ideas about gender, and his sexuality interacted with his works. Byron Adams, for instance, in his review of 1999's *Tippett Studies*, notes that 'a particularly disturbing omission in this otherwise thorough volume [... is] the avoidance of any mention of Tippett's homosexuality [...] The spectre of the composer's sexual orientation is exorcised through recourse to the comforting arcana of pitch-class sets'.¹²⁶ As recently as 2005, Michael Kennedy dismissed Tippett's sexuality as 'a subject of limited interest' for scholars.¹²⁷ Kennedy prefers to concentrate on Tippett's politics, music, and connection with Britten, overlooking that an understanding of Tippett's biography and his views on gender and sexuality could inform all three of these areas. As Iain Stannard points out, Tippett's 'works, aesthetic views and personal opinions are elements within a larger discursive field [...] For Tippett, gender [and sexuality were] deeply intertwined with social discourse, political sympathy, cultural perception and personality'.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ See, for example: Brett, *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, ed. George E. Haggerty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); John Bridcut, *Britten's Children* (London: Faber & Faber, 2011); Clifford Hindley, 'Homosexual Self-Affirmation and Self-Oppression in Two Britten Operas', *The Musical Quarterly*, 76, no. 2 (1992), 143-68; J. P. E. Harper-Scott, 'Being-with Grimes: The Problem of Others in Britten's First Opera', in Rachel Cowgill, David Cooper, and Clive Brown (eds.), *Art and Ideology in European Opera* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), 362-81; Harper-Scott, 'Britten and the Deadlock of Identity Politics', in Philip Purvis (ed.), *Masculinity in Opera* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 144-66; Harper-Scott, 'Made You Look! Children in *Salome* and *Death in Venice*', in Lucy Walker (ed.), *Benjamin Britten: New Perspectives on his Life and Music* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009), 116-37; Ruth Sara Longobardi, 'Reading between the Lines: An Approach to the Musical and Sexual Ambiguities of *Death in Venice*', *Journal of Musicology* 22, no. 3 (2005), 327-64; Longobardi, 'Multivalence and Collaboration in Benjamin Britten's *Death in Venice*', *Twentieth-Century Music* 2, no. 1 (2005), 53-78; Stephen McClatchie, 'Benjamin Britten, *Owen Wingrave* and the Politics of the Closet; or, "He Shall Be Straightened Out at Paramore"', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 8, no. 1 (1996), 59-75; Lloyd Whitesell, 'Britten's Dubious Trusts', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 56, no. 3 (2003), 637-94.

¹²⁶ Byron Adams, Review of David Clarke (ed.), *Tippett Studies, Notes* 56, no. 4 (2000), 955.

¹²⁷ Michael Kennedy, 'The Effusions of a Fertile Mind', *The Telegraph*, 16/10/2005. <http://tinyurl.com/ycplc8n>. Accessed 03/04/2017.

¹²⁸ Iain Stannard, 'Hermaphroditism and the Masculine Body: Tippett's Aesthetic Views in a Gendered Context', in Ian Biddle and Kirsten Gibson (eds.), *Masculinity and Western Musical Practice* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 280-6.

Arguably, Britten's deadness, great posthumous success, more guarded attitude over his sexuality, and operas that apparently deal with homosexuality in a euphemistic manner made him a more viable and tantalising subject for investigation when New Musicologists such as Brett were making their first controversial forays into the links between music, biography, gender, and sexuality.¹²⁹ Raking over Tippett's oeuvre while the composer was still alive might well have been considered a potentially awkward experience for all concerned. Furthermore, unlike Britten, little of Tippett's work is canonic, and he has not quite achieved 'national treasure' status, arguably making him a less high-profile candidate for scholarship that was in some ways designed to cause a stir. Tippett's relative openness in later life about his sexuality has perhaps also rendered his music unappealing to musicologists wanting to uncover new, surprising details about the relationship between the lives and music of composers.¹³⁰ Clive Paget overstates the case when he writes that 'unlike the tight-lipped Britten, [Tippett] was out there almost waving the rainbow flag'.¹³¹ Actually, in his younger years, Tippett had been highly conscious of the unacceptability, not to mention illegality, of his homosexuality.¹³² Paget's claim, however, encapsulates the popular perception of how Tippett and Britten respectively dealt with their sexuality in their work. Meirion Bowen's statement that 'there is no gay sub-text to Tippett's work, as there is throughout Britten's' is misleading, but is

¹²⁹ See Brett, 'Britten and Grimes', *The Musical Times* 118, no. 1618 (1977), 995-7 & 999-1000.

¹³⁰ By the time Tippett wrote his autobiography in 1991, his sexuality had been an 'open secret' for several decades. In 1984, Kemp was the first biographer to acknowledge Tippett's homosexuality by mentioning the composer's relationship with Wilfred Franks. Even then, however, Tippett – raised in a society in which gay men were at risk of being ostracised and imprisoned – requested that Kemp refrain from using the word 'homosexual' in his book (Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 307, n. 54). Today, the 'Wilfred Franks Biography' website only euphemistically refers to Tippett as Franks's 'friend'. See '3. Tippett & Boosbeck', *Wilfred Franks Biography*. <http://tinyurl.com/glqf5u>. Accessed 03/04/2017.

¹³¹ Clive Paget, 'The 10 Greatest Gay Composers: Mardi Gras Special!', *Limelight Magazine*, 27/02/2014. <http://tinyurl.com/ks4ht97>. Accessed 03/04/2017. Assessed on the categories 'Musical Muscle', 'The Goss', 'Out and Proud?', and 'Phwoar Factor', Tippett tops Schubert, Handel, Copland, Smyth, Poulenc, Tchaikovsky, and Corelli, but is beaten into third place by the 'power couple' of Barber and Menotti, and Britten.

¹³² In the early 1940s, for example, Tippett had to forcefully remind a friend who 'outed' him at a public meeting that homosexuality was 'a criminal matter' (Robinson, "'Coming out to Oneself': Encodings of Homosexual Identity from the First String Quartet to *The Heart's Assurance*", in Gloag and Jones (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Michael Tippett*, 88).

nevertheless arguably the fundamental general assumption that has led to more exploration of Britten's operas than Tippett's.¹³³

Some early Tippett scholarship draws vague links between the composer's life, sexuality, and music. Bowen, for example, writes that *A Child of Our Time*'s Jungian message ('I would know my shadow and my light, so at last I shall be made whole') 'was really the collective application of what Tippett had recently experienced in his own personal life'.¹³⁴ Kemp, meanwhile, similarly describes *The Midsummer Marriage* as 'a dramatization of the psychological discoveries of [Tippett's] emotional upheavals [in] 1938/39', when the composer underwent Jungian psychoanalysis following the end of his relationship with the artist Wilfred Franks.¹³⁵ More recently, Robinson has explored Tippett's work from the 1930s and 40s in relation to his sexuality. She concludes that 'expressions of love, loss, pleasure and sexual frustration are all present in the works of those decades, amounting to a kind of *Bildungsroman* of the modern homosexual'.¹³⁶ Stannard has also examined Tippett's letters to see how the composer's concept of a Jungian 'psychological hermaphroditism' – that is to say, 'the union of masculine and feminine elements in [the] psyche' – influenced his personal life, aesthetics, and music.¹³⁷ Clarke, meanwhile, has considered gender and sexuality in *The Midsummer Marriage*, *King Priam*, the Triple Concerto, and *Byzantium*.¹³⁸

There is, however, a puzzling lack of work relating to gender and sexuality in *The Knot Garden*. Granted, *The Knot Garden* is a confusing, intricate piece without a clear plot or main character on which to focus. Nevertheless, it is a remarkably frank exploration of people and relationships in the modern world, and single-mindedly explores Tippett's interest in 'the age-

¹³³ Bowen, *Michael Tippett*, 2nd ed. (London: Robson, 1997), 246.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹³⁵ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 210.

¹³⁶ Robinson, "Coming out to Oneself", 99.

¹³⁷ See Stannard, 'Hermaphroditism and the Masculine Body', 279-304. See 'Dov-Ariel: Tippett Androgyne' and 'I will dress myself in green' in Chapter 5 of this thesis for further discussion of how Tippett's ideas on 'psychological hermaphroditism' might have informed *The Knot Garden*.

¹³⁸ See Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*.

old problem of to what extent gender, sex and love correspond'.¹³⁹ *The Knot Garden*, as Bowen puts it, is an opera which throws issues of gender and sexuality 'absolutely into the limelight', and was regarded as controversial upon its release for this reason.¹⁴⁰ It is therefore strange that scholars have largely ignored its frank depictions of psychosexual relationships, and its assortment of characters with shifting sexual identities. The absence of scholarship on *The Knot Garden* is also surprising given that this opera is arguably the most autobiographical of all Tippett's works. Several characters and situations seem to be drawn straight from the composer's own personality and experiences. Most notably, the opera features one character – Dov, a composer-singer aligned with Ariel from *The Tempest* – whom Tippett described as something of a self-portrait, and whose journey he would continue to explore in *Songs for Dov*.¹⁴¹

The Prospero fallacy?

Perhaps discussions of gender and sexuality in *The Knot Garden* have been affected by a broader scholarly hesitancy around drawing links between the personal life of a creator and their creations. Biographical interpretation retains a hold in musicology – in fact, it has arguably undergone a resurgence in recent decades in the work of musicologists writing on gender and sexuality: Brett, McClary, and Jackson, for instance, all use the sexuality and biography of their chosen composers as a springboard for their explorations.¹⁴² Other scholars are sceptical of this practice, however, and argue for less critical focus on the producer of a work. Taruskin, for

¹³⁹ Tippett, *Those Twentieth-Century Blues* (London: Hutchinson, 1991), 61.

¹⁴⁰ Bowen, *Michael Tippett*, 2nd ed., 41.

¹⁴¹ 'The question is often posed to me: with which of your operatic characters do you most identify? The assumed answer is usually Mangus [... but] for me, an identification with Dov, the singer, the musician who expresses heart-break, has always seemed close' (Tippett, 'Dreams of Power, Dreams of Love', in *Tippett on Music*, ed. Bowen (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995) 221-3). See 'Dov-Ariel: Tippett Androgyne' in Chapter 5 of this thesis for a discussion of Dov's autobiographical qualities.

¹⁴² See, for example, Brett, *Music and Sexuality in Britten*; Susan McClary, 'Sexual Politics in Classical Music', in *Feminine Endings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 53-79; Timothy L. Jackson, 'Aspects of Sexuality and Structure in the Later Symphonies of Chaikovsky', *Music Analysis* 14, no. 1 (1995), 3-25, and *Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6: Pathétique* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

instance, rails against ‘the poietic fallacy’, ‘the conviction that what matters most (or, more strongly yet, that all that matters) in a work of art is the making of it, the maker’s input’.¹⁴³ According to Taruskin, this ‘exceedingly old-fashioned, even outmoded, aesthetic’ reduces art criticism to ‘shoptalk’.¹⁴⁴

What, though, should be done about a composer such as Tippett, whose work – particularly the ‘private myths’ of his later operas – often veers into personal territory? As Puffett puts it, Tippett’s work ‘never fail[s] to rebound on the Man Himself’.¹⁴⁵ Perhaps a solution can be found in a consideration of the critical history of *The Knot Garden*’s parent work, *The Tempest*. Coincidentally, many of the most heated and famous discussions from the past few centuries about the role of biography and intention in the interpretation of art lead back to this play. A perusal of these arguments sheds considerable light on the merits and pitfalls of adopting a biographical approach, and invites a consideration of if, and how, a biographically inflected methodology might be applied suitably in the case of Tippett.

‘Subjectivist’ Shakespearian criticism has been prevalent since the early nineteenth century, emerging at around the same time as similar, biographically tinged musicology on Mozart and Beethoven. In the words of Gordon McMullan, the task of a critic at this time was ‘biographical and bibliographical, to chart the life and at the same time the chronology of the work, to treat each individual work as evidence of the growth of the artist’.¹⁴⁶ Writers such as Coleridge, Hazlitt, and Thomas Campbell forwarded speculative readings of Shakespeare’s plays, seeking titbits about the frustratingly mysterious playwright in his works.¹⁴⁷ *The Tempest*

¹⁴³ See Taruskin, ‘The Poietic Fallacy’, *The Musical Times* 145, no. 1886 (2004), 10.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Puffett, ‘Tippett and the Retreat from Mythology’, 10.

¹⁴⁶ Gordon McMullan, *Shakespeare and the Idea of Late Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 138. Although his supposed focus is on Shakespeare’s last plays, including *The Tempest*, McMullan provides a thorough overview of ‘the discourse of lateness’, which encompasses literature, music, and art. According to McMullan, ‘the idea of late writing offers a critical focus for our persistent belief in genius, for our insistence on the centrality of biography to critical analysis, and thus for the way we treat the relationship between creator and creation in all fields of artistic endeavour’ (6).

¹⁴⁷ The lack of substantial evidence about Shakespeare’s life and beliefs has prompted some speculative artistic responses. Edward Bond’s play *Bingo* (1973) portrays the old Shakespeare as an irritable man,

was an especially tantalising proposition for these writers, owing to its position as the opening play of the first folio and one of the last of Shakespeare's works, and the parting nature of some of Prospero's speeches. A consensus emerged that *The Tempest* was the triumphant apotheosis of Shakespeare's career, his valediction to the stage, and that Prospero was a self-portrait of the artist. Campbell, for example, wrote in 1838 that *The Tempest* 'has a sort of sacredness as the last work of the mighty workman. Shakespeare, as if conscious that it would be his last, and as if inspired to typify himself, has made its hero a natural, a dignified, and benevolent magician'.¹⁴⁸

Subsequent scholars have pointed out the many failings of this style of interpretation, not least that it is unsubstantiated and overly hagiographical, and that it 'fundamentally misrepresents the processes of production of early modern theatre', which was generally concerned with the power of rhetoric, not confessional autobiography.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, such readings arguably underestimate an artist's capabilities, assuming that they are only capable of writing from personal experience and lack imagination and wider knowledge.¹⁵⁰ Arguably, the sentimental Shakespearian criticism of Coleridge and company is more telling of how highly these critics and artists valued confession and emotion in art than of Shakespeare's actual working methods or intentions. A further problem for subjectivist interpreters of *The Tempest* is that it is not definitively Shakespeare's final play, which casts doubt on the idea of Prospero being a self-portrait. According to Orgel,

conflicted between his dual personas of miserly landowner and sensitive artist. The popular 1998 film *Shakespeare in Love* traces *Romeo and Juliet* to a love affair between Shakespeare and the fictional Viola de Lesseps. Jonathan Bate's one-person play *Being Shakespeare* (2011) uses the 'Seven Ages of Man' speech from *As You Like It* as the basis for a stage biography, weaving moments from Shakespeare's plays into the story of his life. The 2016 BBC comedy *Upstart Crow* also shows Shakespeare drawing on unusual real life events for inspiration with his work.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas Campbell, quoted in Orgel, *The Tempest*, 10.

¹⁴⁹ McMullan, *Shakespeare and the Idea of Late Writing*, 22.

¹⁵⁰ Certain conspiracy theories about the authorship of Shakespeare's plays seem to stem from this biographical assumption. For example, supporters of the 'Oxfordian' theory – that the Earl of Oxford was in fact the author of Shakespeare's plays – often rely on the fact that there are apparent links between the plays and Oxford's life. The Oxfordian theory has recently received mainstream coverage in Roland Emmerich's film *Anonymous* (2012). For more on Shakespeare's biography and the authorship debate, see Bate's *The Genius of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), and James Shapiro's *Contested Will* (London: Faber & Faber, 2011).

We know that *Henry VIII* was a new play when it was produced at the Globe in 1613, so it is later than *The Tempest* by at least two years. Shakespeare's two collaborations with Fletcher, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and the lost *Cardenio*, were also written after *The Tempest*. It has been argued on the basis of internal evidence that *Henry VIII* is also a collaboration, and that therefore *The Tempest* is Shakespeare's last *solo* performance [...] There is, in fact, not even any way of determining chronological priority between *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale* [...] The most we can say is that the evidence supports a date of late 1610 to mid-1611, and that Shakespeare was writing the play just after, or just before, or at the same time as *The Winter's Tale*.¹⁵¹

Another potential problem with biographical criticism – even that which is thoroughly researched – is that by focusing too much on a creator's alleged motives, designs, and intended meanings, it runs the risk of ignoring a work's wider context, its reception history, and its relevance to the modern world. Elmer Edgar Stoll, for instance, lambasts the Shakespeare-Prospero link as an 'insidious biographical fallacy' and argues that this reading 'robs the play of its general and human significance' and its theatrical potential.¹⁵² Stoll's essay on *The Tempest* lies at the heart of a wider post-war debate about authorship, since it is cited in W. K. Wimsatt's and M. C. Beardsley's seminal 1946 article 'The Intentional Fallacy', which sets the tone for much literary theory from the second half of the twentieth century (and receives a hat tip in the title of Taruskin's later article). Wimsatt and Beardsley do allow some room for biographical interpretation, although they take care to separate such 'author psychology' and 'literary biography' from 'poetic analysis and exegesis', which is 'the true and objective way of criticism'.¹⁵³ They argue that although 'external, private' evidence 'may add another shade of

¹⁵¹ Orgel, *The Tempest*, 63.

¹⁵² Elmer Edgar Stoll, 'The Tempest', *PMLA* 47, no. 3 (1932), 725.

¹⁵³ W. K. Wimsatt Jr. and M. C. Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy', *The Sewanee Review* 54, no. 3 (1946), 477-86.

meaning’, nothing should take analytical precedence over the ‘internal, public’ evidence of the text.¹⁵⁴ ‘Critical inquiries’, they conclude, ‘are not settled by consulting the oracle’.¹⁵⁵

A couple of decades later, Barthes infamously declared ‘the Death of the Author’, and encouraged interpreters to completely ignore information about a work’s creator in order to place greater importance on the role of the reader and liberate a plethora of potential meanings.

The author still reigns in histories of literature, biographies of writers, interviews, magazines, as in the very consciousness of men of letters anxious to unite their person and their work through diaries and memoirs. The image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions, while criticism still consists for the most part in saying that Baudelaire’s work is the failure of Baudelaire the man, Van Gogh’s his madness, Tchaikovsky’s his vice. The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the *author* ‘confiding’ in us [...] We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash [...] To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing [...] When the Author has been found, the text is ‘explained’ – victory to the critic.¹⁵⁶

It is apparent, then, that criticism linking an artwork to the life and personality of its creator has the potential to be reductive and speculative. It can unhelpfully lock down the meaning of a work, prevent its continued relevance, and do a disservice to both a creator’s talents and a receiver’s intelligence. Nevertheless, it might be a mistake to discard a

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 482.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 487.

¹⁵⁶ Roland Barthes, ‘The Death of the Author’, in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Noonday, 1977), 142-8. Barthes oddly claims that a reader, unlike an author, ‘is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted’ (148).

biographical-intentionalist approach entirely. On the matter of Shakespeare and *The Tempest*, for instance, Kiernan Ryan calls for a continued appreciation of the potential ‘genetic’ allusions in Shakespeare’s last plays, since to dismiss them out of a basic fear of ‘genius’ and author-centred criticism could result in a failure to fully grasp Shakespeare’s final works and characters. According to Ryan,

The peculiar intensity and resonance of these parables of expiation may owe much to their author’s prospective retirement to dwell with the wife and daughters, and the lingering ghost of a beloved son, from whom his theatrical life in London had divorced him for so many years. No one will ever know exactly how much, but the parallels between the plights of Pericles, Cymbeline, Leontes and Prospero and the family fortunes of the playwright viewed from this point in his life are too striking to dismiss as irrelevant to an appreciation of the plays. At the very least they remind us, at a time when the author is too often reduced to a mere textual effect, that these works are the deliberate creations of a formidably complex individual, striving to give dramatic form and poetic expression to his deepest private fears and fantasies – however irrecoverable the real substance of those fears is doomed to remain.¹⁵⁷

The recent work of Paisley Livingston might offer some assistance in reconciling biographical and anti-biographical viewpoints. Livingston describes himself as a proponent of ‘partial intentionalism’, and distances himself from the pedantic ‘absolute intentionalism’ of Stanley Fish and the hyperbolic ‘absolute anti-intentionalism’ of Barthes.¹⁵⁸ He concedes that there are ‘excellent reasons to reject [...] old-fashioned biographical criticism’: ‘an exclusive focus on the artist’s self-understanding and psychology can obscure crucial dimensions of the

¹⁵⁷ Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare: The Last Plays* (London: Longman, 1999), 7.

¹⁵⁸ Paisley Livingston, *Art and Intention: A Philosophical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005). See also Stanley Fish, ‘Biography and Intention’, in W. H. Epstein (ed.), *Contesting the Subject: Essays in the Postmodern Theory and Practice of Biography and Biographical Criticism* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1991), 9-16. Fish argues that ‘you [cannot] read independently of biography, of some specification of what kind of person – and with what abilities, concerns, goals, purposes, and so on – is the source of the words you are reading [...] The only way to read unbiographically would be to refrain from construing meaning – to refrain, that is, from regarding the marks before you as manifestations of intentional behaviour; but that would be not to read at all’ (12-14).

context of creation, and it is not a good idea to try to reduce complex fictions to the status of psychological symptoms – a recurrent foible of biographical criticism'.¹⁵⁹ He further notes that 'intentionalism in aesthetics both relies upon and promotes the individualist dogma that a genuine work of art [...] must be the achievement of a sovereign individual author or artist'.¹⁶⁰ Livingston therefore defines his 'intermediary position' as the thesis that 'authorial intentions figure in [the meaning of a work of art], yet combine with other factors, such as features of the finished text, artefact, or performance, and aspects of the historical and artistic context in which the work was created'.¹⁶¹ He argues that the anti-intentionalist thesis 'would be easier to defend were it established that intentions were epiphenomenal, or played a negligible role in the actual production of a work of art', and states that that 'the theory of appreciation and interpretation should be attuned to the artist's constitutive role in the making of works'.¹⁶² He also sensibly calls for a meticulousness in the interpretation of art, declaring that 'if the works of art that actual authors have created are the prime target of an interpretative hypothesis, then we should let all the available evidence about the causal history of the artistic structure have the same, initial status'.¹⁶³ Using the example of Kafka, Livingston writes

[It is hard to imagine] why critics should be required to refrain from allowing their interpretations of Kafka's works to be in any way guided by an interpretation of these fascinating diaries and other evidence relevant to the actual author's thoughts and experience. Recognizing that in some cases limited or boring semantic intentions are decisive of a work's features is the price we pay for an interpretative principle that allows us on other happier occasions to recognize that the artist's laudable and complex aims were decisive [...] The evidentiary difficulties surrounding our access to actual authorship are not always insurmountable; sometimes the evidence supports reasonable, but of course fallible, inferences about events

¹⁵⁹ Livingston, *Art and Intention*, ix.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 142.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 164.

involved in a work's making. It is true that often we cannot get all of the evidence we would like to have, and it is possible that the evidence we do have is misleading. Yet that is but a familiar condition of all historical knowledge. The avoidance of epistemic risk has its own risks and costs.¹⁶⁴

The same sort of argument can easily be applied to Tippett. Why should scholars rule out sources such as the composer's letters, writings, and autobiography, simply because of an ideological desire to avoid 'the author'? Ignoring such evidence might even be considered tantamount to scholarly laziness. Unlike Shakespeare, Tippett's life and beliefs are well chronicled, by both himself and others, and there is a large amount of material to hand that might act as a useful guide to his works. Biographical conclusions need not be speculative, as they inevitably are when discussing the alleged link between Shakespeare and Prospero in *The Tempest* due to the lack of evidence about Shakespeare's career. Of course, the writings of Tippett and others must be carefully scrutinised, and any claims of links between life and work must be thoroughly thought through: tabloidesque gossip-mongering, idle speculation, and the simplistic life-art comparisons of some pop music journalism are unwelcome in a scholarly study. Yet it is equally undesirable to avoid drawing such conclusions owing to a fear that a mistake might be made. In the words of E. D. Hirsch,

The risk of resorting to semi-private implications – available at first only to a few – is very often worth taking, particularly if the new usage does finally become widely understood. The language expands by virtue of such risky innovations [...] Whether a meaning is autobiographical is a neutral and by itself irrelevant issue in interpretation.¹⁶⁵

Biographical interpretation might not always be an appropriate avenue to pursue: each case needs to be weighed up, and a decision reached regarding the most suitable methodology

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 164-5.

¹⁶⁵ E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 15-17.

with which to progress. Interpretive methods that, for reasons such as lack of evidence or individual or period aesthetics, are not applicable to Shakespeare, Titian, Mozart, or Eliot, might be far more pertinent to Shostakovich, Kafka, Van Gogh, or Tippett. According to Maynard Solomon, ‘the primary area of dispute about the value of biography appears to centre on the vexed question of how – or whether – the pathways between life and art can be mapped, whether a “personal” factor in creativity can be identified’.¹⁶⁶ In the case of Tippett, this ‘personal factor’ is readily apparent. Tippett’s music – particularly his operas, and especially *The Knot Garden* – seems to be obviously and avowedly shot through with his own experiences, and polemically forwards his ideas about life, politics, psychology, gender, and sexuality. It would be strange to ignore such an essential aspect of his work out of a misplaced sense of semantic autonomy or loyalty to the text over the author.

My earlier critique of Jackson’s article on Tchaikovsky’s *Tempest* should have made it clear that I am sceptical of analyses that fail to fully consider all of a work’s potential influences and meanings, fixate on a composer’s biography and sexuality, and attempt to use such details as the basis for unenlightening hermeneutics.¹⁶⁷ I do not wish to pigeonhole Tippett as an exclusively ‘gay composer’, imply that he was so unimaginative or self-centred that he only dealt with issues relating to his own life and sexuality in his work, or contend that his music is only valuable as a pseudo-biography. Biographical details should form part of a larger web of evidence and interpretation, and a reading cannot be considered successful if it merely consists of drawing links between creator and creation, before declaring these findings to be the ultimate ‘meaning’ of a work, neutralising its relevance for future audiences. Yet, in Clarke’s words, if Tippett’s aim was to ‘draw a universal message from personal experience’, then it is important to acknowledge the ‘debt which the former owes to the latter’.¹⁶⁸ Robinson similarly argues that

¹⁶⁶ Maynard Solomon, ‘Biography’, *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*. <http://tinyurl.com/q92jx5y>. Accessed 03/04/2017.

¹⁶⁷ Analysing an opera from a biographical perspective is arguably less problematic than analysing the notes of an ‘absolute’ work, since opera is a medium that explicitly deals with people and the physical world.

¹⁶⁸ Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 233-4.

Tippett ‘arrived at a mode of communication that synthesized private and public worlds. The private remains, both present and absent: present to those privileged few who have access to its codes, and absent because it has not yet been declared and remains deniable’.¹⁶⁹ It might well be fruitful, then, to consider the more private aspects of *The Knot Garden*, such as how Tippett channelled his experiences and opinions through the opera and its characters, in order to offer a clearer understanding of the work’s public, ‘universal’ messages, and its relevance to its time and ours.

Tippett, Jung, Lacan

In addition to adopting a biographical-intentionalist approach to *The Knot Garden* in the hope of revealing the work’s broader historical and cultural significances, this thesis will also make use of psychoanalysis to conduct close readings of the opera’s characters and scenarios. The history of *The Tempest* given earlier in this chapter has already demonstrated how the play has been subjected to considerable psychoanalytic attention and interpretation from the early twentieth century to the present day, particularly during the last three decades.¹⁷⁰ *The Knot Garden* is arguably the most overtly psychoanalytic of all *Tempest* adaptations, being set in the office of a psychoanalyst and dealing with a group of people struggling with social, emotional, identity, and relationship pressures (see Table 3.1 for Tippett’s descriptions of *The Knot Garden*’s characters).

¹⁶⁹ Robinson, “‘Coming out to Oneself’”, 99.

¹⁷⁰ Scholarly pieces exploring *The Tempest* from a psychoanalytic perspective include: Janet Adelman, ‘Masculine Authority and the Maternal Body: The Return to Origin in the Romances’, in *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare’s Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 193-238; Coppélia Kahn, ‘The Providential Tempest and the Shakespearean Family’, in *Man’s Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 193-226; David Mikics, ‘Psychoanalysis, Idealizing and Magic: Reading *The Tempest*’, in Graham Bradshaw, Tom Bishop and Michael Neill (eds.), *The Shakespeare International Yearbook: Volume 5* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2005), 162-79; Stephen Orgel, ‘Prospero’s Wife’, in Patrick M. Murphy (ed.), *The Tempest: Critical Essays* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 231-44; Étienne Poulard, ‘Shakespeare’s Politics of Invisibility: Power and Ideology in *The Tempest*’, *International Journal of Žižek Studies* 4, no. 1 (2010), 1-20; and David Sundelson, ‘So Rare a Wonder’d Father: Prospero’s *Tempest*’, in Murray M. Schwartz and Kahn (eds.), *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 33-53.

TABLE 3.1

The Knot Garden, Dramatis Personae

Faber	<i>A civil engineer, aged about 35</i>	robust baritone
Thea	<i>His wife, a gardener</i>	dramatic mezzo
Flora	<i>Their ward, an adolescent girl</i>	light high soprano
Denise	<i>Thea's sister, a dedicated freedom fighter</i>	dramatic soprano
Mel	<i>A negro writer in his late twenties</i>	lyric bass baritone
Dov	<i>His white friend, a musician</i>	lyric tenor
Mangus	<i>An analyst</i>	high tenor baritone

The Knot Garden is possibly also the only example of an opera with a psychoanalytic setting. While numerous operas have been inspired by psychoanalytic trends or subjected to retrospective investigation along psychoanalytic lines, Tippett's opera is seemingly unique in its focus on the therapeutic scenario.¹⁷¹ Juliet Mitchell's comment that, primarily, 'psychoanalysis is about human sexuality and the unconscious' is also an apt summation of *The Knot Garden*'s main interests.¹⁷² The incorporation of some form of psychoanalytic theory into an exploration

¹⁷¹ Weill's musical *Lady in the Dark* (1941), which focuses on the Freudian treatment of a female protagonist, is perhaps the only other music drama that has a psychoanalytic setting comparable to *The Knot Garden*. See Alexander Carpenter, 'Towards a History of Operatic Psychoanalysis', *Psychoanalysis and History* 12, no. 2 (2010), 173-94. For further information on the links between psychoanalysis and opera, see: A. Carpenter, 'Schoenberg's Vienna, Freud's Vienna: Re-Examining the Connections between the Monodrama *Erwartung* and the Early History of Psychoanalysis', *Musical Quarterly* 93, no. 1 (2010), 144-81 and "'This Bestly Science...': On the Reception of Psychoanalysis by the Composers of the Second Viennese School, 1908-1923', *International Forum of Psychoanalysis* 24, no. 4 (2015), 243-54; Lawrence Kramer, 'Modernity's Cutting Edge: The Salome Complex' and 'Fin-de-Siècle Fantasies: *Elektra* and the Culture of Supremacism', in *Opera and Modern Culture: Wagner and Strauss* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 128-66 & 190-220 and 'Opera as Case History: Freud's Dora, Strauss's Salome, and the Perversity of Modern Life', *The Opera Quarterly* 31, no. 1-2 (2015), 100-15; and Jill Scott, 'From Pathology to Performance' and 'Choreographing a Cure' in *Elektra After Freud: Myth and Culture* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), 57-80 & 81-95. For Lacanian readings of works by Mozart and Wagner, see Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar, *Opera's Second Death* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁷² Juliet Mitchell, 'Introduction - I', in Jacques Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, ed. Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, trans. Rose (New York and London: Norton, 1985), 2.

of *The Knot Garden* would therefore seem to be a necessity, especially because the opera has not yet been the subject of an extended study that fully incorporates this discipline.

Tippett was deeply interested in the history, application, and ethics of psychoanalysis, and Clarke even writes that the composer's whole 'view of art [...] is a strongly psychoanalytic one'.¹⁷³ In both his personal life and career, Tippett was drawn especially to the theories of Jung, whose work he read voraciously following his first encounter with it in the late 1920s or early 1930s. In his first book of essays, *Moving into Aquarius*, Tippett describes himself as a 'disciple of Jung', and references to Jung's ideas are scattered throughout many of his essays.¹⁷⁴ According to Kemp, Tippett found that 'Jung illuminated not only personal emotional problems, but a wide range of philosophical, social, and artistic matters'.¹⁷⁵ He notes that Jungian ideas are particularly prominent in Tippett's wartime oratorio, *A Child of Our Time* (1944), and his first opera, *The Midsummer Marriage*. The final lines of *A Child of Our Time* – 'I would know my shadow and my light,/ so shall I at last be whole./ Then courage brother, dare the brave passage' – outline Jung's idea that 'a balanced, mature, and integrated personality could be achieved only if ['Shadow'] archetypes of the collective unconscious are recognized and accommodated to the complementary needs of the unconscious mind'.¹⁷⁶ Kemp writes that Tippett's debt to Jung is also 'self-evident' in *The Midsummer Marriage*: the opera's dream-like scenario, archetypal figures, and emphasis on people attempting to find individuation (a theme that it shares with *The Knot Garden*) mean that it 'could hardly have been conceived without Jung's insights'.¹⁷⁷

Clarke further argues that Jung's 'depth psychology', particularly his concept of the 'image', is vital to an understanding of almost all of Tippett's aesthetic principles and resultant

¹⁷³ Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 14.

¹⁷⁴ Tippett, 'What Do We Perceive in Modern Art?', in *Moving into Aquarius*, 85. See also 'Persönliches Bekenntis' (117-21) and 'Postscript' (163-7) in *Moving into Aquarius*, and 'What I Believe', in *Music of the Angels*, 49-55.

¹⁷⁵ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 155.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 223. For a full analysis of this opera, see Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 209-77. Another opera from this period that is heavily indebted to Jung, particularly his ideas on personality and sexuality, is Maxwell Davies's *Taverner*. See Beard, 'Taverner: An Interpretation', in Gloag and Jones (eds.), *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 79-105.

work. According to Clarke, ‘Jung offers an extended theoretical system (a quasi-philosophical worldview, one might even say) within which Tippett’s usage of the term ‘image’ may be contextualized alongside his own – a practice allowable because of affinities between composer and psychologist, amounting in certain respects to a shared ideology’.¹⁷⁸ Tippett, like Jung, considers ‘images’ (in his case, musical ‘archetypes’) to be ‘vehicles which make available the otherwise unknowable contents of the “inner world”’.¹⁷⁹ Clarke argues that Tippett’s Jungianism is discernible in his approach to musical composition as ‘a staged process, essentially a passage from the inchoate to the articulate’.¹⁸⁰ Additionally, ‘the [Jungian] image becomes the principal constitutive element of form’ for Tippett’s works after *King Priam*, in which ‘the principle of formal progression by immediate succession rather than mediated flow becomes the norm’.¹⁸¹ Clarke also sees attempts to create ‘images’ in Tippett’s inclination to push instruments and voices to extremes, his use of instrumental colour, his fragmentation of instrumental resources, and his onomatopoeic score annotations.¹⁸² Ultimately, ‘Tippett’s [Jungian] musical images manifest an often productive (though sometimes problematic) tension between the demands of musical syntax and a desire [...] to transcend it’.¹⁸³

Kemp and Clarke both demonstrate how Jung’s thought was undoubtedly a major factor in Tippett’s aesthetics and work, if not the most important influence. It might be time, then, for a Jungian exploration of *The Knot Garden*. No large-scale investigation of the opera’s Jungian underpinnings has yet been attempted, but it would undoubtedly be possible to conduct a successful analysis of the opera using Jung’s theories. As Clarke notes, ‘the Jungian themes of self-knowledge, rebirth and the reconciliation of opposites pervade [Tippett’s] later oeuvre with

¹⁷⁸ Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 14.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 17. Jung, for example, writes that images ‘are the best possible expressions for something unknown – bridges thrown out towards an unseen shore’ (‘On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry’, in *The Spirit in Man: Art and Literature*, trans. Richard F. C. Hull (London: Ark, 1993), 75-6). Quoted in Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 19.

¹⁸⁰ Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 19.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 27-8.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 35.

varying degrees of emphasis’, and this thesis’s exploration of the opera’s third act will demonstrate that Jungian concepts such as individuation and the collective unconscious are vital themes in Tippett’s work from this time.¹⁸⁴

In fact, Nicholas Morris has carried out a short analysis of *The Knot Garden* and its predecessor, *King Priam*, from a Jungian perspective.¹⁸⁵ Morris’s short article, however, demonstrates why I do not consider it viable to employ Jungian psychoanalysis exclusively in an exploration of this particular Tippett opera. As Clarke notes, much of the existing Jungian commentary on Tippett’s music, including Morris’s *Knot Garden-Priam* article, tends to concentrate simplistically ‘on identifying archetypal symbols [or characters] within [Tippett’s] works’.¹⁸⁶ The main problem with Morris’s reading is that his hastily applied Jungian labels do not do full justice to the psychological complexities of *The Knot Garden*’s characters. He discusses Mangus’s analysands in crudely one-dimensional terms: Mel and Dov are ‘bestial’ and ‘creative’ respectively; Denise is ‘naive and unformed’; Faber has an ‘uncontrolled anima’; Thea is an ‘Earth Mother’; Flora is a ‘maiden’.¹⁸⁷ These descriptions, while capturing something of the characters’ qualities, fail to explain properly the shifting subjectivities and psychological developments seen within the opera. Jung’s mythological archetypes – shadow, wise old man, child, mother, maiden, hero, anima (the ‘feminine’ part of a man’s personality), animus (the ‘masculine’ part of a woman’s personality), and so on – seem somewhat insufficient for describing the identities and desires of Tippett’s distinctively modern, psychologically fluid characters. They also impose an unwanted fixity on an opera in which change and growth are central symbolic features.

Jung’s system also does not permit a nuanced understanding of *The Knot Garden*’s unpredictable depictions of gender and sexuality. Essentialism, heteronormativity, and sexism

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 14.

¹⁸⁵ Nicholas Morris, “‘Simply the Thing I Am Shall Make Me Live’: a Jungian Perspective on *King Priam* and *The Knot Garden*”, in Lewis (ed.), *Michael Tippett, O. M.: A Celebration* (Tunbridge Wells: Baton, 1980), 91-107.

¹⁸⁶ Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 14.

¹⁸⁷ Morris, “‘Simply the Thing I Am Shall Make Me Live’”, 100-5.

are the almost inevitable by-products of employing Jung's archetypal binaries, with their stereotypical separation of 'male' and 'female' characteristics. In the words of Jungian scholar Polly Young-Eisendrath,

Rarely [has gender] been treated seriously within depth psychology without being tied to some biological and/or essentialist argument that women or men are 'born that way' [...] Most psychodynamic theorizing about gender has been flawed by reducing sex differences to a formula that imitates stereotypes [...] Too often Jungian theory has portrayed the sexes as a complementary division of the Masculine and the Feminine. This has led to a defensive splitting of interpersonal and intrapsychic worlds, both in theorizing and in practice. Each sex then seems to represent a preset part of the human experience. The meaning of Masculinity, men and maleness in this kind of theory is Logos, rationality, independence, and objectivity. The meaning of Femininity, women and femaleness is Eros, connectedness, and subjectivism. This is the picture of the two sexes that Jung painted, reflecting the biases of his cultural era.¹⁸⁸

According to the classical Jungian position of Anthony Stevens, for instance, gender is simply 'the psychic recognition and social expression of the sex to which nature has assigned us'.¹⁸⁹ Stevens rails against 'fashionable contemporary notions' about gender – that is to say, the 'specious idea that gender differences are entirely due to culture, and have nothing to do with our archetypal and biological predispositions'.¹⁹⁰ He opines (on the basis of an 'overwhelming mass of anthropological and scientific evidence', which he does not reference) that because of 'archetypal design', 'virtually everywhere, it appears that girls tend to be more nurturant and affiliative than boys', while boys 'tend to prefer some form of physical activity, such as running, chasing, and playing with large, moveable toys. They also tend to be more rowdy and

¹⁸⁸ Polly Young-Eisendrath, 'Gender and Controsexuality: Jung's Contribution and Beyond', in Young-Eisendrath and Terrence Dawson (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Jung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 228.

¹⁸⁹ Anthony Stevens, *Jung: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001), 68.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

aggressive and less amenable to control by adults'.¹⁹¹ Men are therefore biologically predisposed to 'hunting and warfare', while 'child-rearing is almost invariably the responsibility of women'.¹⁹²

Young-Eisendrath, by contrast, acknowledges recent studies that have 'effectively undermined beliefs in universal gender differences, in ways of being that are biologically "masculine" or "feminine"'.¹⁹³ She submits that 'no longstanding personality traits are connected to any consistent [biological] differences between female and male people', and that gender is merely a variable temporal and locational 'construction based on [...] socialization'.¹⁹⁴ Young-Eisendrath believes that it is possible to revise Jung's idea of 'contrasexuality' – the idea that 'that everyone has a biologically based opposite-sexed personality derived from genetic traces of the other sex (hormonal, morphological, and the like)' – to reflect recent developments in feminism and anthropology, and 'be applicable to contemporary life'.¹⁹⁵ While Young-Eisendrath refreshes Jung's model of sexual difference by absorbing social constructivist findings, however, she does not question its rigid polarisation of male and female people. Rather, she updates Jung's immutable, universal split to accommodate a range of local cultural constructions, stereotypes, and tropes relating to 'men' and 'women', rather than applying any pressure to the actual notion of sexual difference, or attempting to identify psychological similarities between the genders. In her words, she still 'focus[es] on the universal opposition or dichotomy of a split-gender world' and 'the two sexes imagined as opposites, as carrying complimentary potentials'.¹⁹⁶ There is a touch of the 'Mars' and 'Venus' outlook that formed the basis of 1990s pop psychology (and retains a hold in popular thought) in Young-

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 70.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Young-Eisendrath, 'Gender and Contrasexuality', 225.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 226.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 224-7.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 225.

Eisendrath's neo-Jungian strategy.¹⁹⁷ Her retention of Jung's enantiodromatic anima-animus binary supports the absurd but persistent romantic notion of 'finding The One', or one's 'other half': that is to say, locating and pairing with the single 'right person' or 'soul mate' of the opposite gender, in order to stop psychosexual turmoil.

Young-Eisendrath also does not challenge the heterosexual bias at the heart of Jung's theories. Upholding the key Jungian concept of anima and animus as 'unconscious *complexes* of "the opposite sex"', she only discusses how those gendered oppositely as 'men' and 'women' relate to each other in romantic relationships, and therefore precludes homosexual relationships.¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, for Young-Eisendrath, psychological gender is still firmly fixed to 'the identity club, the social category, that we are assigned at birth (and now sometimes sooner, thanks to ultrasound tests) based on the sex of the body': gender, for her, 'flows from' sex.¹⁹⁹ She especially emphasises 'the exclusive nature of gender and sex: no one can be *both* genders or [both] sexes, and there is no third possibility'.²⁰⁰ Such a position would seem to problematically rule out the existence of a range of nonconforming, non-binary sex and gender positions such as intersex, gender fluid, and transgender, 'third possibilities' in non-Western cultures, or, for that matter, any person who questions, challenges, or rejects the societal clichés associated with their gender. Young-Eisendrath's approach, then, like its Jungian model, remains 'tainted by essentialism', cultural prescription, and exclusion.²⁰¹

Tippett's so-called 'retreat from mythology' resulted in his final three operas being set in modern-day urban environments and containing less mythological and archetypal – that is

¹⁹⁷ See John Gray, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992). As Bruce Fink notes, 'the title [of this book] seems promising, suggesting that there is *nothing that predestines men and women for complimentary relations*. But everything in the book after the first two chapters is designed to help the reader overcome difference and establish *the One that has to be*, the One that the age-old fantasy requires' ('Knowledge and Jouissance', in Suzanne Barnard and Fink (eds.), *Reading Seminar XX: Lacan's Major Work on Love, Knowledge, and Feminine Sexuality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 28.

¹⁹⁸ Young-Eisendrath, 'Gender and Controsexuality', 229.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 225.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 229.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 224.

to say, less obviously Jungian – characters than *The Midsummer Marriage*. Certain of *The Knot Garden*'s characters do not seem to fit into stereotypical gender categories, or consistently project their desires onto 'the opposite sex' in the heteronormative fashion assumed by Jung and Young-Eisendrath. Their pursuit of identity, sex, love, and happiness can sometimes seem far more arbitrary and desperate – as well as, in some cases, entirely unsuccessful. In sum, *The Knot Garden* is not a straightforwardly Jungian opera, so it cannot be analysed in a straightforwardly Jungian fashion. Arguably, the opera demands exploration from the perspective of a form of psychoanalysis that is less essentialist in nature, more sensitive to the peculiarities of this work's characters, and the product of the same time and environment.

Young-Eisendrath actually points towards the psychoanalytic methodology which, in combination and juxtaposition with Jungian thought, might prove useful to an investigation of *The Knot Garden*. At the beginning of her essay, she quotes from Jacqueline Rose's introduction to Lacan's *Feminine Sexuality*:

Sexuality belongs in [an] area of instability played out in the register of demand and desire, each sex coming to stand, mythically and exclusively, for that which could satisfy and complete the other. It is when the categories 'male' and 'female' are seen to represent an absolute and complementary division that they fall prey to a mystification in which the difficulty of sexuality instantly disappears.²⁰²

For Young-Eisendrath to begin her essay with a quote from a Lacanian scholar is remarkable, since, as S. J. McGrath notes, Lacan's theories of sexual difference present 'the most formidable challenge to the Jungian *coniunctio*'.²⁰³ In the sentences immediately following those quoted by

²⁰² Rose, 'Introduction – II', in Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality*, 33. Quoted in Young-Eisendrath, 'Gender and Controsexuality', 223.

²⁰³ S. J. McGrath, 'Sexuation in Jung and Lacan', *International Journal of Jungian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2010), 1. Lacan's theories have gained a significant foothold in recent musicology concerned with modern subjectivities. See, for example, Beard, "'A face like music": shaping images into sound in *The Second Mrs Kong*', in *Harrison Birtwistle's Operas and Music Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 242-77; Harper-Scott, *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism: Revolution, Reaction, and William Walton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) and 'Berlioz, Love, and

Young-Eisendrath, for instance, Rose notes how ‘Lacan argued that psychoanalysis should not try to produce “male” and “female” as complementary entities, sure of each other and their own identity, but should expose the fantasy on which this notion rests’.²⁰⁴

For Lacan, taking a position as ‘man’ or ‘woman’ ‘is by no means identical with one’s biological sexual characteristics, nor is it a position of which one can be very confident’.²⁰⁵ Sex and sexuality instead belong ‘in the realm of masquerade’.²⁰⁶ Lacan writes that the ideas of ‘men, women, and children [mean] nothing qua prediscursive reality. Men, women, and children are but signifiers’.²⁰⁷ He also discards the notion of ‘the One’ – both in terms of individual wholeness and romantic fulfilment – describing it as ‘a kind of mirage’.²⁰⁸ One of Lacan’s most infamous claims is that “‘there’s no such thing as a sexual relationship” (“*il n’y a pas de rapport sexuel*”): in fact, he states that the whole of ‘analytic discourse is premised solely on [this] statement’.²⁰⁹ That is not to say that people do not ever have sex, only that it is impossible for them to reach the sort of lasting sexual-spiritual individual and connective unity envisaged by Jungianism. On Lacan’s account, the sexual relationship is not with another person as such, is always fleeting and unsatisfying, and does not offer completion: ‘one’s [enjoyment] of the Other taken as a body is always inadequate’.²¹⁰ For him, ‘nothing that would qualify as a true relationship between the sexes can be either spoken or written. There is nothing complementary about their relationship, nor is there a simple inverse relationship or some kind of parallelism between them. Rather, *each sex is defined separately with respect to a third term.*

Béatrice et Bénédicte’, *19th-Century Music* 39, no. 1 (2015), 3-34; and Kramer, *Franz Schubert: Subjectivity, Sexuality, Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

²⁰⁴ Rose, ‘Introduction – II’, 33.

²⁰⁵ Mitchell, ‘Introduction – I’, 6.

²⁰⁶ Rose, ‘Introduction – II’, 43.

²⁰⁷ Lacan, ‘The Function of the Written’, in *Encore: On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge: Book XX: 1972-1973*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Fink (New York: Norton, 1998), 33.

²⁰⁸ Lacan, ‘Love and the Signifier’, in *Encore*, 46.

²⁰⁹ Lacan, ‘On Jouissance’, in *Encore*, 9. This phrase first appears in Seminar XIX, but Lacan spends considerable time, in his words, ‘drumming [it] into’ his students during Seminar XX (‘The Function of the Written’, 35).

²¹⁰ Lacan, ‘The Rat in the Maze’, in *Encore*, 144.

Thus there is only a nonrelationship, an absence of any conceivable direct relationship between the sexes'.²¹¹

Tippett and Lacan were almost exact contemporaries, and at the same time that Lacan was critiquing identity, sexuality, and relationship politics – to borrow Tippett's words, exploring 'the age-old problem of to what extent gender, sex and love correspond' – Tippett was giving these same issues substantial attention in *The Knot Garden*.²¹² Lacan's theories of sex and sexuality, which are far less biologically and culturally determined than Jung's, seem to align well with Tippett's thinking on gender, sex, and sexuality in this opera, since certain of Tippett's characters could be described as 'fragmented subject[s] of drifting and uncertain sexual identity'.²¹³ Tippett does not turn his back on Jungian theories in *The Knot Garden*; in fact, the opera's overall Jungian focus on individuals achieving individuation is indicated by its epigraph, '... simply the thing I am/ shall make me live', which is taken from *All's Well That Ends Well* (IV. 3). Jungian frameworks are still vitally important for understanding the opera's action, some of its characters, and some of its conclusions. Nevertheless, over the course of the opera, Tippett often appears to treat Jungian precepts with some scepticism, applying considerable pressure to them in a manner reminiscent of his French psychoanalyst peer, even if he does not ultimately share Lacan's wholesale rejection of them.

Another important aspect of Lacan's psychoanalytic project was to revise the role of the analyst and concordantly reassess the aims of psychoanalysis. A Freudian or Jungian 'ego psychologist' might seek to adopt a masterly pose during analysis and guide their patients through therapy on a predetermined course, with the Jungian school seeing psychological crises as an opportunity to pursue the goals of individuation and self-development. Lacan, however,

²¹¹ Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 105.

²¹² Tippett, *Those Twentieth-Century Blues*, 61. According to Lacan, 'people have done nothing but speak of love in analytic discourse' (A Love Letter', in *Encore*, 83): 'I've been doing nothing but that since I was twenty, exploring the philosophers on the subject of love' ('God and ~~Woman~~'s Jouissance', in *Encore*, 75).

²¹³ Mitchell, 'Introduction – I', 26.

warns analysts that they should not assume any sort of superiority over their analysands, and that they should abandon any hope of ‘curing’ them. He states that ‘there is nothing doctrinal about our role. We need not answer for any ultimate truth’.²¹⁴ For Lacan, psychoanalysis is a dialectical, not dictatorial experience, and an analyst should attempt to maintain ‘neutrality’.²¹⁵ Ultimately, as McGrath puts it, a Lacanian analyst should enjoin the patient ‘to accept the ultimate senselessness of the renunciations and displacements of desire essential to his or her sanity, to move from “subjectivization” to “subjective destitution”, and to “enjoy” his or her “symptom”. The “cured” subject is able to grasp the sheer contingency and absurdity of the events which constitute the narrative of his or her life’.²¹⁶ Mangus, *The Knot Garden*’s psychoanalyst, is not a practising Lacanian, more a stereotype of a Freudian or Jungian clinician who attempts to control his patients through the knot garden in order to ‘cure’ them. Nevertheless, because of his arrogance, he often loses control of the analytical situation, and moves closer to becoming the sort of Lacanian analyst whom Darian Leader describes as a ‘cross between a beggar and a clown’.²¹⁷ Tippett’s dissection of Mangus’s role certainly bears some similarity to Lacan’s radical reconfiguration of the analyst’s position.

According to McGrath, Lacan’s ‘violent attack on the [Jungian] paradigm’ might render him ‘too much of a [problem] for Jungians to either defeat or integrate [...] It might be in the end that the Lacanian approach to the unconscious must be rejected entirely by Jungians’.²¹⁸ Jung’s and Lacan’s positions on the human subject might well seem incompatible, given that Lacan claims people ‘cannot aim at being whole’, and the Jungian notion of ‘the “total personality” [is a] premise where modern psychotherapy goes off course’.²¹⁹ There are some

²¹⁴ Lacan, ‘The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire’, in *Écrits*, trans. Fink (New York: Norton, 2002), 693.

²¹⁵ Lacan, ‘Intervention on Transference’, in *Feminine Sexuality*, 63-72.

²¹⁶ McGrath, ‘Sexuation in Jung and Lacan’, 5.

²¹⁷ Darian Leader, ‘The Great Unknown’, *The Guardian*, 07/03/2009. <http://tinyurl.com/heg2h5g>. Accessed 03/04/2017.

²¹⁸ McGrath, ‘Sexuation in Jung and Lacan’, 2.

²¹⁹ Lacan, ‘The Meaning of the Phallus’, in *Feminine Sexuality*, 81.

potential areas of crossover between Lacan's and Jung's distinctive and disparate brands of psychoanalysis. They share common themes such as projection, demand and desire, and lack (even if they interpret such terms differently and offer differing solutions to them), so it might be possible to bridge them in some fashion. It is not, however, necessary or even helpful to attempt to integrate Lacanian and Jungian positions in the discussion of this particular opera: because that is not what Tippett attempts to do.

In *The Knot Garden*, Tippett presents a confusing clash and comingling of Jungian and Lacanian ideas. Sometimes, Tippett's depiction of identity, sex, and sexuality seems pessimistic, inconsistent, and somewhat cynical – in other words, Lacanian. At other points, it seems far more optimistic, wholesome, and Jungian in nature. The result is an ambiguous work that seems to exist in a gap between 'intrinsicist' Jungian and 'extrinsicist' Lacanian thought, and which therefore requires an exploration that is attuned to the perspectives of both schools.²²⁰ This thesis will therefore attempt to incorporate both Jungian and Lacanian psychoanalysis into its explorations of *The Knot Garden*, but hold their diverse aims and ideas in tension with each other, in an attempt to create a productive conflict that will provide a fuller picture of Tippett's bewildering depiction of the problems facing modern subjects, the state of contemporary society, and the potential solutions (if any) to both internal and external turmoil.

²²⁰ McGrath, 'Sexuation in Jung and Lacan', 12. According to McGrath, 'for an intrinsicist psychology, wholeness is the actualization of a human potency and the completion of psychological development. For an extrinsicist psychology, wholeness could only come from beyond human nature; the soul is essentially divided, against itself and against others. Such a soul has no inner resources for unifying itself. Read through this theological lens, Jung is an intrinsicist, and Lacan, an extrinsicist' (12).

Part 2

The Knot Garden:

Shakespeare, Sexuality, Psychoanalysis

Chapter 4

ACT I: 'CONFRONTATION', OR TWENTIETH-CENTURY BLUES

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.*

*Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?*

W. B. Yeats, 'The Second Coming' (1919)

The urban labyrinth

Tippett considered several names for his third opera, including *A Touch of Caliban*, *The Garden*, *Charade* (the eventual title for Act III), *The Maze Garden*, and *The Amazing Garden*, before settling on *The Knot Garden*.¹ This title refers to an intricate, maze-like Renaissance garden that through its geometry symbolizes humankind's ability to shape and control nature (see Figure 4.1). *The Knot Garden*'s action does not take place in a literal Tudor garden, however. Tippett's 'knot garden' is instead a surreal, responsive, and participatory space, which stands as a social and psychological metaphor. In the words of Kemp, 'the title and setting of [*The Knot Garden*] derive from the idea that a garden is a projection of someone's inner personality [...] When relationships in the opera become tender, the scene moves towards the idea of a rose garden; when harsh, towards that of a labyrinth'.² The garden, for example, is most active in Act II ('Labyrinth'), when 'it is in total disarray and the maze in operation' while the characters are being thrown into their most intense encounters with each other.³

The Knot Garden's main title and Act II subtitle immediately indicate the opera's status a labyrinth story; in fact, when *The Knot Garden* received its French premiere in 1994, it was retitled *Le Jardin labyrinthe*.⁴ The labyrinth has been a popular trope in Western art since the tale of Ariadne, Theseus, and the Minotaur in Greek mythology. Bloom even wonders if there is any other image that has so appositely 'fuse[d ...] high literature and life' across millennia.⁵ Labyrinths primarily symbolise the choices and difficulties facing individuals, and the possibility that a single wrong decision at any point might result in disaster. Borges – the twentieth-century artist who engaged most with this symbol, and whose 1962 anthology was actually entitled *Labyrinths* – simply describes the labyrinth as 'a symbol of bewilderment, a

¹ Eric Walter White, *Tippett and His Operas* (London: Barrie & Jenkins), 95-7.

² Ian Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music* (London: Eulenberg, 1984), 405.

³ Michael Tippett, *The Knot Garden* libretto (London: Schott, 1969), 3.

⁴ Meirion Bowen, *Michael Tippett*, 2nd ed. (London: Robson, 1997), 59.

⁵ Harold Bloom, *Bloom's Literary Themes: The Labyrinth* (New York: Infobase, 2009), xvi.



Figure 4.1. A knot garden.

symbol of being lost'.⁶ The labyrinth was a particularly frequent and significant trope in much work from the twentieth century, when it became arguably the most pertinent artistic symbol for the alienation, confusion, and turmoil of modern subjects. Labyrinths – both literal and metaphorical – are a key feature of work by Borges, Joyce, Paz, García Márquez, Eco, Kafka, Mondrian, Miro, Picasso, Escher, Hundertwasser (see Figure 4.2), and Birtwistle, among others.⁷ Mass-market labyrinth films such as *The Shining*, *Pan's Labyrinth*, and *Inception* (see Figure 4.3) further demonstrate the symbol's enduring appeal for modern artists and audiences.

Tippett might well have taken inspiration for his title and setting from Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, in which the King of Navarre's 'curious-knotted garden' (I. 1) is a central symbolic feature. Louis Adrian Montrose suggests that, in this play, the garden represents both 'self-entrapment' and 'transcendence', and the 'labyrinthine self-deceptions of the misguided wits which effloresce within its confines' – a description that applies equally well to Tippett's

⁶ Jorge Luis Borges, in Nicomedes Suárez-Aráuz, William Barnstone, Roberto Alifano, and Borges, 'Jorge Luis Borges: Interview', *The Massachusetts Review* 24, no. 3 (1983), 512. See also Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings* (London: Penguin, 2000).

⁷ Birtwistle employs the idea of the labyrinth in *The Mask of Orpheus* (1986), *Yan Yan Tethera* (1986), and *The Minotaur* (2008). Beard notes that an urban-pastoral split is also an integral feature of *Yan Yan Tethera*, while Birtwistle's use of string glissandi in this opera is reminiscent of the openings of both *The Knot Garden* and Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. See 'Yan Yan Tethera: Pastoral Labyrinths and the Scene-Agent Ratio', in *Harrison Birtwistle's Operas and Music Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 159-95.

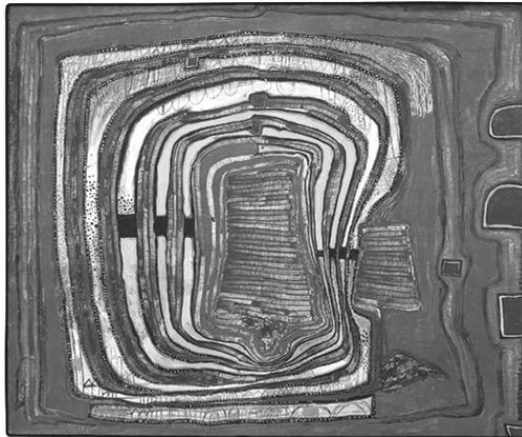


Figure 4.2. Friedrich Hundertwasser, *Spiral in Gold Rain (Byantinisches Labyrinth)* (1961).

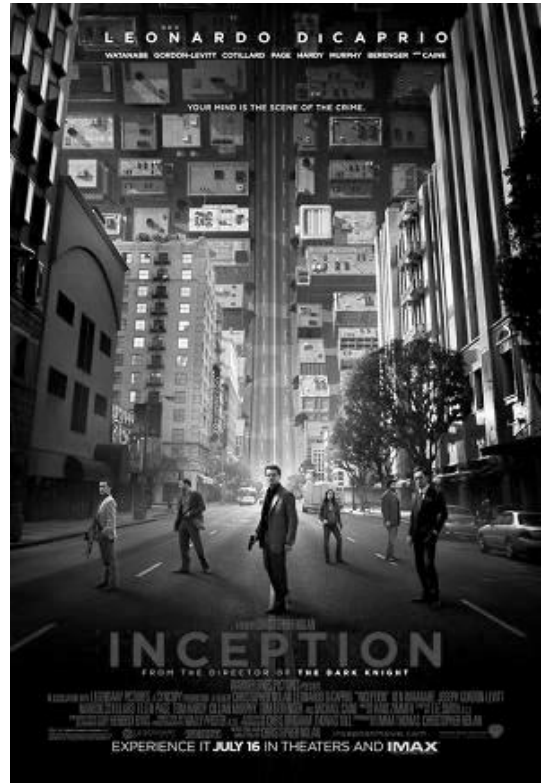


Figure 4.3. Promotional poster for *Inception* (dir. Christopher Nolan, 2010).⁸

opera.⁹ The labyrinth is also an integral feature in *The Tempest*, *The Knot Garden*'s parent work. Along with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest* is probably the most labyrinthine of all Shakespeare's plays. Its action is shot through with references to mazes and manoeuvrings: in Act V, for example, Alonso proclaims 'This is as strange a maze as e'er men trod' (V. 1), while the first four acts conclude with an invitation to move: 'Come, follow', 'Lead the way', 'follow, I pray you', and 'follow me'. There are also a number of references to 'amazement' throughout the play. Prospero's island might be interpreted as a shifting maze, constructed by him and Ariel for the shipwrecked courtiers to complete, with the two of them and Caliban acting as guides

⁸ Note the labyrinth background to this poster. Nolan makes *Inception*'s classical basis even clearer by naming the female architect of the film's maze-like 'dreamscapes' Ariadne.

⁹ Louis Adrian Montrose, "'Folly, in Wisdom Hatch'd': The Exemplary Comedy of *Love's Labour's Lost*", *Comparative Drama* 11, no. 2 (1977), 150-6.

and obstacles at various points.¹⁰ In the words of Vaughan and Vaughan, ‘the characters perambulate in small groups from one part of the island to another; only at Prospero’s final invitation, “Please you, draw near”, do they join in one place [once] their physical and psychological journeys through the island’s maze have ended’.¹¹ It is not difficult to see why *The Tempest* might have appealed to Tippett as a model for his opera about an assortment of bewildered and frustrated characters attempting to negotiate the emotional and moral conundrums of mid-twentieth century life.

In a libretto note, Tippett writes that ‘if the [knot] garden were ever finally visible, it might be a high-walled house garden shutting out an industrial city’.¹² Following the mythological settings and characters of *The Midsummer Marriage* and *King Priam*, *The Knot Garden* was the first of Tippett’s operas to be set in modern times and feature unmistakably modern people – albeit with several Shakespearian and Classical resonances.¹³ *The Knot Garden*’s characters are urban subjects shaped by, distressed by, and rebelling against their environment. The ‘continuing tussle with the modern urban jungle’, to borrow Whittall’s phrase, would also be the topic of Tippett’s next two operas, *The Ice Break* and *New Year*.¹⁴

¹⁰ Roger Stritmatter and Lynne Kositsky intriguingly contend that *The Tempest* was first performed as *A Tragidye of the Spanishe Maz*, several years before its commonly accepted first performance date of 1611. They do not adequately explain, however, why Shakespeare – not usually one for difficult titles – would have felt the need to give his play a strange name such as *The Spanish Maze*. *The Tempest* is not unambiguously a tragedy or Spanish: it has a relatively happy ending and is more concerned with Italian politics, even if Spain held Milan and Naples at this time. The opening tempest is also considerably more important to the plot than any maze references. See Stritmatter and Kositsky, ‘*The Spanish Maze* and the Date of *The Tempest*’, *The Oxfordian* 10 (2007), 9-19.

¹¹ Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, in Vaughan and Vaughan (eds.), *The Arden Shakespeare (Third Series): The Tempest* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 17.

¹² Tippett, *The Knot Garden* libretto, 3.

¹³ Tippett’s reference to the labyrinth, allusions to a plethora of classical literature, and use of *The Tempest* as the basis for *The Knot Garden* might prompt consideration of whether his third opera really does signal a ‘retreat from mythology’, as Puffett submits (see Derrick Puffett, ‘Tippett and the Retreat from Mythology’, *The Musical Times* 136, no. 1823 (1995), 6-14). Perhaps the opera might be regarded more fruitfully as a transmutation of mythological or classical themes into a modern context.

¹⁴ Arnold Whittall, ‘*Byzantium: Tippett, Yeats and the Limitations of Affinity*’, *Music and Letters* 74, no. 3 (1993), 391. *The Knot Garden*’s song cycle sequel, *Songs for Dov*, also explores, in Tippett’s words, ‘a highly developed city culture, a polyglot culture, and its relationship with an older pastoral culture’ (Tippett, ‘*Dov’s Journey*’, in *Music of the Angels: Essays and Sketchbooks of Michael Tippett*, ed. Bowen (London: Eulenberg, 1980), 236).

Several writers over the past century and more have shared Tippet's interest in and anxiety about the psychological effects of modern city life. For example, in his 1903 essay, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', Georg Simmel attempts to capture the experience of living in a developing urban labyrinth – in his case, London. Simmel writes that 'one never feels as lonely and as deserted as in this metropolitan crush of persons', and that modern individuals fear 'being levelled, swallowed up in the social-technological mechanism'.¹⁵ Modern people, writes Simmel, possess 'a slight aversion [to each other], a mutual strangeness and repulsion which, in close contact which has arisen any way whatever, can break out into hatred and conflict'.¹⁶ The modern subject's reserved, cold, angst-ridden personality is a reaction to the sheer scale and business of city life, since if one were to engage with all other people then one would be 'completely atomized internally and would fall into an unthinkable mental condition'.¹⁷

David Harvey argues that, by the late 1960s and early 1970s, the modern urban individual's overwhelming feelings of isolation and nihilism had intensified to an unmanageable level. The (post)modern city was 'much too complicated a place ever to be [...] disciplined'.¹⁸ It was 'a labyrinth, an encyclopaedia, an emporium, a theatre', a place of 'subjective individualism'.¹⁹ And although the city was undoubtedly a site of previously unimaginable opportunity,

too many people [were losing] their way in the labyrinth, it was simply too easy for us to lose each other as well as ourselves. And if there was something liberating about the possibility of playing many diverse roles there was also something stressful and deeply unsettling about it.

¹⁵ Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' (1903), in Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (eds.), *The Blackwell City Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 16 & 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990), 5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Beneath all that lay the grumbling threat of inexplicable violence, the inevitable companion of that omnipresent tendency for social life to dissolve into total chaos.²⁰

There was, therefore, according to Harvey, ‘a pressing need to confront the psychological, sociological, technical, organizational, and political problems of massive urbanisation’.²¹

It is exactly this scenario, these types of characters, and these issues that Tippett grapples with in *The Knot Garden*, an opera about the unmooring psychological effects of the urban labyrinth on the (post)modern individual. The garden – the equivalent of *The Tempest*’s island – is both a refuge from and a metaphor for the outside world. By moving through its labyrinthine form, the characters can painfully work through their various problems and regain a sense of agency and understanding in order to re-enter and renegotiate the maze of the external metropolis. In this sense, *The Knot Garden* can be compared with another British Shakespeare opera from the 1960s, Britten’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Both Tippett and Britten use a dangerous, bewildering pastoral space to probe their characters’ urban psyches, teetering relationships, and fluid genders and sexualities. Tippett’s knot garden and Britten’s magical wood might be considered kinds of ‘cyberspace’, which reveal to their on-stage characters the uncomfortable fact that ‘virtual reality’ is no more of a fantasy construct than their everyday locales.²² These finite, virtual worlds offer the characters an opportunity to reinvent themselves and experiment with different identities, irrespective of their social and biological ‘realities’. Such acts of disidentification might seem frivolous, but, as Slavoj Žižek notes, they very often involve more than ‘just playing’: ‘Is it not that, in the guise of a fiction, of “it’s just a game”, a

²⁰ Ibid., 6.

²¹ Ibid., 25.

²² Jonathan Raban, author of *Soft City* (1974), which serves as Harvey’s exemplar of a postmodern labyrinth work, observes that the ‘freedom to experiment with personae, to play out fantasies of self, once the unique gift of the metropolis, is [now] available on everyone’s laptop, as they masquerade anonymously behind screen names and avatars’ (‘My Own Private Metropolis’, *Financial Times*, 09/08/2008. <http://tinyurl.com/j3z4t68>. Accessed 03/04/2017).

subject can articulate and stage features of [their] symbolic identity – sadistic, “perverse”, and so on – which [they] would never be able to admit in [their] ‘real’ intersubjective contacts?’²³

‘Surely some revelation is at hand’

Labyrinths are not merely representations of indecision, alienation, and bewilderment. Despite their terrifying nature, they offer hope; they do have a centre that holds, to modify Yeats’s famous words from ‘The Second Coming’ (quoted at the opening of this chapter), albeit one that is exceptionally difficult to find. As Jennifer Munroe observes, ‘the labyrinth paradoxically suggests captivity within its maze-like structure *and* the potential for liberation if one reaches the centre’.²⁴ For Frank Dauster, Borges’s labyrinthine stories deal with the search for a kernel of pure, salvatory truth in the middle of modern life:

At the centre [of the labyrinth] lies something closely akin to the mystics’ communion with the infinite, an experience which reveals the fundamental truths of existence [...] If human existence is justified and explained by one moment, this moment is the centre of the labyrinth, the moment which virtually all Borges’ characters seek.²⁵

Borges himself expresses uncertainty about whether there is a transcendental centre to the labyrinth of the contemporary world, or even if modern life should be properly characterised as labyrinthine: ‘It is probable that the universe is not a labyrinth but simply chaos, and if that is so

²³ Slavoj Žižek, ‘Class Struggle or Postmodernism? Yes, Please!’, in Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality* (London: Verso, 2000), 103. Examples of this sort of temporary and revealing ‘game play’ might include constructing a social media persona far removed from one’s usual personality, role-playing in the bedroom, or becoming unusually aggressive when playing sport.

²⁴ Jennifer Munroe, *Gender and the Garden in Early Modern English Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 112.

²⁵ Frank Dauster, ‘Notes on Borges’s Labyrinths’, *Hispanic Review* 30, no. 2 (1962), 144–6.

we are indeed lost'.²⁶ He does, however, concur with Dauster's view that 'in the idea of the labyrinth there is also hope, or salvation'.²⁷

The different positions that Borges outlines here neatly sum up the basic Lacanian and Jungian views of modern people, who are 'without a cosmos', or 'homeless'.²⁸ For Lacan, the modern subject is fundamentally and irretrievably 'adrift in a reality that has no order or meaning'.²⁹ He or she is an 'empty subject living in a disenchanted world, a subject deprived of roots in "the pre-modern universe of meaning"'.³⁰ For Jung, however, the modern individual is more of a "lost soul", shipwrecked in the disenchanted universe of modernity, trying to rediscover their place in "the pre-modern universe of wisdom and its sexo-cosmology, the universe of harmonious correspondences between the human microcosm and the macrocosm".³¹ To put it Borgesian terms, Lacan's universe is 'chaos', while Jung's is a solvable labyrinth.

The Knot Garden, like many of Borges's stories, presents 'a series of individuals who are seeking, essentially, the centre of their individual labyrinths'.³² It is an opera about modern individuals' search for 'the eternal and the immutable' in the face of the 'transient, the fleeting, the contingent', to use Baudelaire's words that so often feature in discussions of modernity.³³ Tippett felt that 'The Second Coming' was an apt summation of the mid-century zeitgeist, citing it in one of his diagnoses of the lonely and chaotic nature of contemporary society.

²⁶ Borges, in 'Jorge Luis Borges: Interview', 513.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ S. J. McGrath, 'Sexuation in Jung and Lacan', *International Journal of Jungian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2010), 6.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid. McGrath's quotes are taken from Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder: On Schelling and Related Matters* (London: Verso, 2002), 209.

³² Dauster, 'Notes on Borges's Labyrinths', 142.

³³ Charles Baudelaire, 'The painter of modern life', cited in Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 10.

There is a general dislocation of centre [...] If one is not an Einstein stretching to bring the anarchy anew to order; or if one is not able to wall oneself up in an older fundamentalism, from the Bible or Koran; or if one does not receive divine messages from the Collective Unconscious; then indeed one has cause to be dislocated, and what then can a mere mortal do?³⁴

Tippett's mention of older fundamentalisms and dislocation indicates his awareness of the nihilistic modern space opened up by what Nietzsche identified as the 'Death of God' – a vacuum that *The Knot Garden* takes place in and attempts to overcome. Nietzsche recognised that by the end of the nineteenth century, the Christian God – the ultimate authority and source of all meaning and value in Western society and metaphysics for thousands of years; 'the centre', to put it another way – had been 'murdered' by modern science and rationality, and the increasing secularisation of European society.³⁵ Nietzsche did not lament the amputation of Christianity as a guiding, unifying ideal for Western humanity, or the potential anarchy unleashed by its deposition, at least in the short term. For Nietzsche, the Death of God, although undoubtedly frightening, is a necessary and liberating realisation – a potential opportunity for progressive people to cast off the debilitating restrictions of traditional religious morals and build a new, humanistic ethos.

We philosophers and 'free spirits' feel, when we hear the news that 'the old god is dead', as if a new dawn shone on us [...] At long last our ships may venture out again, venture out to face any

³⁴ Tippett, 'What Do We Perceive in Modern Art?', in *Moving into Aquarius* (St Albans: Paladin, 1974), 86. Tippett cites Yeats as a major inspiration, writing of how 'through Eliot, I came to read and identify closely with Yeats' (in *Music of the Angels*, 118). For more on Tippett's relationship with Yeats (and Nietzsche) see Whittall, 'Byzantium: Tippett, Yeats and the Limitations of Affinity', and Chapters 3 and 7 in David Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett: Modern Times and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 261). Tippett's mention of Jung's Collective Unconscious in this quote gives an indication of where *The Knot Garden*'s characters will find their eventual salvation.

³⁵ 'God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?' (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (London: Vintage, 1974), 181).

danger; all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, *our* sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never been such an 'open sea'.³⁶

Like Nietzsche, Tippett did not perceive the Death of God to be a negative event. Although he was not an atheist, Tippett did not subscribe to traditional religions, and was excited by the search for a new centre to the modern labyrinth.

I believe [...] in a reality of the spiritual world within, experienced, in my own case, by some intuitive, introspective apprehension of a kind which, in the past, was formulated generally by dogmatic, revelatory, received religions [...] It is not possible to believe in a cosmology of incomprehensible, infinite space, of geological time running into billions, and evolutionary time running into millions of years, *and* to believe in the costumes and dogmas of the great male-dominated authoritarian religions of the past, without a tension in the psyche that is manifest or repressed [... We need] a new ritual, in which we are all there, fully defined in terms of sex, space, and time.³⁷

According to Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins, 'an extended theme in [Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*] is the danger that science will be treated as [a] new religion, serving as a basis for retaining that same damaging psychological habit that the Christian religion developed'.³⁸ Similarly, for Tippett, the ultimate answer to the riddle of modern life was not science, technology, and positivism. In his writings, he continually highlights the destructive potential of science, and dismisses the illusion given by modern technology that the world is united.

Sputnik tells us now that the world is round. With its mechanized voice it is an image of a scarcely credible scientific age. It is the frothy bauble of the unappeasable urge to industrialize

³⁶ Ibid., 280.

³⁷ Tippett, 'What I Believe' (1978 postscript), in *Music of the Angels*, 52-4.

³⁸ Bernd Magnus and Kathleen Higgins, 'Nietzsche's Works and their Themes', in Magnus and Higgins (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 36.

the world. It is on its dark side the herald of ever more limitless weapons of warfare, youngest brain-children of our unappeasable death-wish. Sputnik then, with the superficial vision of its technological eye, saw the world is one. But emotionally one – that we certainly are not.³⁹

He also underlines ‘the tremendous need of our time to reach further into the interior world as some balance against our social preoccupation with science and technology’, and expresses an aversion to Western society’s privileging of science and technology over art, blaming this trend for the emotional void in the modern world and the ‘disintegration of our spiritual sensibility within an insatiable materialism’.⁴⁰

Tippett’s Nietzschean thoughts on science and technology chime with those of several of his contemporaries. Gary Brower explains how Borges, like Tippett, uses the idea of the labyrinth ‘within that orientation in contemporary literature which attacks the Western rationalist tradition’:

Trying to fashion an order out of a chaos, modern man has accepted a “rationalist cosmos” of science, technology, the machine, bureaucracies and the Positivist idea of progress. But this has led to a dehumanization because once he accepts the quantification of exterior reality as an answer to his problem(s), it becomes an uncontrollable maze’.⁴¹

The potentially destructive consequence of Western devotion to technology and positivism is also a predominant theme in the writings of Heidegger and Adorno. Adorno describes a contemporary condition ‘of society and of scientific thought that would expel unregimented experience’.⁴² Heidegger, meanwhile, in Albert Hofstadter’s words, observes that ‘this time of

³⁹ Tippett, ‘Too Many Choices’, in *Moving into Aquarius*, 134.

⁴⁰ Tippett, ‘Art and Man’, in *Music of the Angels*, 29; ‘Persönliches Bekenntnis’, in *Moving into Aquarius*, 119.

⁴¹ Gary L. Brower, ‘Borges and Paz: Death by Labyrinth and Resurrection by Dialectic’, *Latin American Literary Review* 2, no. 4 (1974), 22.

⁴² Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1987), 123.

technology is a destitute time, the time of the world's night, in which man has even forgotten that he has forgotten the true nature of being'.⁴³ For Heidegger, modernity is a time when everything (including human beings) has been reduced to the level of resource: something from which energy, money, and time can be generated. Modern people lack an awareness of anything beyond this 'technological', capitalist horizon. 'God' – not the obsolete Christian idea, but the linguistic function of a sacred authority above technology and commerce – offers the only recourse to discovering lost values and a new, collective ethos.

Everything is functioning. That is precisely what is awesome, that everything functions, that the functioning propels everything more and more toward further functioning, and that technicity increasingly dislodges man and uproots him from the earth [...] All our relationships have become merely technical ones. It is no longer upon an earth that man lives today [...] The uprooting of man that is now taking place is the end [of everything human ...] Only a god can save us.⁴⁴

The Knot Garden will ultimately reveal such a 'god' to its characters: a Jungian truth at the centre of the labyrinth. Only at the end of Act III, however, after much painful meandering and many wrong turns, do the characters finally glimpse a possible answer to dislocated humanity's troubles. In Act I, by contrast, the characters meet – in some cases for the first time – and their personalities and relationships fracture dramatically. Their personal issues are laid bare and intensified, and salvation appears a long way off.

⁴³ Albert Hofstadter, 'Introduction', in Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, ed. and trans. Hofstadter (New York: Harper Collins, 1971), xv.

⁴⁴ Martin Heidegger, 'Only a God Can Save Us: The *Spiegel* Interview (1966)', trans. William J. Richardson, in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, ed. Thomas Sheehan (New Jersey: Precedent, 1981), 56-7.

‘Prospero, man of power’: Mangus-Freud-Schoenberg

[We] gang up into groups or congregations and elect a leader, on whom to project the notion of a centre, and who will speak as falconer to falcon, as teacher to disciple, as God to creature. And I mean not only a social or political leader. It happens everywhere, great or small; for instance in the world of sport; and, I am afraid, even in the world of psychoanalytic therapy, and certainly in the world of music.

Tippett, ‘What Do We Perceive in Modern Art?’

The Knot Garden begins, predictably enough, with a tempest (although this would appear to be a collective psychological squall rather than a literal one), and Mangus the psychoanalyst lying on a couch ‘as a still point in [the] whirling storm’.⁴⁵ Mangus’s name aligns him with Prospero, recalling ‘the Renaissance *magus*, the seer who sought to improve the world through his magical art’.⁴⁶ His saviour complex and pretensions to Prospero-like omnipotence are apparent from his opening lines.

MANGUS

So, if I dream,

It’s clear I’m Prospero:

Man of power.

He put them all to rights.

The Knot Garden, I. 1

The orchestra follows Mangus’s vocal movements, perhaps indicating that he does hold a certain level of ‘power’. Yet his self-absorption and hubris are emphasised musically by his extended, jumpy melismas, which are especially prominent and ridiculous on ‘Pro-spe-ro-o-ho’

⁴⁵ Tippett, *The Knot Garden* libretto, 5.

⁴⁶ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 407.

Allegro (♩ = 132)
MANGUS
p *f con vigore*
 It's clear I'm — Pro - spe - ro: (ho)
 Cl., B.Cl., Bsn.
p *non troppo* *f con vigore* *p*
 Timp. *p* *non troppo*
 Pf. Bsn. Hrn. *p*

Example 4.1. *The Knot Garden*, I. 1, 'It's clear I'm Prospero' (Mangus).

(see Example 4.1). He ends the scene in 'a pose of self-satisfaction', after his couch disappears at his command.

Tippett notes that, in *The Tempest*, 'Prospero stands in for God: he, possessing complete magical powers, can do everything, and in the end, he can demand the act of contrition that results in forgiveness and the possibility of leaving the island to return once more to civilization'.⁴⁷ Mangus, who at one point describes himself as a 'priest-magician' (I. 6), would like to do the same as Prospero for his patients: act as a God substitute in a godless world, and use his 'magic powers' to help them reach a point of reconciliation. His attitude is perfectly understandable, since, as Bruce Fink notes, psychoanalysis has 'taken over the former role of confession for many and prayer/atonement for others, situating the analyst in [a] God-like position [...] fit to deliberate on all questions of normal and abnormal, right and wrong, good and bad'.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Tippett, 'Dreams of Power, Dreams of Love', in *Tippett on Music*, ed. Bowen (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 221.

⁴⁸ Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 88.

Mangus would appear to be a caricature of a Freudian ‘ego psychologist’, a person whom Fink describes as a ‘judgmental, all-knowing Other’.⁴⁹ The Jungian Tippett had limited time for Freudian analytical approaches, believing them to be inadequate for the modern age.

Without in any way belittling Freud, I know that I cannot abide entirely in his therapeutic examination of the collective primitive in us [...] Jung has found a way to bring [the] collective non-primitive into relation again with our expressly rationalistic, empirical modern minds. And this way is forced on us by the terrible psychic unbalance caused by our excessive materialism. Some of us are driven by other agonies to a deeper analysis, [where] we meet on the labyrinthine paths of the collective unconscious.⁵⁰

In fact, as a result on his own experiences, Tippett appears to have disliked psychoanalysts in general, not just Freudian ones. He recounts how, in a session with the ‘maverick Jungian analyst’, John Layard, he was informed that he should ‘give up homosexuality’, or his ‘anima would die’.⁵¹

That ended my consultations with Layard. By then I knew that Jung himself could not treat the considerable number of individuals who wanted to be his patients and he regarded self-analysis as an acceptable alternative [...] Independent of Layard, I made my own analyses from a Jungian standpoint. I continued this dialogue with myself for nine months.⁵²

Mangus is quite possibly the parodic embodiment of Tippett’s issues with judgemental psychoanalysts such as Layard, who act, in his words, as ‘falconer to falcon, as teacher to disciple, as God to creature’.⁵³

⁴⁹ Ibid., xiii.

⁵⁰ Tippett, ‘What I Believe’, 51.

⁵¹ Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues* (London: Pimlico, 1991), 63.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Tippett, ‘What Do We Perceive in Modern Art?’, 87.

Kemp writes that Mangus's status as a creative artist of sorts also means that he, like Prospero for Shakespeare, can be regarded as something of a self-portrait for Tippett, and *The Knot Garden*, like *The Tempest*, 'might be interpreted as an allegory about the creative artist'.⁵⁴ Kemp believes that Tippett 'accepts the basic Shakespearean premise: Prospero-Shakespeare, the artist, who through the transformative imaginative power of his art can only fulfil the superhuman task of bringing harmony into the world'.⁵⁵ Tippett, however, argues that in *The Knot Garden*, 'the romantic notion of the creative artist as someone who can solve mankind's problems, dies hard'.⁵⁶ In actuality, Tippett's exploration of the creative artist's role in modern society is far more complicated than either of these quotes suggests, and only reaches some form of conclusion at the end of the opera, when Mangus's authority and superiority seemingly collapse completely.⁵⁷

Intriguingly, Mangus's main musical association is a twelve-note 'Tempest' motif that opens the opera (see Example 4.2). Tippett dismissed Schoenberg's serialism as 'alphabetic',⁵⁸ so the appearance of a twelve-note pattern at the very beginning of *The Knot Garden* is something of a surprise, perhaps even implying that the rest of the opera will follow suit. In fact, according to Kemp, this motif 'exerts a stronger influence on the opera than any other' musical element, from the opera's surface features to its overall structure.⁵⁹ Many of *The Knot Garden*'s key moments – Denise's aria, the blues ensemble, Flora's Schubert song, Thea's aria – are in B or closely related keys, and transformations of the 'Tempest' motif are heard at a number of 'tempestuous' moments in the opera, often being used to initiate and break up action. The motif

⁵⁴ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 413.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Tippett, 'Dreams of Power, Dreams of Love', 220.

⁵⁷ See 'Prospero's a fake' in Chapter 6 of this thesis for an analysis of this moment.

⁵⁸ Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 274.

⁵⁹ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 430.

THE KNOT GARDEN

ACT I

Confrontation

MICHAEL TIPPETT

The image shows a musical score for the opening of Act I, Confrontation, from the opera *The Knot Garden* by Michael Tippett. The score is in 9/8 time and features a twelve-note 'Tempest' motif. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' with a metronome marking of approximately 126. The score includes dynamics such as *pp*, *cresc. poco a poco*, and *(p)*. The instrumentation includes W.W. (+Str. *gliss.*) *poco pes.*, Horn + Tuba, and later (+Pl.), (+Tpt. + Harp). The score is divided into two systems, with the first system ending at measure 12 and the second system starting at measure 13. A box labeled '1' is placed above the first system.

Example 4.2. *The Knot Garden*, I. 1, opening twelve-note 'Tempest' motif.

features particularly prominently at the beginning of the Act II 'labyrinth' section, and in between the characters' duets in this act.⁶⁰

In the same essay in which he mentions 'The Second Coming', Tippett actually expresses a grudging admiration for Schoenberg, describing him as the composer who 'experienced [the] dislocation of centre most courageously, consistently, and sensitively'.

[Schoenberg] believed indeed that the material of music itself mirrored this dislocation [... He] wished to give order to the centre of these centreless musical notes, that is the twelve equal semitones of the equal tempered octave, by arranging them for the purposes of each composition into a subjectively chosen alphabetical row, which is to be constantly repeated. This is what I

⁶⁰ See the beginning of Chapter 5 of this thesis for a discussion of the motif's reprisal at the beginning of Act II, and its potential relation to Lacan's 'symbolic order'.

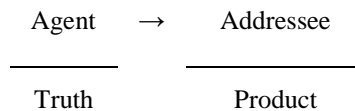
would call Schoenberg's fundamentalism, absolutely justified for himself but which he failed to justify rationally to the general satisfaction of his peers.⁶¹

Elsewhere, Tippett aligns Schoenberg with Freud, portraying them both as flawed revolutionaries.

Like Freud, [Schoenberg] was an idealist driven by a demon. Like Freud his demon drove him down a road of over-simplification, towards a dogma – the law of the twelve-tone system [...] That [their students] induced in [them] a God-the-father attitude is equally apparent.⁶²

The pairing of Mangus with a Schoenbergian tone row, then, would appear to be something of a pointed Tippettian joke. What better way for Tippett immediately to undermine his hubristic Freudian analyst than by aligning him with Schoenberg, a composer whom Tippett similarly regarded as revolutionary, egotistical, and fundamentally wrong.

Tippett's criticisms of 'God-the-father' figures and egocentric analytical approaches align closely with Lacan's ideas about the interactions between analysts and analysands. While Lacan refers to numerous different types of 'discourse' during his seminars, he considers there to be four predominant forms both within and outside of the psychoanalytic setting: Master, University, Analyst, and Hysteric.⁶³ These four discourses all operate according to the following formula:

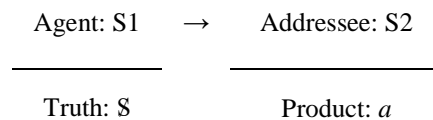


⁶¹ Tippett, 'What Do We Perceive in Modern Art?', 87.

⁶² Tippett, 'Moving into Aquarius', in *Moving into Aquarius*, 37.

⁶³ Lacan first outlines this idea across his Seminar XVII. See Jacques Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis: Book XVII*, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 2007). For further explanation, see Fink, 'The Four Discourses', in *The Lacanian Subject*, 129-37.

In each of the discourses, four mathemes – S1 (the ‘master’ signifier), S2 (one or more ‘lesser’ signifiers), \$ (the ‘split’ human subject), and *a* (*objet a*, or the object of desire) – occupy the four positions. Mangus’s outlook at this point perfectly exemplifies the discourse of the master, in which the mathemes are arranged as follows:



Put into words, this arrangement means that the master signifier addresses all the other signifiers that make up the ‘symbolic order’; that is to say, the surrounding world of speaking beings. According to Fink, in the discourse of the master, ‘the master must be obeyed – not because we’ll all be better off that way or for some other such rationale – but just because he or she says so. No justification is given for his or her power: it just is’.⁶⁴ Here, for instance, Mangus attempts to impose his authority and wisdom upon his analysands, hopefully without challenge: like Prospero, Schoenberg, and Freud, he tries to create order from chaos, in the same fashion that a gardener constructs a knot garden. Mangus’s wish is that his patients, by following his instructions, will produce some kind of knowledge or unconscious insight (*a*), whatever that might be; that they will, in his words, be ‘put to rights’.

While the master lays claim to uncontested authority, however, they must attempt to mask awareness of the truth that they are not a perfect, ‘whole’ subject (\$). In other words, ‘master Mangus’ must try to hide the truth that he is deeply fallible, all too human, just like his analysands. Hence, he cannot treat his patients while in the guise of his insecure and inadequate everyday persona, and he decides to act as a pompous ‘Prospero’ instead. Mangus’s Schoenbergian musical association further bolsters this facade, and highlights his attempts to command the symbolic order in the same way that Schoenberg, in Tippett’s judgement,

⁶⁴ Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 131.

attempted to ‘give order’ to ‘centreless musical notes’ through an ‘alphabetical’ system. The problem with discourses, however, as Mangus and the audience will soon discover, is that they are not entirely fixed or controllable: the unstable secondary signifiers (S2) – in other words, the analysands, and with them the rest of Mangus’s constructed universe – might decide not to play along, and to adopt a different discourse altogether.

Thea’s lady garden

Following his opening gambit, Mangus converses with Thea when she emerges ‘from the inner garden, stooping occasionally to tend the flowers’.⁶⁵ Thea’s name associates her with Theia, a Greek goddess of the moon, which, Catherine Clément notes, is a feminine symbol suggesting menstruation, ‘fertility and necessary union’, and ‘shining and terrifying divinity’.⁶⁶ Perhaps, then, Thea might also be linked with the witch Sycorax from *The Tempest*, a fearsome female figure who was ‘so strong/ That could control the moon’ (V. 1). Sycorax is ultimately defeated by Prospero, and in *The Knot Garden*’s libretto Tippett aligns Thea with another dangerous sorceress who is eventually bested by a male antagonist: the Greek goddess Circe.⁶⁷ Thea’s allusive name(s), then, seem to mark her out as an independent, powerful, but soon-to-be tamed woman.

Thea’s association with Circe, who is renowned for her knowledge of plants and herbs, also indicates her special relationship with the knot garden. It has already been noted that the garden does not only indicate one character’s psychological state, but responds to the overall situation and the emotions of whichever characters might be on stage. If the garden were to be associated with one particular character, however, it would be Thea, who is ‘a gardener’,

⁶⁵ Tippett, *The Knot Garden* libretto, 5.

⁶⁶ Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (London: Virago, 1989), 97-9.

⁶⁷ This allusion occurs in Act I, Scene 10, when Thea unexpectedly attempts to seduce Mel, ‘to convince herself, trapped as she is in a dead marriage, that she is still attractive’ (Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 407). In Book 10 of *The Odyssey*, Circe invites Odysseus’s crew to dine with her, before turning them into swine. Circe attempts to seduce Odysseus and take his manhood, but Odysseus outwits her and forces her to transform his crew back. The two then become lovers for a year.

repeatedly refers to her ‘garden’, and speaks in botanical metaphors. According to Munroe, during the Renaissance, gardens became ‘associated with creativity, agency, and feminine identity [... They] demarcated a domain where women might exercise creative decision-making’.⁶⁸ They also, however, demonstrated women’s ‘loss of economic power and [an] increased pressure [...] to withdraw to private, domestic spaces [... Gardening] became part of an evolving definition of [amateur] feminine activity that devalued women’s accomplishments and further entrenched their positions in diminutive relation to men’s’.⁶⁹ It makes perfect sense, therefore, that the opera’s eponymous garden ostensibly belongs to Thea, who occupies a traditional female gender role, similar to that of a Renaissance woman. She compulsively tends to her garden while her husband, Faber – whose name, in male stereotype, means ‘maker’ – works professionally as a civil engineer. Thea’s garden references often also seem to serve as metaphors for Thea’s frustrated sexuality. In Act I, Scene 2, for example, Thea wonders whether her ‘playboy’ husband will ever ‘go with me/ Deep into my garden’. When she sings of ‘touch[ing] the tap root to [her] inward sap’ (see Example 4.3), her vocal line evocatively reaches a high A₂ climax on ‘touch’, while pianissimo strings suggest imaginary heightened pleasure.

In the early stages of the opera, the garden, in Lacanian terms, is Thea’s ‘master signifier’: ‘that which assures [...] unity, the unity of the subject’s copulation with knowledge’.⁷⁰ In other words, it is the thing in Thea’s life around which everything else revolves. In a clinical setting, the ‘master signifier’ is, in Fink’s words, ‘a dead end, a stopping point, a term, word, or phrase that puts an end to association, that grinds the patient’s discourse to a halt’.⁷¹ At the beginning of Act I, for example, Thea – accompanied by the sharp, severe strings that frequently characterise her criticisms of other characters – rebuffs the assistance of Mangus, the analyst

⁶⁸ Munroe, *Gender and the Garden in Early Modern English Literature*, 97.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 97-8.

⁷⁰ Lacan, ‘The Rat in the Maze’, in *Encore: On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge: Book XX: 1972-1973*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Fink (New York: Norton, 1998), 143.

⁷¹ Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 135.

rit. ———— 26 Andante (♩=116) *più p* (turning away) (+ Fl. colla voce)

in my gar - den, where I

8va

pes. *pp* *poco* *pes.*

Celli + D.B. *pes.* *pes.*

ossia

THEA *dolciss.*

touch the tap - root to my in-ward

3 *Vlns. pp* *poco* *pp*

27 THEA (They hold a meditative pose for a moment)

sap.

8va *3* *3* *3* *1*

Celesta *pp*

Temple Blocks + Pf. *pp secco*

Hrns. 3 pes. *3 pes.* *pes.*

pp *poco* *pp*

Vcl. + D.B. *pes.* *pes.* *pes.*

Example 4.3. *The Knot Garden*, I. 2, 'where I touch the tap root to my inward sap' (Thea).

whom she has given the task of fixing her marriage, as soon as he mentions her garden. Thea is Mangus's primary analysand, and presents the most consistent and perceptive challenge to his authority over the course of the opera.⁷² Even at this stage, however, there is evidence of tension between them, with Thea refusing Mangus's horticultural – that is to say, psychological (perhaps even psychosexual) – assistance.

MANGUS

Ah, Thea.

I thought I'd help you in your garden.

(With a conjurer's flourish he produces a pair of secateurs)

I could cut the roses.

THEA

(With authority)

Only I may prune this garden.

Give me the secateurs.

Planting is rough; yet needs green, loving fingers.

Pruning is the crown.

Mangus, your finesse lies elsewhere.

Mine lies in my garden.

Where I touch the tap root to my inward sap.

The Knot Garden, I. 2

Thea's and Faber's adoptive daughter, Flora, is also associated with the garden through her name, which indicates her youth and virginity, and her close relationship with Thea. The link between Thea and Flora is highlighted by a version of Thea's 'garden theme' being heard

⁷² See the opening section of Chapter 6 in this thesis for further exploration of Mangus's and Thea's analyst-analysand relationship.

THEA
meno f più dolce

Flo - ra's a seed - ling wai - ting to trans-

p poco

pes.

pes.

pes.

37 THEA

-plant; Bud not flower.

p

C.A.
pp colla voce poco

pes.

pes.

pes.

cresc. poco a poco

Example 4.4. *The Knot Garden*, I. 4, 'Flora's a seedling...' (Thea).

when she describes Flora in typically botanical terms as 'a seedling, wating to transplant;/ Bud not flower' (see Example 4.4). Both Thea and Flora are, in their own ways, seeking liberation and agency in a male-dominated world. Specifically, they are both trying to escape Faber, who embodies many of the faults of patriarchal society.⁷³ Arguably, however, only Flora will truly

⁷³ See 'Faber: midlife crisis man-child' in Chapter 5 of this thesis for a longer analysis of Faber's 'male' personality.

achieve this freedom by the end of the opera.⁷⁴ Her mother, by contrast, appears to meet a similar fate to her literary ancestors, Sycorax and Circe.⁷⁵

‘O, you may stare in horror’: Denise the ‘menacing visionary’

Thea’s and Mangus’s first interaction is interrupted by Flora, who rushes onstage to the accompaniment of frantic woodwind and xylophone, while being pursued lecherously by Faber. Thea’s cutting strings are heard once again when she scolds her husband, and he complains that she has distanced herself from him before they both depart the stage.⁷⁶ Mangus takes the opportunity to quote Prospero in an exaggerated fashion (‘And by my prescience/ I find my zenith doth depend upon/ A most auspicious star’), providing another example of his ‘master’ pretensions. Next, there is a short scene between Thea and Flora: Thea comforts Flora and encourages her gardening interests, while Flora notifies her mother that Denise, Thea’s sister, has arrived. Thea, before she leaves the stage, describes her sister as ‘a turbulent girl grown to a woman’, ominously laying the foundations for Denise’s forthcoming appearance.

The gay couple Dov and Mel then surprise Flora by careering on to the circus-like sounds of offbeat bass drum, meandering clarinet, shrieking piccolo, and glissando trombone. Strangely, Dov and Mel are ‘in character’ as Ariel and Caliban respectively, and seem incapable of interacting with each other or Flora without the mediation of these adopted personas. Mangus takes Flora away to gather costumes for the forthcoming *Tempest* performance, leaving Thea, Dov, and Mel alone together. Thea unexpectedly seduces Mel, drawing him to her ‘hypnotically, by implication sexually’, and leaving Dov ‘howling like Ariel’s dog’.⁷⁷ Faber

⁷⁴ For more on Flora’s personality and journey in *The Knot Garden*, see ‘Flora: Miranda in Wonderland’ and ‘I will dress myself in green...’ in Chapter 5, and ‘Flora-Miranda, Tippett’s aspirational hysteric’ in the conclusion of this thesis.

⁷⁵ See ‘Thea’s Imaginary Marriage’ in Chapter 6 of this thesis for a discussion of the conclusion to Thea’s story.

⁷⁶ See ‘Faber: midlife crisis man-child’ in Chapter 5 of this thesis for an explanation of the significance of these string ‘stabs’ within Thea’s and Faber’s relationship.

⁷⁷ Tippett, *The Knot Garden* libretto, 10.

enters and attempts to return the favour by seducing Dov, but he is interrupted first by the reappearance of Thea and Mel, and then by a distressed Flora running on to announce the entrance of Denise.

FLORA

Thea, Thea,

Denise is come...

She looks, she looks...

O, I can't tell you...

The Knot Garden, I. 13

Denise enters, 'half-majestic, half-sinister', to a quiet, sombre, chorale-like passage played by trombone, cello, and tuba (see Example 4.5).⁷⁸ She has been 'twisted and otherwise disfigured from the effects of torture', and her presence 'entirely dominates the stage'.⁷⁹ In a lengthy, impassioned aria, 'O, you may stare in horror', Denise unsettlingly recalls her experience of torture and her consequential anguish.

DENISE

When we were tortured

We screamed

Ah, ah.

Indecent anguish of the quivering flesh

Ah, ah.

Until we broke

Or they stopped.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

141 *Meno mosso* *adagio lento* (♩ = 76)
dolciss.

Tromb. *pp sub.*

Vcl. *espr.* *poco* *(tutti quasi solo)* *tr.* *mp* *(p)*

Tuba

142 *solo espr.* *pp* *non solo* *pes.* *quasi solo* *tr.* *mp* *(p)* *dolciss.* *pp* Ob.

Example 4.5. *The Knot Garden*, I. 13, Denise's entrance.

Ah, ah.

Ah, ah.

The Knot Garden, I. 13.

There is something distinctly Electra-like about the aggressive, vengeful, magnetic Denise. This similarity is particularly in evidence in her lines 'The lust of violence has bred/ Contamination in my blood./ I cannot forget./ I will not forgive'.⁸⁰ Žižek's description of Electra's 'hysterical theatre' is also highly applicable to Denise here. Denise 'indulges in

⁸⁰ In Greek mythology, Electra is the daughter of Agamemnon, and, along with her brother Orestes, plots revenge on her mother, Clytemnestra, and stepfather, Aegisthus, for her father's murder. In 1909, Strauss famously adapted the story into an opera (*Elektra*), which is highly focused on its female protagonist's psychology and thirst for revenge. In 1915, Jung proposed the idea of the 'Electra complex' (a father-fixated girl) as a companion to Freud's 'Oedipus complex' (a mother-fixated boy) (see Jung, *The Theory of Psychoanalysis* (New York: The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 1915), 69-70). Whether Denise is suffering from such a complex is unclear, however, since her and Thea's parents are never mentioned.

exaggerated theatrical self-pity, and thereby confirms that this indulgence is her one luxury in life, the deepest source of her libidinal satisfaction. She displays her inner pain with neurotic affectation, offering herself as a public spectacle'.⁸¹ Denise's self-indulgent martyrdom in 'O, you may stare in horror' shows her, like Electra, wallowing in 'her grief as a symptom, fearing its end':⁸² at one point in the aria, for instance, she claims that her 'distortion is [her] pride'.

The first act's mood – which up until now has been hyperactive, surreal, and sometimes humorous – changes dramatically during Denise's aria, which stands out as an extended, emotional interlude in an act that has so far been devoid of moments of stasis and reflection. In the words of Kemp, it 'imposes [an] authority on the frantic pace of the opera thus far, as if to say that *it* represents true humanity and that everything that has preceded it simply scratches the surface'.⁸³ In Lacanian terms, Denise's visceral aria might be regarded as an eruption of 'the real' into the opera's constructed reality. Lacan's 'real' contrasts with 'reality' or the 'real world' – the everyday, language-based realm of 'the symbolic' – and is especially associated with horror or trauma. Lacan describes the real as 'the mystery of the unconscious',⁸⁴ and states that 'when something happens in [people's] dreams that threatens to cross over into the real, it distresses them so much that they immediately waken, in other words, they go on dreaming'.⁸⁵ According to Fink, the real 'is perhaps best understood as that which has not yet been symbolized, remains to be symbolized, or even resists symbolization; and it may perfectly well exist "alongside" and in spite of a speaker's considerable linguistic capabilities'.⁸⁶

'O, you may stare in horror' is a potent manifestation of the trauma that currently escapes Denise's concrete linguistic symbolisation, and Žižek's explanation of the real as a

⁸¹ Žižek, 'The Feminine Excess', in Žižek and Mladen Dolar, *Opera's Second Death* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 185.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 186.

⁸³ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 415.

⁸⁴ Lacan, 'Rings of String', in *Encore*, 131.

⁸⁵ Lacan, 'Aristotle and Freud: The Other Satisfaction', in *Encore*, 55.

⁸⁶ Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 25.

‘bone in the throat’ is entirely appropriate to her aria.⁸⁷ Denise is a highly capable, charismatic orator, as demonstrated by her vivid, expressionistic descriptions:

DENISE

Angels have fought angels

As man must fight man

If the command comes

To redeem our manhood from a bestial time

The Knot Garden, I. 13

Yet there are also moments when Denise descends into pained, wordless, melismatic wails (see Example 4.6). These occasions when Denise’s grasp on language fails are when her unintelligible anguish – ‘the real’ – seeps through, and the characters and audience glimpse the true level of her suffering and the scale of the violence that has been inflicted upon her, rather than only those feelings that she can adequately enunciate.

Over the course of the opera, Denise experiences significant trouble in shedding her hardened, ‘freedom fighter’ image, a step that she must apparently take in order to re-enter ‘normal’ society. To modify one of Žižek’s famous phrases, Denise loves her symptoms more than herself, and it proves almost impossible for her to give them up.⁸⁸ In her scene with Thea at the beginning of Act II, Denise sings that she fears ‘risking a woman’s bond in love’ will leave her ‘vulnerable’, but that she envies her sister’s marriage. Her masculine virility is emphasised by her usurping of Dov – an infinitely more sensitive and sympathetic character – in Mel’s affections. She questions, however, whether she should subserviently ‘follow’ Mel and open herself up to love.

⁸⁷ Žižek, ‘The Real of Sexual Difference’, in Suzanne Barnard and Fink (eds.), *Reading Seminar XX: Lacan’s Major Work on Love, Knowledge, and Feminine Sexuality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 72.

⁸⁸ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 74.

152 Allegro (♩. più mosso del ♩ precedente) ♩. = 116

DENISE *f* < *ten.*
Ah,

Pf. (+ Str.) *ten.* *Str.* (+ W.W.) *p sub.* *f*

DENISE 153 *f* < *ten.*
ah,

Pf. (+ Str.) *ten.* *f*

DENISE

Str. (+ W.W.) *8va* *p sub.* *f*

154 DENISE *f* < *ten.* *ff*
ah

Pf. (+ Str.) *ten.* *p in* *f*

Example 4.6. *The Knot Garden*, I. 13, 'O, you may stare in horror' (Denise).

Denise, like Thea, is an observer of the *Tempest* charade in Act III, and profoundly altered by the bewildering action that unfolds before her. Initially, she claims that she ‘do[es] not understand confusion’, only whether ‘to kill [...] or be killed’. When Thea tells Denise that Mel will ‘warm’ her, Denise disdainfully replies that Mel will simply ‘uphold me as I am’. Denise’s words soon come back to haunt her, however, when Mel-Caliban creeps up on Flora-Miranda and attempts to rape her. Denise, unable to distinguish reality from fiction, ‘hauls Mel-Caliban off [Flora-Miranda] and to his feet’.⁸⁹ Denise is shocked that Mel is not the idealised figure she thought he was, that he is contradictory and human, and that he will not simply be what she wants him to be; that he will not ‘uphold’ her, to use her phrase.⁹⁰ She says that she is ‘tortured’ by what she has just seen, an experience she is of course familiar with on a physical level. This time, however, her torture is emotional, ‘a shock [she] had not known’, as she puts it. Denise’s upset here might be considered the result of a surfeit of *jouissance* – that is to say, ‘a pleasure [or pain] that is excessive, leading to a sense of being overwhelmed or disgusted, yet simultaneously providing a source of fascination’.⁹¹ As Fink notes, the primordial experience of *jouissance* stems from ‘a traumatic encounter with the Other’s desire’, which almost exactly describes what Denise undergoes during the charade.⁹² This emotional trauma finally ‘breaks’ Denise, and she is reduced to tears as she leaves the stage.

It could be argued that Tippett’s treatment of Denise, like Strauss’s of Electra, is misogynistic.⁹³ Bowen notes how Denise’s psychological difficulties are ‘the product of her political and social activism’.⁹⁴ In other words, they are the result of her trying to enter a hostile, patriarchal world, and in order for her to achieve psychological wellbeing she must now shed

⁸⁹ Tippett, *The Knot Garden* libretto, 25.

⁹⁰ See ‘Faber: midlife crisis man-child’ in Chapter 5 of this thesis for further discussion of Mel’s role as a ‘vanishing mediator’.

⁹¹ Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, xii.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ For more on the misogynistic portrayal of Electra, see Lawrence Kramer, ‘Fin-de-Siècle Fantasies: *Elektra* and the Culture of Supremacism’, in *Opera and Modern Culture: Wagner and Strauss* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 190-220.

⁹⁴ Bowen, *Michael Tippett*, 2nd ed., 115.

her ‘masculine’ tendencies and disengage from activism – hardly a ringing endorsement for women attempting to force their way into the political sphere. In ‘O, you may stare in horror’, Denise sings of ‘redeeming our manhood from a bestial time’, and the ‘contamination’ of her blood could be interpreted as her ‘natural’ femininity being spoiled by masculine traits. Clarke notes that Tippett’s operas contain a number of ‘aspirational’ women like Denise (usually played by ‘dramatic sopranos’) whose ‘desire to be somewhere other than where they are often brings with it more than a hint of alienation from their social situation’.⁹⁵ These women – such as Jenifer (*The Midsummer Marriage*), Hecuba (*King Priam*), Gayle (*The Ice Break*), and Regan (*New Year*) – are often admirably progressive and ambitious, yet they can also be frightening and deranged; Whittall aptly describes them as ‘menacingly visionary’.⁹⁶ They are usually notable for their bitterness, cruelty, frigidity, and hysteria, and are often contrasted with lighter-voiced soprano ingénues such as Bella (*The Midsummer Marriage*), Flora, or Jo Ann (*New Year*), each of whom are portrayed far more compassionately and are apparently much less threatening to those around them.⁹⁷

Music such as Denise’s aria, which implies ‘contemptuous, concentrated but aimless libido’, as Kemp puts it, is symptomatic of potentially dangerous female characters in Tippett’s operas.⁹⁸ Jenifer, who is aligned with Saint Joan and is intent on escaping the patriarchal control of her father, King Fisher, ‘takes off into Queen of the Night-style coloratura’.⁹⁹ Like Denise, the ‘violent and hysterical’ Hecuba has what Lewis describes as a ‘jerky and haughty’ singing style.¹⁰⁰ Denise shares a particular kinship with Sosostris from *The Midsummer Marriage*.

⁹⁵ Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 261.

⁹⁶ Whittall, ‘Byzantium’, 390.

⁹⁷ See ‘Flora-Miranda, Tippett’s aspirational hysteric’, in the conclusion of this thesis for a discussion of Tippett’s treatment of women in comparison to Britten.

⁹⁸ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 417.

⁹⁹ Bowen, *Michael Tippett*, 2nd ed., 103.

¹⁰⁰ Geraint Lewis, ‘King Priam’, *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, *Oxford Music Online*. <http://tinyurl.com/jy565ye>. Accessed 03/04/2017. Later Tippettian ‘dramatic sopranos’ continue this trend for hystericism and danger. At the beginning of Act I of *The Ice Break*, the impulsive Gayle, girlfriend of Yuri, throws herself at Olympion, ‘sports champion’ boyfriend of her friend Hannah, and triggers the racial tensions that lead to a riot and her death in Act II. *New Year*’s Regan is described by Bowen as ‘the

Granted, Sosostriis is a contralto, but she has a similarly domineering presence to Denise and a lengthy solo scene in which she sings a melismatic, self-indulgent aria. Like Sosostriis, Denise has a deeper understanding of the world than her contemporaries, but her ‘oracular power [has been] achieved at the expense of her womanhood’.¹⁰¹

In his analysis of Tippett’s female characters, Clarke ponders whether certain examples ‘have their origins in the figures of Tippett’s own biographical and historical circumstances’.¹⁰² There might well be an element of portraiture to Denise, given Tippett’s experiences with trailblazing women in his younger life. According to Kemp, Tippett’s mother, Isabel, came from a family ‘less remarkable [...] for their male progeny than for their domineering and often startlingly nonconformist females’.¹⁰³ Isabel Tippett was ‘a red-haired extravert of immense drive, inclined to moralize and always convinced of the rightness of her views [...] Her commanding personality certainly shaped [her son’s] attitudes and taught him to stand by his own beliefs’.¹⁰⁴ Isabel was involved in social work, campaigned for women’s rights, became a staunch vegetarian, joined the Labour Party before becoming apolitical, and was a Suffragette, being arrested in 1911 for protesting in Trafalgar Square. Bowen writes that Isabel’s ‘proudest moment’ was when her son also went to prison for his pacifist principles in 1943.¹⁰⁵ Kemp notes that another significant female influence on Tippett’s early life was his mother’s cousin, the ‘extraordinary’ Charlotte Despard.¹⁰⁶ ‘Cousin Lottie’, as Tippett called her, promoted charitable schemes in the slums of London, joined various left-wing political parties, and formed the

archetypal iron maiden – “She Who Must be Obeyed””. According to Bowen, ‘journalistic rumour at the time of the production of the opera suggested that she was modelled on Margaret Thatcher. That was inaccurate, though the ex-Tory Prime Minister certainly had some of Regan’s traits’ (*Michael Tippett*, 2nd ed., 134).

¹⁰¹ Lewis, ‘*The Midsummer Marriage*’, *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, Oxford Music Online. <http://tinyurl.com/jgrecm5>. Accessed 03/04/2017.

¹⁰² Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 267.

¹⁰³ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 5.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

¹⁰⁵ Bowen, *Michael Tippett*, 2nd ed., 25.

¹⁰⁶ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 5.

Women's Freedom League, a pacifist alternative to Emmeline Pankhurst's Women's Social and Political Union. Later, she became a Sinn Féin activist and a Communist.

It is tempting to speculate that Denise, a woman of unflinching beliefs and moralising tendencies, is based on Tippett's mother, her cousin, and other similar women of this era. Kemp, for example, considers Denise to be 'representative of those women of the present period whose integrity has enabled them not to break under stress nor betray the ideals they hold with such passion', a description which would also be ideal for Isabel Tippett and Charlotte Despard.¹⁰⁷ Kemp elsewhere explains, however, how 'friction developed between [Tippett and his mother] and her persistently overweening manner even led, in his early forties, to a complete, if temporary break in relations'.¹⁰⁸ He especially highlights a letter from 1943, where Tippett writes that his mother would inevitably spoil his homecoming from prison, 'for the old usual mother-ish moral reasons which spoilt so much of my childhood'.¹⁰⁹ Tippett himself writes in the opening pages of his autobiography that 'I can't say I ever loved [my mother] in the same way I loved my father'.¹¹⁰ At the risk of opening up a Freudian can of worms, one wonders just how much personal resentment lies behind Tippett's treatment of his operas' memorable but menacing female visionaries.

'Do, do not, "do not torment me"': Tippett's blues

Arguably, it is Denise, not Mangus, who successfully initiates the psychoanalytical process for the other characters. Her shock arrival, vivid descriptions of torture, and pained wails seem to function as an embarrassing jolt to the other, apparently more immature patients, upsetting the equilibrium of their previously sheltered environment. Her startling interruption also has a profound musical effect, since it prompts the other characters to perform a blues ensemble in a

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 408.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰⁹ Tippett, quoted in Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 486, n. 5.

¹¹⁰ Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 2.

collective ‘discharge of emotion’, which results in an involuntary confession of their problems and paves the way for the intense, frenzied meetings of Act II.¹¹¹ The extended use of a ‘low’, black, popular art form at the end of *The Knot Garden*’s first act is an arresting moment, given that up until this point the opera has hardly been replete with allusions to popular styles. This is presumably one of the moments in Tippett’s later work that Puffett finds so distasteful and symptomatic of an older composer ‘desperately trying to keep his imagery up to date’.¹¹² To reinforce his harsh assessment, Puffett quotes Tippett’s own words back at him: ‘the task of, shall we say, lyric poets in our period, might just be to sustain the pastoral metaphor, in its deepest sense, against the ephemera of town fashions’.¹¹³

Tippett, however, did not consider the blues a mere ‘town fashion’, but something far more vital and communal. He pointedly ends his autobiography with a celebration of the blues, recalling how he learnt about this music in Leroi Jones’s book *Blues People* while composing the first act of *The Knot Garden*. Following Jones, he describes the blues in grandiose terms as far more important than Schoenberg’s ‘alphabetic’ serialism, and ‘the most fundamental musical form’ of the twentieth century, ‘just as the fugue was fundamental to the Baroque period, and sonata to the Enlightenment’.¹¹⁴ The blues, for Tippett, is a humanity encompassing metaphor, ‘an archetype even’.¹¹⁵ To concur with Whittall, however, it is probably best to ignore Tippett’s ‘hyperbolic assertion[s]’ and avoid wearisome debates about the relative merits and universality of the blues and serialism.¹¹⁶ Rather, the blues should be regarded simply as the musical topic best suited to the psychoanalytical themes of *The Knot Garden* and the cathartic requirements of

¹¹¹ Tippett, *The Knot Garden* libretto, 12.

¹¹² Puffett, ‘Tippett and the Retreat from Mythology’, 11.

¹¹³ Tippett, quoted in Puffett, ‘Tippett and the Retreat from Mythology’, 14, n. 27.

¹¹⁴ Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 274.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 275.

¹¹⁶ Whittall, ‘Tippett and Twentieth-Century Polarities’, in Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Michael Tippett* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 22.

this moment in particular.¹¹⁷ As Whittall points out, the blues is a fitting musical counterpart for psychoanalysis, since it is similarly concerned with ‘purg[ing] the negative emotions of despair – along with the fear that comes from lack of self-awareness’.¹¹⁸

‘Do, do not, “do not torment me”’ is strictly based around the standard twelve-bar blues pattern. It begins with a slow blues in E (36 bars) initiated by Mel. Dov joins in on the second repetition, pleading with Mel, ‘Do, do not, do not desert me’. During the third repetition, Flora, addressing Faber, sings ‘Do, do not, do not assault me’. Faber himself joins in half-way through this final cycle, but instead of responding to Flora sings to his wife, Thea: ‘You’d like to take the mickey out of me, woman’. A boogie-woogie section of 36 bars follows, and predominantly focuses on the disintegrating relationship between Faber and Thea. Faber insists that he is going to continue philandering: ‘I’m gonna play the high class joints [...] the low class joints [...] the honky-tonks’, while Thea wonders whether ‘this playboy’ can ever be her ‘true man’, ‘father [her] children’ and ‘shelter [her] home’. Mel, Dov, and Flora, meanwhile, exclaim clichéd, quasi-spiritual phrases such as ‘Go, tell it from the mountain’ and ‘All right, brother’. The number ends with a repetition of the slow blues in E (24 bars). This time, however, all of the characters join in with individual, disconnected lines, creating a dense texture and ‘an extraordinary screaming claustrophobia’ (see Example 4.7).¹¹⁹ Mangus bizarrely intones Prospero’s epilogue from *The Tempest*, before Mel rounds off the piece with an insouciant ‘Sure, baby’.

Clarke argues that, in Tippett’s work, ‘musical others’ (spirituals in *A Child of Our Time*, the blues in *The Knot Garden* and the Third Symphony, country music in *The Ice Break*, ska in *New Year*) ‘escape integration into the dominant musical soundworld of their respective

¹¹⁷ The poet and jazz enthusiast Philip Larkin believed that jazz and the blues was ‘the closest description of the unconscious we have [...] Jazz is the new art of the unconscious, and it is therefore improvised, for it cannot call upon consciousness to express its own divorce from consciousness’ (quoted in B. J. Leggett, ‘Larkin’s Blues: Jazz and Modernism’, in *Twentieth Century Literature* 42, no. 2 (1996), 262).

¹¹⁸ Whittall, ‘Tippett and Twentieth-Century Polarities’, 21-2.

¹¹⁹ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 418.

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format. It begins with a vocal line for Denise, marked *piu f* and *mf*, with the lyric "ah,". This is followed by Thea's line, marked *f* and *molto*, with the lyrics "gar-den, deep in-to my gar-den?". Faber's line is marked *f* and *molto*, with the lyric "on me.". Flora's line is marked *f* and *molto*, with the lyric "lost, lost.". Dov's line is marked *f* and *molto*, with the lyric "That's the way love is.". Mel's line is marked *P* and *dolce*, with the lyrics "for mis-ter Charlie? Sure, ba-by.". Mangus's line is marked *f* and *molto*, with the lyric "and frees all faults.". The piano accompaniment includes a piano part with dynamics *(mp)* and *(mf)*, a timpani part marked *Pf. + Timp.* and *mf*, and string parts for W.B., Cym., B.D., and S.D. marked *mf*.

Example 4.7. *The Knot Garden*, I. 13, 'Do, do not, "do not torment me"', ending.

works'.¹²⁰ 'Do, do not, "do not torment me"', however, barely escapes integration into *The Knot Garden*'s 'soundworld' at all. It does use standard blues forms, contains phrases taken from blues songs, and features instruments such as drums, electric guitar, and muted trumpet. Yet Tippett's blues, like much of *The Knot Garden*, is coloured by dissonance, vocal melismas, angular, overlapping vocal lines, and pungent orchestration, and sounds far removed from the usual, intentionally uncomplicated sound of the blues 'proper'. In fact, Lawrence Kramer criticises Tippett's incorporation of the blues into his works from this period for this very reason. Commenting on the Third Symphony, the work that followed *The Knot Garden* and likewise features an extended blues section, Kramer describes Tippett's blues as 'slightly mannered' and 'distant from its model', owing to vocal lines of 'modernist angularity' and a classically trained singer who cannot match 'the blues singer's urgent exploration of vocal grain and timbre'.¹²¹ 'The result', writes Kramer, 'is music of great fervour and dignity, but it is not the blues. Tippett suffers a slippage from writing to citing a blues because the sonority he devises sounds, despite itself, like a curb on pleasure as excess'.¹²²

Kramer would presumably make similar observations about *The Knot Garden*'s blues ensemble, given that it is likewise performed by classical singers and is an atypically difficult, unpleasant blues to listen to. Kramer's criticism seems to stem from displeasure at Tippett writing a strange, 'modernist' blues, denying an audience the frisson of hearing a 'pure', popular blues in a high art setting, which neuters any potential for radical subversion. Yet it is unfair of Kramer to accuse Tippett of merely 'citing' a blues. Tippett *does* write an original, full blues; admittedly, it is not one that meets standard sonic expectations, but that does not mean it is not a blues *tout court*. 'Do, do not, "do not torment me"' integrates references to existing blues songs by Bobby 'Blue' Bland, such as 'Honky Tonk' ('I'm gonna play the high-class joints...') and 'Loan a Helping Hand' ('Well I walk, I talk, but all by myself...'), but Tippett did

¹²⁰ Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 226.

¹²¹ Kramer, *Musical Meaning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 214.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 211.

not simply draw on the blues in order to try and ‘imitate a Negro style’ and shock audiences through the use of popular music in the opera house.¹²³ Rather, he absorbed the basic, transferable structural framework of the blues into his own musical language for cogent dramatic reasons.

Kemp claims that *The Knot Garden*’s ‘collective’ is a ‘miniature human universe’, but it is actually nothing of the sort, and certainly not properly representative of the ‘collective’ with which the blues is most closely associated.¹²⁴ The blues, Paul Oliver notes, specifically arose as the potent musical expression of an oppressed, minority, black proletariat population, and was a way of expressing the ‘mental state [... of] black working-class men and women’ in America during the early twentieth century.¹²⁵ To quote Philip Larkin, ‘the Negro did not have the blues because he was naturally melancholy. He had them because he was cheated and bullied and starved’.¹²⁶ This music, in the words of Sieglinde Lemke, was ‘a tactic for survival, a vent for frustration, and a reclamation of the [black] body’.¹²⁷

There is undoubtedly something uncomfortable about this blues, in which a group of uptight, mostly white, middle-class characters construct exotic ‘black’ alter egos, ‘fabricating an Africanist persona [...] to explore [their] most sublimated desires and fears’.¹²⁸ The characters might even be accused of propagating ‘the myth that blacks [and black music] will revivify the weary souls of white folks’.¹²⁹ Clarke claims that Tippett uses ‘musical others’ in his operas to

¹²³ Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 275.

¹²⁴ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 403-4.

¹²⁵ Paul Oliver, ‘Blues’, *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*. <http://tinyurl.com/hqrcbnv>. Accessed 03/04/2017.

¹²⁶ Larkin, quoted in Leggett, ‘Larkin’s Blues’, 259.

¹²⁷ Sieglinde Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 60.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 67. Tippett’s use of the blues here is arguably a late example of ‘primitivist modernism’, to borrow Lemke’s term. According to Lemke, ‘marginalised and despised black cultures were pivotal in the creation of transatlantic modernism [...] Euro-American modernism’s identity has always been hyphenated, has always been hybrid, has always been biracial’ (6). Lemke explains that modernist writers such as Conrad, Stein, and Eliot ‘embraced “black” English primarily because it was nonconformist’ (11). Lemke’s study is primarily concerned with the encounter between black art and modernism between the

represent ‘collectives [...] alienated from the bourgeois stratum of society’.¹³⁰ It is questionable, however, whether the characters singing the blues in *The Knot Garden* are ‘alienated’ at all, at least in a racial or economic sense. Granted, several of the characters suffer from psychological anxieties and are in disintegrating relationships, and they might be considered outsiders because of their sexuality or political sympathies. Yet most, if not all of them come from comfortable backgrounds, and have rewarding jobs that suit their personalities. Their problems do not stem from poverty or the exploitation of their labour. From a certain point of view, *The Knot Garden* could be described as an opera about self-indulgent, bourgeois people moaning about relatively trivial bourgeois problems.

Even Mel, a black American himself, can only *imitate* ‘the style and accent of a negro-blues-man’,¹³¹ presumably because his status as a writer is actually quite divorced from that of the traditional working-class, black blues singer, and he therefore has no authentic claim on the music. Kemp writes that the blues is Mel’s ‘inherited language’, while Tippett also says that Mel is the ‘natural leader’ of this section, but in actuality Mel’s blues persona is as affected and constructed as the rest of the characters’.¹³² It is telling that Mel’s opening line, ‘Do, do not, “do not torment me”’, is lifted from Act II, Scene 2 of *The Tempest*, when Caliban (Mel’s Shakespearian alter ego) meets Trinculo and Stephano. The imitative, inauthentic quality of Mel’s blues is enhanced by his quotation of this text; these are the words of a (possibly) black slave, but they are not Mel’s own.¹³³ Mel’s position as an ‘outsider’ in the black community is

world wars. Many of her observations, however, might be applied to *The Knot Garden*. Tippett’s longevity meant that he arguably extended the inter-war modernist aesthetics of Eliot’s generation into the later twentieth century.

¹³⁰ Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 226.

¹³¹ Tippett, *The Knot Garden* libretto, 12.

¹³² Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 408.

¹³³ By casting his Caliban as a black African-American, Tippett might have been attempting to acknowledge this character’s possible heritages. Shakespeare’s Caliban has been interpreted both as a depiction of a Native American and an African. According to Vaughan and Vaughan, if *The Tempest* is about New World colonisation, then ‘Caliban must be to some degree an American native’. Caliban’s African genesis, meanwhile, is suggested by the play’s potential location, the character’s possible complexion, ‘and his name, [which] if derived from the town of Calibia, is emphatically African’.

further emphasised in Act II, Scene 7, when the white, female freedom fighter Denise tries to persuade him that he should engage with the Civil Rights Movement.

DENISE

Your race calls you;
Calls for your words,
For your strength, for your love.

MEL

(As though hearing in his mind 'We Shall Overcome', words are forced from him)

'deep in my heart'

The Knot Garden, II. 7

In the blues ensemble, all of the other characters bar Mangus imitate Mel, awkwardly highlighting that they are of the 'wrong' race and class to be singing the blues, and can only copy their black colleague, who is himself only approximating the style of a working-class blues singer.¹³⁴ Their blues, then, is a simulacrum blues: a copy of a 'blues' that never existed in the first place. 'Do, do not, "do not torment me"' might sound artificial, incongruous, and affected, but that is arguably the point, since the blues is sung here by characters who are desperately adopting a blatantly inauthentic persona and have no experience of the usual conditions that give birth to such music and its conventions. Why would they be able to sing a proper-sounding blues, as Kramer might wish them to?

It is also possible that the blues *The Knot Garden's* audience hears is not the same as the one that the characters think they are singing. Opera is 'unreal' in the sense that an audience is not meant to believe that operatic characters live in a world of constant music and sing

Vaughan and Vaughan acknowledge, however, that Shakespeare's inspiration for Caliban is 'unproven and endlessly arguable'. See Vaughan and Vaughan, *The Tempest*, 43-51.

¹³⁴ Thea is possibly further along in the analytical process than the other characters at this point, since she is able to sing 'in her own style' at certain points.

through every waking moment; this musical ‘filter’ is applied to enhance the drama for an audience and – to return to Schmidgall’s words from the start of this thesis – exemplify ‘abstract concepts [and] intellectual processes’.¹³⁵ In their ‘real life’ setting, *The Knot Garden*’s characters might simply be thinking, talking to each other, or singing a ‘normal’ blues. What their audience hears, however, is a ‘fake’ blues that concurs with *The Knot Garden*’s general, dissonant soundworld. This blues that does not sound like a blues, then, aptly demonstrates traumatised characters who wish to escape their issues but cannot; they experiment with an exotic form and character, but ultimately are unable to shed their usual identities.

The Knot Garden’s blues is a vent for the characters, which allows them to purge themselves of the frightening ‘real’ that they have just witnessed through Denise’s aria. The glimpse of ‘the real’ that they get in Denise’s scene creates *jouissance*, and they simply cannot deal with these extreme feelings. They therefore commit an act of protective disidentification, detach themselves from their usual personas, and sing ‘in character’ as black blues singers. This sort of cowardly disidentification – becoming another character in order to avoid dealing with a difficult scenario – is also in evidence when Mel and Dov first appear as Caliban and Ariel earlier in the act. Ian Pace’s comment that the spirituals Tippett employs in *A Child of Our Time* could be interpreted as ‘idle emotional catharsis for conscience-alleviating purposes’ is also pertinent to this blues moment in *The Knot Garden*, although in this instance that charge should only be levelled at the characters rather than the composer.¹³⁶

Nevertheless, in this scene, by liberating themselves from reality and ‘becoming a different person’, as it were, *The Knot Garden*’s characters do begin to engage with issues and aspects of their usual personalities that they have so far ignored. To return to an earlier Žižek quote, ‘in the guise of a fiction, of “it’s just a game”’, these subjects ‘articulate and stage features of [their] symbolic identity [...] which [they] would never be able to admit in [their]

¹³⁵ Gary Schmidgall, *Shakespeare and Opera* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 260.

¹³⁶ Ian Pace, *Michael Finnissy’s The History of Photography in Sound: A Study of Sources, Techniques and Interpretation* (London: Divine Art, 2013), 94. <http://tinyurl.com/he3u8zy>. Accessed 03/04/2017.

“real” intersubjective contacts’.¹³⁷ Flora, for example, is able to admit to herself that she is just ‘a little girl lost’ and begin the process of addressing this immaturity. Likewise, Mel concedes that he is ‘a no-good man’, while Dov admits his confusion about his gender and sexuality, describing himself as ‘a two-way man’.¹³⁸ Wilfred Mellers claims that *The Knot Garden*’s blues indicates that ‘divisiveness can be healed [...] by a return to [a] corporeal-spiritual identity’.¹³⁹ Really, however, the blues does not offer the salvation or cure that the characters are seeking – it simply makes explicitly plain the fractures in individual characters and their relationships, something that the ensuing two acts, and particularly the third, will attempt to heal.

¹³⁷ Žižek, ‘Class Struggle or Postmodernism? Yes, Please!’, 103.

¹³⁸ See ‘Dov-Ariel: Tippett Androgyne’ in Chapter 5 of this thesis for a discussion of Dov’s gender and sexuality.

¹³⁹ Wilfred Mellers, ‘Song and Dance Man’, in Lewis (ed.), *Michael Tippett, O. M.: A Celebration* (Tunbridge Wells: Baton, 1985), 32. Much like Tippett’s work, Mellers’s overview of twentieth-century music emphasises the ‘implications of our Christian heritage’, and the need for a ‘healing of the division within the psyche’. He too draws on a *Tempest* metaphor to emphasise his call for a ‘new primitivism’ in music, writing that ‘we cannot “know ourselves” without acknowledging the fish-like Caliban within us [...] Only when we have said “this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine” [...] may we hope to enter into and to possess our brave new world’ (Mellers, *Caliban Reborn: Renewal in Twentieth-Century Music* (Da Capo: New York, 1979), 182).

Chapter 5

ACT II: 'LABYRINTH', OR MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN

Here the garden is in total disarray and the maze in operation. That is, it appears as if the centre of the stage had the power to 'suck in' a character at the back of the stage, say, and 'eject' him [sic] at the front. During their passage through the maze, characters meet and play out their scene. But always one of the characters in these scenes is about to be ejected, while a fresh character has been sucked in and is whirled to the meeting point. Indeed, if the maze could be seen from above, it might be apparent that someone, perhaps Mangus, is operating a huge puppet show. And this means that when two characters play a scene the one or the other may be whisked away arbitrarily, independent of where the scene has got to, as if by force majeure. Finally the two characters most lost and most alone are thrown clear of the maze onto the forestage, and the maze recedes from attention.

Tippett, *The Knot Garden*, Act II libretto note

The Knot Garden's second act opens with a chaotic, abortive reprisal of Mangus's twelve-note 'Tempest' motif from the opening of the opera (see Example 5.1). Piano and woodwind play disconnected, partial, crescendoing iterations of the motif, which are interrupted prematurely by sharp xylophone, drum, and percussion strikes: the effect is analogous to a car engine starting and stalling several times. This unsuccessful restatement of the 'Tempest' motif is enigmatic, potentially holding any number of meanings. It might hint at Mangus's puppet-mastery; alternatively, it might indicate his waning influence, given the association of the twelve-note theme with his 'master' powers. It might simply exemplify that a psychological storm is occurring for all of the characters at this point; according to Kemp, the motif's 'most important function is to create the nightmarish violence of Act II and with it the expression of an

Example 5.1. *The Knot Garden*, II. I, ‘Tempest’ motif.

ineluctable, malevolent force against which resistance is useless’.¹ Kemp writes that the opening of Act II ‘evokes the feeling of being trapped in the workings of some latter-day circle of hell, where you are kicked repeatedly with cold savagery, until, screaming, you are tossed into another circle hardly less grim for being peopled with human beings’.²

The ‘violence’ that Kemp identifies in the motif is also intrinsic to the Lacanian symbolic order – ‘the norm’, or the public realm of language – which forces human beings to

¹ Ian Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music* (London: Eulenberg, 1984), 431.

² *Ibid.*, 430.

construct essentialised identities: man, woman, straight, bisexual, gay, black, white, English, Welsh, Scottish, Irish, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Jewish, atheist, and so on.³ This socio-symbolic order might well be described as, in Kemp's words, 'an ineluctable, malevolent force against which resistance is useless'.⁴ The failed reprisal of the twelve-note 'Tempest' here, however, could represent how the hold of language and everyday identity over the characters is now loosening. The motif was initially and clearly stated at the beginning of Act I, as part of Mangus's attempt to initiate the 'discourse of the master' and 'put them all to rights' – in other words, to reinsert his analysands into a symbolic order. At this point, the characters were still tightly bound to their usual identities and existing relationship situations. Following the 'real' of Denise's aria, and the subsequent, unexpected disidentification of the blues ensemble, however, the characters have begun to shed their usual assumed personas. They have escaped the normal world and entered the labyrinth of the unconscious: hence the breakdown of (in Tippett's words) the 'alphabetic' – that is to say, linguistic – twelve-tone motif.⁵

Faber: midlife crisis man-child

Following the brief 'Tempest' prelude, and a first scene between Thea and Denise in which the two sisters sing of their fears, Faber is whisked onstage, and remains there for the next four scenes – a longer run than any other character is granted during this act. Faber's name (meaning 'workman' or 'maker' in Latin), his robust baritone voice, and his civil engineering profession clearly indicate that he aspires to and embodies a typically male personality: he is, as it were, 'all man'. In his analysis of *The Knot Garden*, Morris writes that Faber 'suffers from an imbalance within his psyche due to an uncontrolled anima [... which is] a personification of

³ The essentialising nature of the symbolic order is possibly most visible in the 'Equality Monitoring' processes that accompany job applications.

⁴ For more on symbolic violence, and its interactions with 'subjective' (physical) and 'objective' (economic) violence, see Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (New York: Picador, 2008).

⁵ Michael Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues* (London: Pimlico, 1991), 274.

male erotic desire'.⁶ This Jungian diagnosis, while arguably accurate, is simplistic, and does not do full justice to either the complications of Faber's gender position(s) or his shifting conception of and experimentation with sexuality. From a Lacanian perspective, Faber's journey through the knot garden, during which he attempts to redefine himself as a male subject in the wake of the apparently irrevocable breakdown of his marriage, actually sees him occupy and wrestle with a number of positions, from traumatised child to obscene father to typical man.

Faber enters the action in Act I being accused by Flora, his adopted daughter, of lecherous harassment. His identifying theme immediately follows hers, highlighting his status as her tormentor. With its dotted rhythms, tonal instability, restless arpeggiation, 'jaunty' character, and brass and piano instrumentation, this theme provides an instant encapsulation of Faber's psychological immaturity and sexual menace (see Example 5.2). After Thea scolds Faber and leaves, Faber responds by calling her 'A mother bitch!/ Who turns me to a cur./ A mother bitch!/ And yet my wife'. His music for this moment is a transformed version of his theme in $\frac{3}{4}$ time, with trombone glissandos further highlighting his comic, childish impetuosity (see Example 5.3). Faber then complains that Thea does not give him enough attention, and instead retreats into her garden, both literally and metaphorically. At this point, Faber appears to embody the clichéd complaints of many adult men, who 'come to couples therapy with the complaint that [their partners] "just don't get it" and can't seem to figure out why their partners are complaining and/or why their [...] methods of communication fail'.⁷ Young-Eisendrath describes such men as 'incompetent lost boy' figures.⁸

The relationship between Thea and Faber at this point is somewhat unusual: she treats him like a child, and he appears jealous of the attention his wife gives to both her garden –

⁶ Nicholas Morris, "'Simply the Thing I Am Shall Make Me Live": a Jungian Perspective on *King Priam* and *The Knot Garden*', in Geraint Lewis (ed.), *Michael Tippett, O. M.: A Celebration* (Tunbridge Wells: Baton, 1980), 101.

⁷ Polly Young-Eisendrath, 'Gender and Controsexuality: Jung's Contribution and Beyond', in Young-Eisendrath and Terrence Dawson (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Jung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 230.

⁸ Ibid.

... before throwing herself into Thea's arms.)

FLORA *meno f*

ah - ee, ah - ee, ah

p colla voce

(Faber enters)

FLORA 30 *Meno mosso* (♩ = 126)

ee.

Hrn. 1 (+2) *p* *f*

Tpt. *f jaunty*

Pf. (+ 8^{ve} higher)

Example 5.2. *The Knot Garden*, I. 3, Faber's theme.

SCENE 5
 [41] Molto allegro (♩=160)
 FABER

41

Tpts. very strong beat accents.

Horn *p* < *f* *gliss.* *p* < *f*

Tromb. *p* < *f* *p* < *f*

Pf. *f* *marcatiss* 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 *p* < *f* *p* < *f*

42

FABER *ff subito* *f*

mother _____ bitch! who turns _____

Trombs. *p* < *f*

Tpts. *f*

Trombs. *f*

Cym., W. Block *f*

Example 5.3. *The Knot Garden*, I. 5, ‘A mother bitch!’ (Faber).

which, it must be remembered, is a metaphor for her psyche and sexuality – and their adopted daughter.⁹ Faber can, then, in Lacanian terms, be considered child-like, since ‘in [his] quest for love and attention, [he has been] confronted with the fact that [he] is not [his “mother’s”] sole subject of interest’.¹⁰ Thea’s refusal to pander to Faber’s neediness has arguably ‘castrated’ him, in a quasi-Lacanian sense. ‘Quasi’ because Lacanian castration proper is usually predicated on language: it occurs at that moment when a child, feeling rejected by its parents, is ‘split’, forced to renounce the *jouissance* of the wordless ‘real’ realm and enter into the symbolic register of

⁹ See ‘Thea’s lady garden’ in Chapter 4 of this thesis for further explanation of the symbolism of Thea’s garden.

¹⁰ Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 101.

language.¹¹ This entry into language and alienation from *jouissance* creates a sense of loss or ‘lack’ at the centre of a human subject’s being.

In *The Tempest*, Caliban – a childlike, violent figure who still possesses a deep, metaphysical connection to the natural world – best demonstrates the psychological violence engendered by a subject’s entry into the linguistic symbolic order. When Prospero arrives, he kills Caliban’s mother, Sycorax, and teaches Caliban to speak, but rejects and enslaves the monster after Caliban attempts to rape Miranda. Traumatized and angered by these events, Caliban desires to return to a pre-Prospero, pre-linguistic, ‘real’ stage:

CALIBAN

You taught me language; and my profit on’t
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!

The Tempest, I. 2

Ironically, however, Caliban’s new capacity to orate both his more brutal tendencies and his island relationship results in speeches that can be both shocking and beautiful, and which close the gap between the symbolic (the world of language) and the ‘real’ (that which cannot be fully represented by language):

CALIBAN

Why, as I told thee, ‘tis a custom with him,
I’ th’ afternoon to sleep: there thou mayst brain him,
Having first seized his books, or with a log

¹¹ ‘Perhaps the simplest way of putting [it] is as follows: Why would a child ever bother to learn to speak if all of its needs were anticipated, if its caretakers fed it, changed it, adjusted the temperature, and so on before it even had a chance to feel hunger, wetness, cold, or any other discomfort? Or if the breast or bottle were always immediately placed in its mouth as soon as it began to cry? If nourishment is never missing, if the desired warmth is never lacking, why would the child take the trouble to speak?’ (Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 103).

Batter his skull, or paunch him with a stake,
Or cut his wezand with thy knife.

The Tempest, III. 2

CALIBAN

Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open and show riches
Ready to drop upon me that, when I waked,
I cried to dream again.

The Tempest, III. 2

Faber, of course, is already a speaking being in *The Knot Garden*, and presumably has been for some time. Yet, much like Caliban being separated from the ‘real’ by Prospero, or a small child learning that its parents are not always willing or able to fulfil its every wish, he is undergoing a traumatic realisation. He is being forced to confront a future in which he may need to redefine himself as a person (specifically, a man), and is therefore a subject ‘learning to speak’, as it were, all over again. In more everyday language, he is undergoing a major midlife crisis.

Faber’s sense of rejection, his castration, is illustrated graphically at the moment when Thea rebukes him. Violent, chopping, *fortissimo* violin chords accompany her while she asks ‘What is it you do to Flora?/ What is it you want?’ (see Example 5.4). There are a couple of Lacanian ways of reading Faber’s subsequent response to this ‘recastration’. Firstly, his actions

SCENE 4

33 *Meno mosso: allegro risoluto* (♩ = 120)
 THEA (Turning upon Faber) *f duro*

What _____ is it you_ do to Flo-ra?

Clar. *p* *f* *fp* *f*

Str. *f duro* (pizz.)

Pf. *f duro* (+ Harp)

Str. *f duro*

Claves

THEA 34

What _____ is it you_ want?

Str. (arco) *p* *f* *fp* *f* *p*

Str. (arco) (pizz.) (arco) *f* *p*

Pf. *f duro* (+ Harp)

Str. (arco) *f duro*

Example 5.4. *The Knot Garden*, I. 4, 'What is it you do to Flora?' (Thea).

over the course of the opera might be read as an attempt to occupy the position of the 'obscene father'. Following Freud's idea in *Totem and Taboo*, this figure is 'the father of the primal horde, who has not succumbed to castration and supposedly controls every woman in the

horde'.¹² Fink writes that the primal father's sexuality knows 'no boundaries, no limitations', but 'lumps all women into the same category: accessible. The set of *all* women exists for him and for him alone'.¹³ Faber, the 'playboy', to use Thea's phrase, does seem intent on sleeping his way around all of the other analysands, apparently under the impression that he is at some sort of swingers' party rather than a group therapy session. At various points, he attempts to seduce Flora, Dov, and Denise, before returning to his wife at the very end of the opera. He is willing to commit a sort-of incest with Flora (his adopted daughter and 'sister' rival for Thea's affections) and Denise (his sister-in-law), and furthermore does not see Dov as 'off limits' owing to his biological sex.

According to Fink, however, any attempt to resist castration and become the obscene father is now fated to fail: 'while there was, once upon a time, an exception to the rule of castration, you can be absolutely sure now, whenever you meet a man, that he is castrated'.¹⁴ Faber's scattergun approach to seduction is therefore not a successful attempt to become the obscene father, but a standard 'male' reaction to castration. To reiterate, the categories of 'man' and 'woman' have no biological basis for Lacan: in his words, sexual difference 'cannot be solved by any reduction to biological factors'.¹⁵ 'Man' and 'woman' are instead two psychological structures, which symbolise contrasting attempts by human beings to symbolize their relation to 'castration' and achieve *jouissance*. Those who are considered 'men', regardless

¹² Ibid., 111. Fictional and non-fictional examples of characters attempting to occupy the 'obscene father' position include Don Giovanni, Captain Kirk, Hugh Hefner, Donald Trump, and 'pimp' gangsta rapper figures such as Snoop Dogg. To borrow Trump's notorious words, when a man sees himself as an 'obscene father', or 'alpha male', he believes that he 'can do anything' to any woman without consent or repercussions: 'when you're a star, they let you do it'. See Ben Jacobs, Sabrina Siddiqui, and Scott Bixby, "'You Can Do Anything": Trump Brags on Tape About Using Fame to Get Women', *The Guardian*, 08/10/2016. <http://tinyurl.com/hwv4jso>. Accessed 05/04/2017. Trump's repeated comments on his own daughter's sexual attractiveness further indicate his 'obscene father' tendencies. See Adam Withnall, 'Donald Trump's Unsettling Record of Comments About His Daughter Ivanka', *The Independent*, 10/10/2016. <http://tinyurl.com/gttn2qu>. Accessed 05/04/2017.

¹³ Ibid. By referring to 'all women', Fink does not mean that the obscene father's sexuality precludes sex with men, since Lacan's categories of 'man' and 'woman' have no biological basis, and simply represent different psychological types.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Jacques Lacan, 'The Meaning of the Phallus', in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, trans. Rose (New York and London: Norton, 1985), 75.

of their biological makeup, are split (\$), wholly subject to symbolic castration, and determined by the ‘phallic function’.¹⁶ In the words of Deborah Luepnitz, the ‘phallic function [...] is not gender specific; it relates to being and having, to lack and the denial of lack – for all subjects’.¹⁷ When Lacan refers to the phallus (Φ), he is not literally referring to ‘the organ, penis or clitoris, which it symbolises’.¹⁸ Rather, the phallus ‘is the privileged signifier of the mark where the share of the logos is wedded to the advent of desire’.¹⁹ In other words, it is the symbol for the object of a person’s desire.²⁰

According to Luepnitz, ‘the phallus’ represents ‘what no one can have but everyone wants’: ‘a belief in bodily unity, wholeness, perfect autonomy’.²¹ Phallic objects ‘are desired for their representative value, their capacity to make the subject feel complete’.²² To explain further: in order to satisfy the desire that stems from the ‘lack’ engendered by castration, a person will seek a ‘phallic object’ in the imaginary-symbolic realm of language, gain pleasure

¹⁶ Lacan states that ‘the relation of the subject to the phallus is set up regardless of any anatomical difference between the sexes’ (‘The Meaning of the Phallus’, 76).

¹⁷ Deborah Luepnitz, ‘Beyond the Phallus: Lacan and Feminism’, in Jean-Michel Rabaté, *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 226.

¹⁸ Lacan, ‘The Meaning of the Phallus’, 79.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

²⁰ Lacan insists on using the phallus as his signifier of desire owing to its centrality in this sense since the time of ‘the Ancients’: ‘the phallus [...] has not stopped being written’ (‘Knowledge and Truth’, in *Encore: On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge: Book XX: 1972-1973*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Fink (New York: Norton, 1998), 94). He furthermore attempts to divorce ‘phallus’ from ‘penis’, and argues that that ‘one must [continue to] use [words] like [phallus], old words, as stupid as anything, but really use them, work them to the bone’, in order to make them hackneyed (‘Aristotle and Freud: The Other Satisfaction’, in *Encore*, 59). Yet, as Rose notes, Lacan’s choice of language means that he was inevitably ‘implicated in the phallogocentrism he described, just as his own utterance constantly rejoins the mastery which he sought to undermine’ (‘Introduction – II’, in Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality*, 56). Some feminist psychoanalysts have taken issue with Lacan’s perceived masculine bias, believing that ‘Lacan’s reliance on the concept of the phallus and the “paternal metaphor” return[s] them to all the wrong aspects of Freud’ (Luepnitz, ‘Beyond the Phallus’, 222). Luce Irigaray, for instance, includes Lacan in her critique of the general phallogocentrism of psychoanalysis and Western metaphysics. She argues that, in Lacan’s work, ‘the importance of [Freud’s idea of] “penis envy” in the woman is not called into question but is further elaborated in its structural dimension’ (*This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), 62). Jane Gallop, who initially defended Lacan’s work, similarly declares ‘phallus/penis: same difference’ (*Thinking Through the Body* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 124). For more on Lacan and feminism, see Chapter 6, n. 22.

²¹ Luepnitz, ‘Beyond the Phallus’, 226.

²² *Ibid.*

or validation from it, and imbue it with significance. This object might be something trivial that satisfies a small craving: coffee, a cigarette, chocolate, drugs, alcohol. It might be some larger material object, like a new sports car that gives the impression of power and virility, or a new house that provides a sense of attainment and security. It might be another person: a one-night stand, a cool new friend, a captivating new partner, maybe even a husband or wife.²³ The ‘phallic *jouissance*’ – the excitement, even indescribable joy – caused by a new object is, however, always and necessarily doomed to wear off. A new ‘phallus’ might, in the short or longer term, cover the lack at the centre of one’s being. Soon enough, however, this temporary fix will fade, and the insatiable cycle of desire will begin once again. As Fink puts it,

Desire’s object will not sit still; desire always sets off in search of something else [...] ‘I know that’s what I said I wanted, but that’s not exactly what I meant’ [...] The satisfaction I take in realizing my desire is always disappointing [... It] *fails* to fulfil me – it always leaves something more to be desired. That is phallic *jouissance* [...] One cannot take the failure out of the phallus. Phallic *jouissance* lets you down, comes up short.²⁴

On Lacan’s account, all of a man’s romantic encounters are based upon a fundamental fallacy, being prompted by desire for what he terms the *objet a* rather than any special connection with a partner. McGrath describes the *objet a* as ‘the point of erotic obsession and fixation in masculine human life, as well as the term of mystical longing: the holy grail in the subject’s narrative’.²⁵ *Objet a* is the true cause of desire, but it is an idea which is ultimately unpronounceable and unfortunately uncapturable. According to Sarah Kay, the *objet a* ‘acts like a vacuum, sucking other objects into its place. This has the effect of making any actual, real-

²³ Luepnitz particularly notes how adults tend to use ‘wealth accomplishments, or their own children as phallic objects’ (‘Beyond the Phallus’, 226).

²⁴ Fink, ‘Knowledge and Jouissance’, in Suzanne Barnard and Fink (eds.), *Reading Seminar XX: Lacan’s Major Work on Love, Knowledge, and Feminine Sexuality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 37-8.

²⁵ S. J. McGrath, ‘Sexuation in Jung and Lacan’, *International Journal of Jungian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2010), 8.

world object on which our desire lights appear *après-coup* to be the goal of our desire'.²⁶ To put it another way, Φ is a tangible but inadequate symbol of the *objet a*. Since, according to Lacan, 'what [men] deal with is *objet a* [...] the whole realization of the sexual relationship leads to fantasy [...] When one is a man, one sees in one's partner what one props oneself up on, what one is propped up by narcissistically'.²⁷ In Fink's interpretation,

Man's partner is *objet a*, not a woman as such. A man may [...] get off on something he gets from a woman: a certain way she talks, a certain way she looks at him, and so forth, but it is only insofar as he has invested her with that precious object that arouses his desire. He may thus need a (biologically defined) woman as the substratum, prop, or medium of *objet a*, but she will never be his partner.²⁸

Certain aspects of Lacan's theories on desire and sexuality bear some resemblance to Jung's, since both are based upon a chain of lack, desire, and projection. For Jung, (biological) men and women 'seek in the other what each most lacks in themselves'.²⁹ To fill this lack, people commit 'projective identification', and search for 'a sort of soul-mate of both ideal and devalued potentials': a phallic object, one might say.³⁰ According to Young-Eisendrath, projective identification can even be directed at 'a fetish, or an aspect of the world, in order to defend the self against anxiety and conflict'.³¹ The similarities between Jung and Lacan end here, however. Jung considers it possible to achieve the sort of 'bodily unity, wholeness, perfect autonomy' described by Luepznitz, and that a joining of anima and animus is attainable; or, to put it in

²⁶ Sarah Kay, *Žižek: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), 56-7.

²⁷ Lacan, 'A Love Letter', in *Encore*, 86-7.

²⁸ Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 121.

²⁹ McGrath, 'Sexuation in Jung and Lacan', 13.

³⁰ Young-Eisendrath, 'Gender and Controsexuality', 224. Susan Rowland develops the idea of 'Jung's phallic anima' (*Jung: A Feminist Revision* (London: Wiley, 2001), 113-4), while McGrath also notes how the 'Lacanian sees anima-animus as nothing but mythologized images of *objet a* and phallus' ('Sexuation in Jung and Lacan', 13).

³¹ Young-Eisendrath, 'Gender and Controsexuality', 224.

216 Poco meno mosso (♩. = 84)

Clar.
Pf. *ff marcatis.*

Example 5.5. *The Knot Garden*, II. 2. Faber's theme.

Lacanian terms, he believes that it is possible to capture the 'holy grail' of the *objet a* through a phallic object. For Lacan, however, such '*coniunctio* is a psychological impossibility'.³² In Lacan's eyes, Jungians are kidding themselves: there is no perfect partner, desire is arbitrary and cannot be sated, and lack can never be covered.

Following Lacan's hypothesis to the letter, Faber's castration and ensuing sense of 'lack' are aligned directly with his desire at the moment when Thea reprimands him while concurrently asking 'What is it you want?' (see Example 5.4). Lacan states that, 'the Other's question – that comes back to the subject from the place from which he expects an oracular reply – which takes some such form as "*Che vuoi?*", "What do you want?", is the question that best leads the subject to the path of his own desire'.³³ Now that his (m)Other has rejected him, Faber is frantically searching for a new phallic object to replace her – something or someone else on which to project his desire and fill the painful and glaring lack in his being. Faber's search for phallic *jouissance* and validity in an Other is particularly in evidence in scenes 2, 3, and 5 of Act II, when he attempts to seduce Denise, Flora, and Dov in quick succession. In Scene 2, a strident, *ff* version of his theme, played by solo clarinet and shifting between time signatures, immediately highlights the desperate randomness of his pursuit (see Example 5.5).

Faber desires Denise because she does not 'shun' him like Thea, but is similar enough to her sister that she offers a realistic replacement. He is patently confused at this point: he

³² McGrath, 'Sexuation in Jung and Lacan', 2.

³³ Lacan, 'The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire', in *Écrits*, trans. Fink (New York: Norton, 2002), 690.

certainly desires, but it is not exactly clear who or what he desires, only that he is fixated on the idea of either replacing or reclaiming Thea. His questions ('Or do I need her [Thea]? Or her alone?') are interspersed with short snippets of his restless theme, which represents his whirling mind and directionless desire (see Example 5.6). Faber suggests to Denise that, since neither of them knows their own needs, they should 'explore' together. Denise, however, like her sister, rebuffs Faber on the basis that he cannot offer her anything. The severe violin chords that enforced Thea's earlier scolding of Faber accompany Denise: once again, Faber has been rejected, or 'castrated'. This music suggests a familial personality link between the two sisters, one that is coloured by Faber's misogynistic perspective. He does not distinguish between his two potential wife-mothers; hence, their music is very similar when they have the temerity to reject him (see Example 5.7).

Next, Faber takes a more aggressive line of attack with Flora, who once again runs away from his advances. He tells her to 'grow up' because she is 'not a girl now' – in other words, she should define herself as a 'woman' so that he can legitimately have his way with her – while his theme shifts between $\frac{7}{8}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ (see Example 5.8).³⁴ 'Give me those flowers' he demands, in a blunt metaphor. Thea then attacks Faber in Scene 3 in retribution for his philandering, and Tippett depicts her here as a misogynist caricature (perhaps Faber's misogynist caricature) of a feminist: she horse-whips her husband, telling him that 'all men' are cowardly and arrogant, and claims that women, the 'divine Furies', are responsible for 'cleansing [and] correcting'. In the next scene, Faber attempts to kiss Dov, but is whisked away at the last moment. His efforts are once again accompanied by his 'jaunty and mocking' theme (see Example 5.9), which by now is well associated with his indiscriminate attempts at sexual domination; this time, the theme is in $\frac{7}{8}$. Throughout these scenes, it is difficult for a listener to retain any sense of the theme's harmonic, rhythmic, or motivic shape. Its elusive, erratic nature

³⁴ A parallel might be drawn between *The Knot Garden* and Arthur Miller's play *A View From the Bridge* (1955), another intense psychodrama which explores the sexual obsession of an adoptive father (Eddie Carbone) with his maturing niece/foster daughter (Catherine), and the destructive impact this infatuation has on his marriage to Catherine's aunt (Beatrice).

219
FABER

poco f *f*

Or do I need her? or her a - lone?

Example 5.6. *The Knot Garden*, II. 2. 'Or do I need her?'

222
DENISE

f

You are de - ceived, I have a

Fl. *marc.* *f* (*non più f della voce che canta*)

Vins. *f*

Vlas. *f* Timp. *f*

Strs. + Bsns. + *gva bassa*

223

se - cret self as tough as Thea's as

meno f *p*

Example 5.7. *The Knot Garden*, II. 2, Denise rejects Faber.

FLORA 229 ♩ = 126

- ee.

are you a - fraid of? Grow up: grow

Hrn. *colla voce*

Tpt. *f non troppo*

f jaunty

Hrn. *p* *f* *f non troppo*

Pf. *f non troppo*

FABER

up. You're not a girl now. You're a

Example 5.8. *The Knot Garden*, II. 3, Faber and Flora.

FLORA
ah - ee, ah - ee

FABER
wo - man.

FL

Example 5.8 (cont.) *The Knot Garden*, II. 3, Faber and Flora.

254 FABER
a tempo $\text{♩} = 126$ *f* piena voce

Dov, what if I

Vlas, Vcl.
poco f staccatiss.

Tpt. solo *jaunty and mocking*
f non troppo

Pt. 7
f non troppo

FABER
want you: have power to tempt, to

Example 5.9. *The Knot Garden*, II. 5, Faber and Dov.

– produced by its triplet and dotted note cross-rhythms, changes in time signature, haphazard two-note ‘melody’, and lack of cadential closure – makes clear Faber’s danger, confusion, and free-floating sexuality.

Faber patently does not care for Denise, Flora, or Dov; he only projects onto them his desperate desire for the *objet a*. For Faber, the ‘standard male seducer’, each of these phallic objects seems like ‘an exception’, possessing a particular ‘*je ne sais quoi*’.³⁵ Arguably, however, for reasons of ‘incest’ and homosexuality, Denise, Flora, and Dov are all transgressive but safely unattainable fantasies, or ‘Things’, for Faber: in Kay’s words, they are ‘sublime object[s] ...] both idealised and horrifying [...] prohibited and [therefore] made desirable’.³⁶ What Faber really wants is Thea, his wife-mother, and in order to attract her attention he is acting out by harassing other people who quite clearly offer him no prospect of long-term fulfilment. In Lacan’s words,

clear alienation [...] leaves it up to the subject to butt up against the question of his essence, in that he may not misrecognize that what he desires presents itself to him as what he does not want [...] He [therefore] transfers the permanence of his desire to an ego that is nevertheless obviously intermittent, and, inversely, protects himself from his desire by attributing to it these very intermittences.³⁷

While Faber’s search for sexual gratification is the most obvious of all the characters’, he is not the only one guilty of seeking short-term phallic *jouissance*. Thea, having lost interest in Faber, projects her desire onto her garden instead, and then onto Mel when she meets him in Act I. Dov, meanwhile, is accused by Mel of ‘loving the manhood, not the man’, perfectly exemplifying the impossibility of the Φ/a dichotomy, and the inability of the male-sexed psychological position to recognise beyond the external or tangible. Almost every character in

³⁵ Žižek, ‘The Real of Sexual Difference’, in Barnard and Fink (eds.), *Reading Seminar XX*, 58.

³⁶ Kay, *Žižek: A Critical Introduction*, 77.

³⁷ Lacan, ‘The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire’, 690-1.

The Knot Garden is exploiting another, to differing extents. Late in the day, some of the characters come to acknowledge this situation, and their status as a commodity or ‘vanishing mediator’.³⁸ Mel, for example, asks himself ‘... what am I/ But black earth for the white roses?’, referring to how Dov and Denise have arguably been drawn to him (consciously or unconsciously) for reasons of exoticism, and to bolster their liberal credentials. Dov, meanwhile, believes that his status as a disposable gay fling for Mel and Faber makes him a ‘shadow puppet on another’s screen’.

In Act III, Faber’s alignment with Ferdinand from *The Tempest* is perplexing, given that Faber is not young and Flora does not reciprocate his feelings in the way that Miranda does with Ferdinand. Perhaps, with this casting, Tippett intends to cast doubt on the sincerity of Ferdinand’s intentions in *The Tempest*. Ferdinand has been away at sea for an unspecified amount of time before being shipwrecked on Prospero’s island, and admits that in the past, ‘Full many a lady/ I have eyed with best regard’ (III. 1). He states that he is ‘a man’ (II. 1) who has liked ‘several women’ for ‘several virtues’; he too, then, is a ‘standard male seducer’, searching for a certain ‘*je ne sais quoi*’ in each of his phallic objects. The virtue that Ferdinand seemingly likes best in Miranda is her sexual inexperience, since he says to her that ‘if a virgin,/ And your affection not gone forth, I’ll make you/ The queen of Naples’ (I. 2); although he does cite her ‘fun soul’ (III. 1) as another attractive quality. Furthermore, Ferdinand arguably capitalises on the fact that he is, for Miranda, only ‘the third man that e’er I saw, the first/ That e’er I sighed for’ (I. 2), by quickly declaring his love and marrying her before she can return to the wider world and encounter other men. Although Prospero surreptitiously encourages their union

³⁸ Žižek explains how individuals often use other people as ‘vanishing mediators’ through reference to Rose’s ‘vampiric’ relationship with Jack in the film *Titanic* (1997): ‘Beneath the story of a love couple, *Titanic* tells another story, the story of a spoiled high-society girl in an identity-crisis: she is confused, doesn’t know what to do with herself [... Jack] is a kind of “vanishing mediator” whose function is to restore her sense of identity and purpose in life, her self-image (quite literally, also: he draws her image); once his job is done, he can disappear [...] There is another narrative [in *Titanic*], the profoundly reactionary myth [...] of a young rich person in crisis who gets his (or her) vitality restored by a brief intimate contact with the full-blooded life of the poor’ (Žižek, ‘A Pervert’s Guide to Family’. <http://tinyurl.com/ohaebb7>. Accessed 05/04/2017). One could flip this argument on its head and say that Rose is just as much of a ‘vanishing mediator’ for Jack: he, the lower-class dreamer, seizes the opportunity for an ocean affair with some engaged posh totty in order to bolster his ‘American Dream’ ambitions and masculine bravado.

(perhaps because any child of theirs will become heir to both Milan and Naples), the magus notes Ferdinand's lust, and warns him not to 'break [Miranda's] virgin-knot' until they have completed their marriage vows (IV. 1). From one perspective, then, the couple's hasty betrothal might be said to stem from Ferdinand's keenness to have sex with Miranda, and vice-versa. One might well question to what extent Ferdinand and Miranda are simply 'phallic objects' that serve to quench the other's pent-up desire, given the remarkable speed with which they fall in love. One might also wonder how long their seemingly perfect union will last once they leave the island.

Alternatively, to follow Kemp's suggestion, it could be that by casting Faber as Ferdinand, Mangus 'confront[s] the would-be playboy with his own illusions of youthful charm and audacity'.³⁹ In *The Tempest*, Miranda accuses Ferdinand of 'play[ing] me false' during a game of chess. Ferdinand denies her claim, and she immediately backs down, saying she will ignore his cheating and 'call it fair play' because of her love for him (V. 1). When Faber and Flora recreate this moment, however, she sends the chess pieces flying and exclaims 'I'm free: I'm free'. Notably, her accusations and concomitant statement of her liberation are accompanied by Faber's theme. Flora's straightforward, confident ownership of this theme demonstrates that she is no longer defined by her tormentor's attempts at sexual domination, and can now stand up to him as an equal (see Example 5.10).⁴⁰ Faber pleads with Mangus, 'That scene went wrong!', but Mangus corrects him, replying that, in fact, the scene went precisely as intended. Immediately, with Flora out of the picture, Thea begins to forgive Faber, and within two scenes, at the conclusion of the opera, the couple are ready to be reunited. Faber has finally reacquired Thea, his Φ , and he gladly reassumes his familiar role as 'man: maker: myself'.

³⁹ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 406.

⁴⁰ See 'Flora-Miranda, Tippett's aspirational hysteric' in the conclusion of this thesis for more on the significance of Flora's rejection of Faber.

422 **Allegro molto** (♩ = 84)
FLORA-MIRANDA (sending the chess-board flying)

O, yes you would.

f non troppo (*colla voce*)

Muted Tpt.

f *sub* 3 3 3 *f* 3 *p* 3

S.D.

Rattle *f sub.* Pft. (+ 8va higher)

Xylo

f

Example 5.10. *The Knot Garden*, II. 6, Flora rejects Faber.

From a Jungian perspective, it might be possible to see Faber’s journey as one in which the ‘despairing mid-life man’ encounters ‘the experience of depression and loss [...] in terms of the projected and dissociated feminine complex’.⁴¹ Consequently, he is able to ‘feel and see [his] dependence, personal needs, and weaknesses [in] a liberating but not uplifting experience’.⁴² Through ‘recognizing and expressing these, [...] he] is gradually able to find in himself the missing parts or resources that originally seemed impossible to envision.’⁴³ Faber’s ending with Thea does seem like a moment of healing and reconciliation; arguably, however, Faber has simply slipped back into a dead relationship and a familiar gender role.⁴⁴ For all of his flirtation and experimentation, one cannot help wondering how much he has actually learnt about himself over the course of the opera, and whether his new union with Thea is destined to last, or if he and they are simply trapped in an endless and unfulfilling cycle of phallic *jouissance*: ‘the *jouissance* of the idiot’.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Young-Eisendrath, ‘Gender and Contrasexuality’, 236.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ For further analysis of *The Knot Garden*’s epilogue, see “‘I am no more afraid’”: Thea’s Imaginary marriage’ in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

⁴⁵ Lacan, ‘A Love Letter’, 81.

Flora: Miranda in Wonderland

Flora is a sensitive, immature, and frustrated girl, poised on the verge of adulthood but frightened by and resistant to this impending change. Morris writes that she embodies the Jungian archetype of the mythological maiden, whose helplessness ‘exposes her to the dangers of reptiles, dragons, and sacrificial slaughter. In *The Knot Garden* this danger is symbolised by Faber’.⁴⁶ It seems unfair, then, perhaps even misogynistic, for Morris to follow up this statement by saying that Flora’s anxiety over Faber’s sexual threat is only ‘half-imagined, half-real’, and ‘to some extent caused by her own immaturity’.⁴⁷ Faber’s pursuit of Flora is a genuine danger, not the product of a childish imagination, and is probably the root cause of Flora’s fear of adult sexuality. Flora’s theme, initiated whenever she is anxious (usually because Faber is chasing her), is characterised by scurrying, chromatically descending, ‘whimpering’ semiquaver figures on percussion and woodwind. In Morris’s words, this ‘neurotic, sobbing, hysterical’ music encapsulates Flora’s ‘unstable psyche’ (see Example 5.11).⁴⁸

Later in Act I, when Dov and Mel career onto the stage dressed as Ariel and Caliban and acting like a cross between these characters and Tweedledum and Tweedledee, Flora joins in their play-acting. She pretends to be Alice in Wonderland, before berating herself for assuming a childlike identity.

FLORA

(Involuntarily; spoken with a tiny voice like a stage Alice)

‘I’m sure I’m very sorry’

(Passionately with a slight tremor in her voice)

O, do stop play-acting;

I’m real somewhere; I’m Flora.

The Knot Garden, I. 9

⁴⁶ Morris, “‘Simply the Thing I Am Shall Make Me Live’”, 104.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

SCENE 3 (Off-stage screams)
 28 Allegro molto (♩ = 168)
 FLORA (Off-stage)

The musical score is written for voice and instruments. The vocal line for Flora is in 4/4 time, starting with a rest followed by the notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The lyrics 'ah - ee, ah - ee' are written below the notes. The dynamic marking is *poco f* and the performance instruction is *whimpering*. The instrumental parts include strings (*ff sub.*), woodwinds (Tpt., Fls., Cl.), and percussion (Xylo., Cym.). The woodwind parts include dynamic markings like *ffp*, *p sub.*, and *mp*. The percussion parts include dynamic markings like *ff sub.* and *mp*. The score is marked with a tempo of *Allegro molto* and a metronome marking of ♩ = 168.

Example 5.11. *The Knot Garden*, I. 3, Flora's theme.

The brief alignment of Flora with Alice is indicative of her personality, life stage, and gender construction.⁴⁹ As Carolyn Sigler notes, 'the *Alice* books have consistently been read as portrayals of the experience of growing up and the construction of [female] agency and identity'.⁵⁰ Flora, like Alice, is beginning to express a desire for subjectivity, and, in the words of Carina Garland, is at 'the border between states'.⁵¹

Flora's main literary link is not, however, to Alice, but to Miranda from *The Tempest*, whom she plays in the Act III charade and whose situation in certain respects mirrors her own. Miranda is part of a group of 'budding' but isolated female characters in Shakespeare; other examples include Juliet (*Romeo and Juliet*), Cordelia (*King Lear*), and Hero (*Much Ado About Nothing*). She is the sole female presence in *The Tempest* (Claribel and Sycorax are only

⁴⁹ Paul Driver has written a short comparison between *The Knot Garden* and the *Alice* books. He states – a little hyperbolically given the plethora of allusions contained within the opera and its debt to *The Tempest* in particular – that 'what happens in *The Knot Garden* may only be compared to what happens to Alice in her two books of surreal adventures' (155). See 'The Knot Garden', in Lewis (ed.), *Michael Tippett, O. M.*, 155–60.

⁵⁰ Carolyn Sigler, in Sigler (ed.), *Alternative Alices* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1997), xiv.

⁵¹ Carina Garland, 'Curious Appetites: Food, Desire, Gender and Subjectivity in Lewis Carroll's *Alice* Texts', *The Lion and the Unicorn* 32, no. 1 (2008), 23. Garland, reads Alice's story as an allegory for Carroll's 'fundamental repression [and] hatred of adult female sexuality', which he regarded as a 'frightening and destructive force' (23).

mentioned but never seen), which isolates her from the outset. Anil Loomba even goes so far as to describe Miranda as ‘the most solitary of [all] Renaissance woman protagonists’.⁵²

From one perspective, Miranda’s prescribed roles are daughter and wife, since ‘ownership’ of her passes almost seamlessly from Prospero to Ferdinand in a familiar act of exogamous exchange: ‘as my gift and thine own acquisition/ Worthily purchased take my daughter’ (IV. 1). To categorise Miranda simply in these terms is, however, somewhat unfair; according to Vaughan and Vaughan, Miranda is ‘not as meek and submissive as she is often portrayed’.⁵³ She is a highly intelligent young woman, having been provided by Prospero with a home-school education well beyond that of the average Renaissance girl: it would appear that she is an excellent linguist, understands legal practice, and can play chess.⁵⁴ She also viciously rebukes Caliban, her would-be rapist, and rebelliously defies her father’s instructions not to talk to Ferdinand (although it must be questioned whether Prospero is in fact the guiding hand behind this relationship). Jessica Slights describes Miranda’s courtship of Ferdinand as ‘a crucial opportunity for [her] to derive a sense of herself as an agent in the world’:

For Prospero’s daughter, heterosexual desire and marriage entail a measure of resistance rather than simple capitulation to patriarchy [... Miranda is] an imaginative and headstrong young woman who shows no signs of acquiescing unthinkingly to her father’s wishes’.⁵⁵

Miranda also has no awareness of or respect for traditional gender roles, offering to help Ferdinand with his manual labour and then proposing to him. At the end of *The Tempest*, one wonders how Miranda’s journey will continue: whether she will become a subservient wife and

⁵² Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 153.

⁵³ Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, in Vaughan and Vaughan (eds.), *The Arden Shakespeare (Third Series): The Tempest* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 27.

⁵⁴ See Hiewon Shin, ‘Single Parenting, Homeschooling: Prospero, Caliban, Miranda’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 48, no. 2 (2008), 373-93.

⁵⁵ Jessica Slights, ‘Rape and the Romanticization of Shakespeare’s Miranda’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 41, no. 2 (2001), 367-8.

mother to Ferdinand, or if her father's teachings and her own initiative will make her an exceptional woman. Her rebuke of Ferdinand during their chess game suggests the latter, although her immediate promise to call his cheating 'fair play' because she loves him suggests the former.

There seems to be no such confusion over Flora's future by the end of *The Knot Garden*. In the second charade in Act III, Mel-Caliban attempts to rape her, but is stopped by Denise, allowing Flora-Miranda to escape. According to Kemp, Flora here 'find[s] out at first hand what sensuous nature means and how she can deal with it'.⁵⁶ Kemp's description of Mel-Caliban's attack as 'sensuous' reads suspiciously like an excusal of attempted rape; the message seems to be that sexual assault is fine, provided that the victim learns something. If anything, Flora's fear of men and sex is exacerbated in this scene, which is indicated by the return of her fearful music. That said, the events of this charade with Mel-Caliban do seem to harden Flora's attitudes towards men in general, and lead her to reach the conclusion that she needs to shed her timidity and take charge of her own sexuality and destiny.⁵⁷ In the next charade, she finally and definitively rejects Faber. Although it is not exactly clear how Flora will define her identity from now on in terms of her gender and sexuality (if, that is, she chooses to define herself at all), she appears to have reached a point of maturity and overcome her psychological distress over these matters. She is now ready to enter her own 'brave new world'.⁵⁸

Dov-Ariel: Tippett Androgyne

According to Bowen, Tippett identified closely with the orphan status of Jo Ann and Donny, the protagonists of his final opera, *New Year* (1989). Bowen writes that *New Year's* genesis 'could credibly be dated back as far back as 1919, when the composer's parents went to live in France

⁵⁶ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 409.

⁵⁷ Kemp, again, is oddly forgiving of Mel's and Faber's actions towards Flora. He writes that Flora 'is no longer frightened of men, even though, after her experience in the second charade, she knows they may overstep their limits' (*Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 410).

⁵⁸ See 'Flora-Miranda, Tippett's aspirational hysteric' in the conclusion of this thesis for further analysis of Flora's 'hysterical' personality.

and Tippett at the age of fourteen felt himself to be effectively “orphaned” [...] The coalescence of these memories of his youth and later experiences produced the two disturbed figures that were quickly to become the focus of *New Year*.⁵⁹ If Bowen’s assertion is correct (and given his personal relationship with Tippett there is no reason to believe it is not), then Tippett probably also related to Flora, *The Knot Garden*’s orphan.⁶⁰ *The Knot Garden* offers up some further possibilities for an androgynous refraction of certain aspects of Tippett’s character. While several characters within the opera might well be said to contain elements of Tippett’s personality, or to be inspired by people from his life, Dov in particular stands out as a strikingly (albeit not completely) autobiographical creation. Tippett himself admitted that Dov was a personal character for him: ‘The question is often posed to me: with which of your operatic characters do you most identify? The assumed answer is usually Mangus [... but] for me, an identification with Dov, the singer, the musician who expresses heart-break, has always seemed close’.⁶¹

The perilous state of Dov’s relationship with Mel is apparent from moments after their first appearance, when they play as Ariel and Caliban in an effort to repress the reality of their disintegrating connection. Thea easily and unexpectedly seduces Mel, leaving Dov ‘howling like Ariel’s dog’ (that is to say, howling like the dog that Ariel impersonates in *The Tempest*). Clarke suggests that Dov’s howlings ‘in some way reflect the turbulence and tensions in Tippett’s declining relationship with Karl Hawker’ at the time of *The Knot Garden*’s composition.⁶² In his autobiography, Tippett describes his relationship with Hawker as ‘turbulent’, and explains how Hawker, like Mel, often doubted his own sexuality.⁶³ It could

⁵⁹ Meirion Bowen, *Michael Tippett*, 2nd ed. (London: Robson, 1997), 132.

⁶⁰ Flora (a ‘light high soprano’) and Jo Ann (a ‘lyric soprano’) are similar, ingénue characters. See ‘Flora-Miranda, Tippett’s aspirational hysteric’ in the conclusion of this thesis for more on the links between them.

⁶¹ Tippett, ‘Dreams of Power, Dreams of Love’, in *Tippett on Music*, ed. Bowen (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 221.

⁶² David Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett: Modern Times and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 234.

⁶³ Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 231.

equally be said, however, that Hawker occupied Dov's role in this scenario, since the relationship ended as a result of Tippett's burgeoning affair with Bowen, and Tippett does not appear to have been greatly upset by this break-up. It is far more likely that Tippett drew on earlier, more painful memories, from a period he describes as 'the main climacteric of my personal and creative life', for inspiration with Dov's and Mel's failing relationship.⁶⁴

In 1932, Tippett met the painter Wilfred Franks, and 'fell for him in a way that I had never previously known [...] Meeting with Wilf was the deepest, most shattering experience of falling in love'.⁶⁵ The relationship was to end acrimoniously, however, when Franks abruptly left Tippett, announcing that he was to be married.

I simply kidded myself, as people often do, that if you desire someone strongly enough, then they will reciprocate [...] I clung to this feeling that Wilf really would accept – but it would not work. He eventually found himself a girlfriend, Meg Masters, though he still found it difficult to practise sex with a woman. Wilf certainly wanted it but there were blockages caused by the age-old problem of to what extent gender, sex, and love correspond. I had these problems too, perhaps more sharply. The level of distress we reached was sometimes acute [...] When Wilf [announced his intention to marry] I went completely cold. At the very moment he said that, I cut off relations completely. Wilf was deeply hurt. I returned to Oxted and had such violent dreams, it was as if a whole dam had opened. I had to do something about it.⁶⁶

According to Kemp, Tippett was 'unable to come to terms with either the wretchedness of separation or the emotional turmoil it let loose'.⁶⁷ The composer's eventual answer to his misery

⁶⁴ Ibid., 52. Suzanne Robinson explores this period in "Coming out to Oneself": Encodings of Homosexual Identity from the First String Quartet to *The Heart's Assurance*, in Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Michael Tippett* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 86-102.

⁶⁵ Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 57.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 62.

⁶⁷ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 36.

was to seek psychological help, in the form of Jungian psychoanalyst John Layard – the parallels with Dov’s situation hardly need pointing out.

Dov’s gender queerness and musicality are emphasised throughout *The Knot Garden* by his continual alignment with Ariel, *The Tempest*’s singing ‘airy sprite’. Orgel describes Ariel as ‘volatile and metamorphic. He is male, the asexual boy to Caliban’s libidinous man, but (in keeping with his status as a boy actor) all the roles he plays at Prospero’s command are female: sea nymph, harpy, Ceres’.⁶⁸ Over the centuries, performances of *The Tempest* have continually questioned Ariel’s gender. After being a male role in the seventeenth century, in the early eighteenth century Ariel became exclusively a female part, a tradition that lasted until the 1930s.⁶⁹ Modern productions, including films and operas, have continued to explore Ariel’s ambiguous gender; it is normal for either male or female performers to take on the role, and for productions to focus on the character’s non-human androgyny.⁷⁰

Dov’s post-*Knot Garden* journey also underlines his gender fluidity. *Songs for Dov* (1970) follows him through his ‘*Wanderjahre*’: in Tippett’s words, ‘those years of illusion and disillusionment, innocence and experience, which we all pass through to reach what maturity we may’.⁷¹ The work shares an autobiographical quality with its operatic predecessor, and according to Kemp, Song 2 of the cycle, ‘Know you the land where the lemon bushes flower?’, has a particularly pronounced ‘autobiographical flavour’.⁷² The first stanza of this song begins with a trumpet quotation from Beethoven’s song ‘*Kennst du das Land*’ (1809), before Dov sings:

⁶⁸ Stephen Orgel, in Orgel (ed.), *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Tempest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 27.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁷⁰ See, for example, Julie Taymor’s 2010 film of *The Tempest*, in which Ben Whishaw plays a gender-fluid Ariel (Figure 3.2 in Chapter 3), and Thomas Adès’s *Tempest* opera (2004), in which Ariel is played by an ultra-high soprano.

⁷¹ Tippett, ‘Dreams of Power, Dreams of Love’, 224.

⁷² Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 434.

‘Know you the land where the lemon bushes flower?’

That’s what the boy-girl sang while the Ancient twanged his harp.

Sound, sound my harp!

‘Mignon, Mignon’ I cry.

‘Shall I hurry to that land of flowering lemon?’

Shall I, shall I?’

Songs for Dov, Song 2

In Goethe’s novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795-6), ‘Kennst du das Land’ is the identifying tune of Mignon, ‘a vulnerable girl on the brink of sexual maturity [... A] child woman who insists on dressing as a boy, is partly aphasic but is capable of eloquent expression through song’.⁷³ Terence Cave writes that Mignon plays her song ‘on the threshold’: she is literally playing at the door of Wilhelm’s house, but is also (like Flora and Alice) traversing the liminal spaces of gender and adolescence.⁷⁴ At one point in the story, Mignon is referred to as ‘zwitterhaft’ (hermaphroditic), and criticism in the early twentieth century assumed that she was of indeterminate sex, although more recent readings take a less deterministic line, presenting her as a precursor to ‘the modern challenge to a crudely sex-based antithesis of “male” and “female”’.⁷⁵ Like Ariel, Mignon embodies musicianship, ‘gender ambiguity, acrobatics [... and] deference to a saviour and protector’.⁷⁶

The next quotation used in Song 2 of *Songs for Dov* is in fact ‘Come unto these yellow sands’ from Tippett’s *Songs for Ariel* (1962), which is also heard at the end of *The Knot Garden*:

⁷³ Terence Cave, *Mignon’s Afterlives: Crossing Cultures from Goethe to the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 15-18.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 242.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 235. In the novel, Mignon has been abducted and abused by a wandering band of acrobats, but is rescued by Wilhelm Meister and becomes his devoted servant. She secretly falls in love with him, and eventually dies from an unspecified disease.

‘Come unto these yellow sands’
That’s what the girl-boy sang to a trilling, skirling pipe.
Sound, sound my flute!
‘Ariel’, I cry, ‘Sweet Ariel,
Shall I hurry to the island with the gold sand beaches?
Shall I? Shall I?’

Songs for Dov, Song 2

During the first two parts of this journey to personal and artistic maturity, then, Dov meets – if not on a physical level, then at least on an internal, imaginative one – Mignon (the ‘boy-girl’) and Ariel (the ‘girl-boy’). His questions at the end of the first and second stanzas might be read as enquiries about whether to submit to a less rigid conception of gender and sexuality, as part of a life entirely devoted to music and song.

As both a gay man and professional musician in mid-twentieth century British society, Tippett apparently considered himself something of a hermaphroditic Ariel-Mignon figure, in a psychological sense, and was anxious about the impact of his sexuality and profession on his gender identity. Clarke, echoing Jean-Jacques Nattiez’s claim about Wagner, intriguingly posits ‘an androgyny assumed within [Tippett’s] authorial persona’ owing to the composer’s identification with Dov and certain female characters.⁷⁷ Clarke is fully aware that characterising a gay composer in this way could be considered dubious, and he is careful to point out that ‘gay does not necessarily equal feminised’, even if ‘feminist and gay consciousness might commonly possess in their different positions [...] a critical resistance to patriarchally determined models of subjectivity and its construction in history’.⁷⁸ Yet Clarke should perhaps not be so apologetic

⁷⁷ Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 261. See also Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, trans. Stewart Spencer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

⁷⁸ Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 266. Tippett’s next opera, *The Ice Break*, features Astron, whom Tippett initially intended to make Astron-Astra, a perfect androgyne akin to Honoré de Balzac’s Séraphitus-Séraphita from the novel *Séraphita*, who is ‘seen as male or female depending on the needs of the petitioner or seeker’ (Tippett, ‘What I Believe’ (1978 postscript), in *Music of the Angels*, 54).

about his hypothesis, since, as Suzanne Robinson astutely notes, the prevailing view in Tippett's society was that gender and sexuality were tightly bound together, and the composer constantly had to grapple with 'the problem of masculinity in a society that associated homosexuality with effeminacy'.⁷⁹ Stannard explains, for instance, how the work of pioneering nineteenth-century sexologist Karl Ulrichs remained highly influential in twentieth-century thought, for example in the work of Foucault. Ulrichs, who was homosexual and campaigned for gay rights, described 'the man-loving-man' as 'a feminine soul enclosed in a male body', while Foucault – who was also gay – characterised homosexuality as 'a model of "interior androgyny" or "hermaphroditism of the soul"'.⁸⁰ Stannard further points out the stereotypical 'overlap between homosexuality and musicality as forms of deviancy which are open to feminization',⁸¹ citing Nadine Hubbs's observation that 'this gendered and highly charged construction of music [still] tints every musician's identity, queer or straight'.⁸²

The predominant discourse of the early to mid twentieth century, then, characterised gay men and musicians as psychologically suspect, and susceptible to effeminacy and sexual abnormality. Tippett was well aware of these assumptions, and, to a certain extent, his own views reflect wider societal opinions on homosexuality, musicality, and gender. According to Stannard, Tippett's letters 'frequently return to the notion of a union between masculine and feminine sides in his psyche, a construction he felt particularly appropriate on account of his homosexuality [...] Tippett saw hermaphroditism as enforced to some degree by social

Whether Tippett identified with Astron is debatable, but Bowen believes that Astron's lines 'Saviour?! Hero?! Me!!/ You must be joking' are 'germane both to the message of the opera and Tippett's stance as an artist' (Bowen, *Michael Tippett*, 2nd ed., 131).

⁷⁹ Robinson, "'Coming out to Oneself'", 96.

⁸⁰ Ulrichs and Foucault cited in Iain Stannard, 'Hermaphroditism and the Masculine Body: Tippett's Aesthetic Views in a Gendered Context', in Ian Biddle and Kirsten Gibson (eds.), *Masculinity and Western Musical Practice* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 285.

⁸¹ Stannard, 'Hermaphroditism and the Masculine Body', 281.

⁸² Nadine Hubbs, *The Queer Composition of America's Sound: Gay Modernists, American Music, and National Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 118. Quoted in Stannard, 'Hermaphroditism and the Masculine Body', 282.

conceptions of the artist and [...] the homosexual too'.⁸³ In one letter, Tippett professes that he 'can't help feeling that there's a somewhat special psychological balance for people like ourselves' (that is to say, homosexuals).⁸⁴ In another, he writes that since 'artistic creation is so often [...] polarised as feminine, as against the pure disembodied abstract intellect [...] it's hardly any wonder if artists turn out hermaphroditic in temperament from time to time'.⁸⁵

Tippett also appears to have followed Wagner by viewing words and music in a gendered fashion. In one article, 'The Birth of an Opera', he writes of being 'taught by Wagner' in his essay *Oper und Drama* (1851).⁸⁶ In Wagner's sexualised conception of music drama, opera is the union of masculine poetry and feminine music. There is a patriarchal bias to this theory: in *Oper und Drama*, Wagner denigrates the effeminated theatre of Rossini and his contemporaries, which subordinates drama to music, and argues for a more masculine, word-dominated art form. In the words of Brian Hyer, 'Wagner allegorizes [the] historical process, conceiving of poetry as masculine and procreative, music as feminine and maternal [... and] imagines the poetic intent as a fertilizing seed that inseminates a musical womb, enabling it to give birth to music drama'.⁸⁷ Tippett might have recognised Wagner's model of artistic hierarchies in the attitudes of his own time. Certainly, he was acutely aware of a lack of intellectual respect paid to musicians in Britain, and of a gendered split between literature and music:

When I was a student, it was generally felt in England that the composer, and the musician in general, was a person of [feminine] sensibility, but not of [masculine] intellect [...] By contrast,

⁸³ Stannard, 'Hermaphroditism and the Masculine Body', 280.

⁸⁴ Tippett, letter to Francesca Allinson, 16/09/1943, in Thomas Schuttenhelm (ed.), *Selected Letters of Michael Tippett* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 110. Cited in Stannard, 'Hermaphroditism and the Masculine Body', 286.

⁸⁵ Tippett, letter to Douglas Newton, 22/05/1943, in Schuttenhelm (ed.), *Selected Letters of Michael Tippett*, 151. Cited in Stannard, 'Hermaphroditism and the Masculine Body', 279.

⁸⁶ Tippett, 'The Birth of an Opera', in *Moving into Aquarius* (St Albans: Paladin, 1974), 52.

⁸⁷ Brian Hyer, Review of Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 47, no. 3 (1994), 532.

creative artists in the fields of literature or drama were allowed to use all the intellectual faculties at their command and even be exploratory in a world context.⁸⁸

Tippett's writings and works arguably demonstrate a keenness to emphasise his mastery of 'masculine' intellectual practice. As Irene Morra notes, Tippett 'tends to place his own works within a literary, rather than musical, dramatic tradition', 'equate[s] his articulation of ideas in opera with the literary accomplishments of contemporary librettists', and highlights his 'literary awareness and knowledge in the text of [his libretti]'.⁸⁹ Arguably, Tippett did not wish to be marginalised or pigeonholed as a mere composer, and was intent on proving his intellectual manliness by writing the literature, as well as the music, for his operas.

In *The Knot Garden*, Dov and Mel embody the stereotypically gendered contrast between language and music: Mel, the writer, is overtly 'masculine', being sexually belligerent and emotionally callous; Dov, the musician, represents more traditionally 'feminine' virtues, such as sensitivity, heartbreak, and whimsy. Intriguingly, however, in *The Knot Garden* Tippett sides with Dov by emphasising the importance of 'feminine' music, rather than 'masculine' words, to the pursuit of psychological and collective wellbeing. Tippett writes of how, in the opera, 'acts of forgiveness, of reconciliation, are [...] effected through the magic influence of music'.⁹⁰ Important examples of redemptive, diegetic musical interruptions in the opera's action include the cathartic blues ensemble in Act I, the Schubert lied in Act II, Dov's subsequent song 'I was born in a big town', and Ariel's 'Come unto these yellow sands' in Act III. Given his close association with music, Dov can be regarded as a heroic figure in *The Knot Garden's* dramaturgy, albeit not in a traditional, 'masculine' sense.

Paul Robinson argues that 'far from suggesting a revolutionary dissolution of the familiar dimorphic categories of male and female – far, in other words, from embracing

⁸⁸ Tippett, from 'Tippett in Interview', in Bowen, *Michael Tippett* (London: Robson, 1982), 158.

⁸⁹ Irene Morra, *Twentieth Century British Authors and the Rise of Opera in Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 13-17.

⁹⁰ Tippett, 'Dreams of Power, Dreams of Love', 223.

androgyny – [Wagner’s writings] in fact [serve] to shore up the notion of sexual difference, and [do] so in the most hidebound fashion by associating maleness with articulate thought and femaleness with wordless emotion’.⁹¹ Arguably, with his sometimes clichéd opinions on male and female characteristics, words and music, and his chimerical view of the homosexual brain, Tippett does the same. Yet Stannard wonders whether Tippett’s delineation of homosexuality into a male-female duality simply reflects ‘the influence of received wisdom more than a fully worked-through account with which he was satisfied’.⁹² He further suggests that Tippett found ‘theories of [psychological] hermaphroditism [...] inadequate to an understanding of the diversity of masculinities in English society at this time’, and was dissatisfied by the ‘relatively clear-cut acceptance of two stereotypical gender types’.⁹³ ‘I’m beginning to doubt the absolute claims of what is called normal psychology’, writes Tippett in one letter, adding ‘Life is just a bit more mysterious’.⁹⁴ Stannard proposes that Tippett’s musical works ‘act as a discursive field in which some of these concerns [about gender] are played out in the form of stylistic adoptions, associations, [and] juxtapositions’.⁹⁵ With these remarks in mind, it is instructive to examine one particularly potent moment of surprising musical quotation and gender-disruptive exploration in Tippett’s work, which occurs at the end of *The Knot Garden*’s second act and features the opera’s two most gender-troubled and gender-troubling characters – in Tippett’s words, ‘the two characters most lost and most alone’: Dov and Flora.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Paul Robinson, Review of Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 7, no. 1 (1995), 81.

⁹² Stannard, ‘Hermaphroditism and the Masculine Body’, 285.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 287-8.

⁹⁴ Tippett, letter to Francesca Allinson, 16/09/1943, in Schuttenhelm (ed.), *Selected Letters of Michael Tippett*, 110.

⁹⁵ Stannard, ‘Hermaphroditism and the Masculine Body’, 286.

⁹⁶ Tippett, *The Knot Garden* libretto, 15.

‘I will dress myself in green...’

In Act II, Scene 9 of *The Knot Garden*, Flora enters running away from Faber once again. After escaping him, she lies sobbing. ‘As the sense of nightmare clears’, Dov comforts Flora, and invites her to sing to alleviate her sadness.

DOV

Flora: Flora, love;

Stop crying.

There’s only you and me.

(Flora gradually recovers composure)

FLORA

I’m glad it’s you.

(He rocks her gently in his arms)

DOV

Flora, do you like music?

(Music that’s bitter-sweet)

Do you ever sing?

The Knot Garden, II. 9

In response, Flora sits up and surprisingly bursts into a German song: ‘Die liebe Farbe’ from Schubert’s *Die schöne Müllerin* (1824), a cycle for piano and baritone based on poems by Wilhelm Müller. Dov, after listening to Flora’s song, echoes her in English, then exclaims ‘But that’s a boy’s song’. Flora tells him ‘Sometimes I dream I am a boy/ Who dies for love/ And then I am a girl again’. ‘Yes’, Dov pointedly responds, ‘I understand’, before singing one of his own compositions, ‘I was born in a big town’.

Much like the Act I blues finale, the concluding scene of Act II is conspicuously long by the standards of its act and *The Knot Garden* in general. This scene of reflection and tenderness marks the end of the ‘Labyrinth’ section in which the antagonisms between characters have reached fever pitch. It signals a turn towards the final act’s working out of psychological blockages, and the *Tempest*-like conclusion of forgiveness and reconciliation. Aside from its structural importance, the scene is also, according to Kemp, ‘the most obviously affecting moment in *The Knot Garden*’, and briefly ‘converts the opera into a concert’.⁹⁷ It certainly offers a special insight into the difficulties besetting Flora and Dov, and demonstrates their exceptional status within the opera’s story. Relatedly, in Gloag’s words, it demonstrates Tippett’s ‘fascination with the ambiguity of gendered archetypes, the images that they project, and the encounters and engagements between them’.⁹⁸

Peter Dennison notes how Tippett ‘recognise[d] that an enormous potential lay in allusion to pre-existing music, that the selection of such material could be governed by specific extra-musical associations, and that its treatment, ranging from simple reminiscence to complex recomposition, could become one of his most powerful communicative weapons’.⁹⁹ Flora’s remarkable Schubert quotation certainly invites hermeneutic scrutiny along these lines. Rather than following this line of enquiry, however, Dennison simply highlights the ‘escapism of Flora’s recourse to tears and song’, reading her quotation of Schubert as an attempt to create a world remote from her current situation.¹⁰⁰ Dennison’s interpretation is partially true, and this scene undoubtedly encapsulates the old idea that music ‘can ease a troubled mind [...] *Minuentur atrae carmine curae*, “Song will diminish gloom”’.¹⁰¹ Yet Dennison’s assessment is

⁹⁷ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 425.

⁹⁸ Gloag, ‘Tippett’s Operatic World’, in Gloag and Jones (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Michael Tippett*, 259.

⁹⁹ Peter Dennison, ‘Reminiscence and Recomposition in Tippett’, *The Musical Times* 126, no. 1703 (1985), 13.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁰¹ Lawrence Kramer, *Why Classical Music Still Matters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 171.

incomplete, since it ignores the specificity of Tippett's reference. Why, one might ask, would a young woman of the 1960s burst into a Schubert lied rather than, say, a Beatles or Supremes song? Furthermore, why does Dov echo Flora's song, apparently in recognition of its applicability to himself? Tippett's use of pre-existing material here does more than simply offer Flora, Dov, and the audience a moment of cathartic recovery, although that is part of its function. The extract of 'Die liebe Farbe' is also a moment when a whole host of meaningful intertextual associations and biographical allusions swirl around the two characters onstage.

Die schöne Müllerin tells the story of a young journeyman miller who follows a brook to a mill and falls in love with the maid who lives there. He tries to impress her, but she rejects him for a more masculine hunter. In 'Die liebe Farbe', after the maid has spurned his advances in favour of his green-clad rival, the miller sings of how he will also dress himself in green, since she is so fond of the colour. 'Die liebe Farbe' occurs towards the end of the song cycle and the miller's life (it is the sixteenth song of twenty), and is the point at which the miller sinks into suicidal depression. At the end of the cycle, he apparently ends his life by throwing himself in the brook. The eventual fate of the miller must lead to questions about Flora's closeness to suicide when she sings this extract. This proximity to death is further emphasised through a link between Schubert's miller and the tragic heroines of *Othello* and *Hamlet*. Susan Youens notes that

no one could drape [themselves] figuratively in willow branches without recalling Desdemona's 'Willow Song' in act 4, scene iii of *Othello*; one remembers her lines 'I call'd my love false love, but what said he then? / Sing willow, willow, willow:/ If I court no women, you'll lie with no men' and shudders at Müller's variation on the theme [...] Like Ophelia, [the miller also] becomes at last pathetic, vulnerable, seeking a watery death like hers.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Susan Youens, *Schubert, Müller, and Die schöne Müllerin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 198-9. Youens further points out that the willow imagery of 'Die liebe Farbe' might prompt links with the male protagonists of *Othello* and *Hamlet*. While Youen's comment that 'Othello undergoes the same harrowing-from-within as Müller's later creation' owing to his partner's (alleged) infidelity might resonate more with Dov's situation than Flora's, Hamlet's and the miller's shared 'sickened belief that love is a lie to hide mere lust' seems applicable to both Flora and Dov (198-9).

The Schubert song also intertextually emphasises the gender trouble that Flora and Dov are both experiencing at this point, since it references a character undergoing his own crisis of gender and sexuality. According to Kramer, the protagonist of *Die schöne Müllerin* is a ‘fascinating case study of failed masculinity’, and ‘Schubert’s most radical experiment in alternative subjectivity’.¹⁰³ Kramer calls the miller ‘a sacrifice to a misguided ideal of manhood. He fails, not because he is unmasculine, but because he does not recognise in himself a viable alternative to the clichéd masculinity that he personifies in the hunter’.¹⁰⁴ Youens further notes how, in *Die schöne Müllerin*,

Müller availed himself of the long literary tradition by which women lament their abandonment, delve into tormented introspection, and kill themselves when all hope of love is lost – but it is a man, not a woman, who does so here [...] When a man is abandoned, he feels like a woman, and those male poets who probe the sensations of abandonment are suspect in gender, vulnerable to the charge that they are effeminate beings.¹⁰⁵

Flora’s sense of identity and gender is as liminal as that of the miller, as demonstrated by her ‘Sometimes I dream I am a boy...’ admission. Dov’s ‘Yes, I understand’ and ‘musing’ repetition of the song indicates an empathy with Flora’s and the miller’s gender uncertainty, and emphasises the closeness of his sexual circumstances to the miller’s. He too has been usurped, abandoned, and left lamenting his inability to compete with a more virile rival – albeit, in this

¹⁰³ Kramer, *Franz Schubert: Subjectivity, Sexuality, Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 133 & 151.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 133. Kramer compares the miller to Severin, the masochistic protagonist of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch’s novel *Venus in Furs*, who loses his love interest, Wanda, to ‘the Greek’. Wanda, notes Kramer, makes Severin tie a green ribbon in her hair: ‘an allusion, surely, to the green ribbon the miller sends to the maid after she mentions her fondness for green’ (134-5). Kramer explains that masochism is ‘an attempt to construct an alternative to normative masculinity, particularly that of the respectable nineteenth-century nuclear family. Unfortunately for the masochist, however, the symbolic father in whom the normative social order centres its authority is not so easy to abolish. He tends to return in the figure of a hypervirile interloper like the miller’s maid or “the Greek” for whom Wanda leaves Severin. In a way, the primary task of the masochist is simply to postpone this all but inevitable outcome: to hold its suspense’ (136).

¹⁰⁵ Youens, *Schubert, Müller, and Die schöne Müllerin*, 201.

case (even more embarrassingly), a female one. Dov's miller quotation might also be a veiled reference to Tippett's relationship with Franks, who, like the miller maid, was 'so fond of green'. According to David Ayerst, at Tippett's and Franks's first meeting, the painter was dressed head to toe in this colour, prompting the nickname 'Der grune Wilf'.¹⁰⁶

Kramer writes that many of Schubert's songs were a reaction to what Foucault terms the 'disciplinary society' and Lacan calls the 'big Other'; that is to say, 'the symbolic order into which every subject must be enrolled'.¹⁰⁷ According to Kramer, 'a key feature of the "disciplinary society" is the determination of human identity by reference to central [collective and anonymous] norms around which various forms and degrees of deviation are ranged'.¹⁰⁸ Schubert's songs 'explore an "errant" subjectivity without assuming its subordination (and sometimes suggesting its insubordination) to a normative model', and 'can be understood as an effort to [...] resist, escape, or surmount the regime of the norm'.¹⁰⁹ It is often the case that 'the songs of Schubert's errant subjects venture into a border area where something – a structural oddity, a textual twist, an expressive gesture – potentially transforms the observance of normative discipline into a deviation from it'.¹¹⁰ 'Die liebe Farbe' contains one such 'errant' moment.

The song begins in B minor, a key that Tippett describes as 'the lowest of the low'.¹¹¹ This explicit reference to a B tonality is significant within the context of *The Knot Garden*: as Kemp notes, 'the main points of structural articulation [in the opera ...] are in either B or in very closely related tonalities'.¹¹² B is the first note heard in the opera, and initiates the twelve-note 'Tempest' motif. Denise's Act I aria is in B; the blues ensemble is in E (the subdominant of B);

¹⁰⁶ David Ayerst, talk for the Burford Society, 1985. Quoted on '3. Tippett & Boosbeck', *Wilfred Franks Biography*. <http://tinyurl.com/glqfq5u>. Accessed 03/04/2017.

¹⁰⁷ Kramer, *Franz Schubert: Subjectivity, Sexuality, Song*, 4.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹¹ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 431.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 430.

the Schubert quotation is in B minor; Dov's ensuing song is in F# (the dominant of B); Thea's Act III aria centres on B; and the opera closes on B. Kemp writes that Tippett's 'search within a tonality' is a 'metaphor [for] the psyche'.¹¹³ Arguably, then, it is not just Flora and Dov who have reached a nadir by the end of Act II, and their grief here stands for the distress and bewilderment of all the *Knot Garden*'s characters. Through their shared B minor song, they serendipitously begin a process of healing for all the characters.

The harmony throughout 'Die liebe Farbe' is almost exclusively restricted to chords I and V, demonstrating the weight of the narrator's sadness through what Youens calls a 'leadent tonality'.¹¹⁴ A short introduction (see Example 5.12) quickly establishes a sombre mood: the left-hand of the piano part enters with no accompaniment on a low B (two octaves below middle C); this low register in the left-hand (or cellos and double basses, in Tippett's reorchestration) is accompanied by poignant, weepy appoggiaturas in the right hand (violins); and there is also a consistently quiet dynamic. One of the song's most distinctive features is the accompaniment's incessant F# semi-quaver ostinato, which plays like a death knell throughout. Kramer suggests that this tolling note indicates how the miller's sense of subjectivity is 'mortally ill'.¹¹⁵ The low register disappears once the singing begins, 'as if the ground had vanished from beneath the [singer's] feet', which throws attention onto the singer and their sorrow.¹¹⁶ Then, in bar 10, when the miller sings 'mein Schatz' ('my love'), there is a surprising shift into the tonic major via a D# in the singer's part, which suggests a fleeting sense of hope or happiness. Almost immediately, however, and with a crushing sense of inevitability, the tonic minor returns via a D# in the piano, along with the low B (see Example 5.13).¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Ibid., 431.

¹¹⁴ Youens, *Schubert: Die schöne Müllerin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 103.

¹¹⁵ Kramer, *Franz Schubert: Subjectivity, Sexuality, Song*, 147.

¹¹⁶ Youens, *Schubert: Die schöne Müllerin*, 102.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 103.

Poco lento.

Example 5.12. Schubert, 'Die liebe Farbe', bars 1-4.

bind me, My love likes green so well, My love likes green— so
 fly - ing, My love likes hunt - ing so well, My love likes hunt - ing so
 o - ver, My love likes green so well, My love likes green— so

wei - den: mein Schatz hat's Grün so gern, mein Schatz hat's Grün— so
 Ha - gen, mein Schatz hat's Ja - gen so gern, mein Schatz hat's Ja - gen so
 Ra - sen: mein Schatz hat's Grün so gern, mein Schatz hat's Grün— so

well. I'll
 well. The
 well. No

gern. Will
 gern. Das
 gern. Kein

Example 5.13. Schubert, 'Die liebe Farbe', bars 9-13.

The harmonic and melodic details of ‘Die liebe Farber’ highlight the painful juxtaposition between the miller’s internal feelings and external pronouncements. Eric Wen, in his Schenkerian analysis of the song, explains that

The expected primary tone would be $D\sharp$ ($\hat{3}$ in B minor), arrived at first in bar 10 after a stepwise initial ascent [...] However, this expected minor $\hat{3}$ is raised to $D\sharp$ both times. The major form of $\hat{3}$ is taken over by the left hand of the piano part upon the arrival of the cadential $\frac{9}{4}$ in the following bar, and is chromatically altered back into the minor mode before descending to $\hat{1}$ in the inner voice. The major form of $\hat{3}$ expressed by the singer serves as a metaphor for the outward joy normally associated with the words ‘mein Schatz’, but the occurrence of the structural melodic descent in minor in the piano accompaniment expresses the inner pain felt by the narrator [...] The real inner feelings of the narrator are poignantly articulated in the $\sharp\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ descent which occurs in the piano accompaniment.¹¹⁸

But the tonal struggle at this point does more than simply express a happy-sad irony. Youens’s and Kramer’s comments about the miller’s gender crisis – that is to say, he is a failed man lamenting like a woman – crystallise in this unexpected moment of conflict and deviation. The voice and piano, inner voice-outer voice, internal-external conflicts arguably encapsulate – to use Tippett’s language – a ‘psychological hermaphroditism’.

Tippett’s music surrounding this song seems to endorse such a close reading, since Flora’s ensuing ‘boy/girl’ statement, already cited, similarly enacts a telling play with a semitone contrast, on $F\sharp$ (‘... a boy who *dies* for love’) and $F\flat$ (‘And then I am a *girl* again’) (see Example 5.14, bars 5 and 8). Taking the connection a little further, it is possible to hear the ‘leaden tonality’ and death-march character of ‘Die liebe Farbe’ as an embodiment of the ‘disciplinary society’ or ‘big Other’, with the brief moment of major-mode happiness offering a tantalising but hopelessly unattainable glimpse of a place beyond the disciplinary gender norms

¹¹⁸ Eric Wen, ‘Bass-Line Articulations of the *Uralie*’, in Carl Schachter and Hedi Siegel (eds.), *Schenker Studies 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 280.

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system shows the vocal line for Dov (Dov) and Flora (Flora) with the lyrics: "But that's a boy's song. Sometimes I dream I am a boy who dies for love." The piano accompaniment (Pf.) is marked *pp* and the harp (Hrs.) is marked *p dolce*. The second system shows the vocal line for Flora (Flora) with the lyrics: "And then I am a girl again. Dov,". The piano accompaniment (Hrs.) is marked *p* and *poco*, and the flute (Fl.) is marked *pp*. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics, articulation, and performance instructions.

Example 5.14. *The Knot Garden*, II. 13, 'Sometimes I dream I am a boy...' (Flora).

that have caused the miller such upset. Structurally, the interpolated Schubert song seems to function in a comparable manner within the broader context of *The Knot Garden*, since – in a further semitone relation – the song's B tonality acts as a chromatic upper neighbour to the B \flat pedal note that leads into it (see Example 5.15).¹¹⁹ The sense that 'Die liebe Farbe' is opening up a dream-like space in the opera's world is subtly heightened by the harp glissando that leads into the song.

Dov-Ariel's and Flora-Miranda's dream-like movement from 'boy' to 'girl' might be regarded as an example of attaining Jung's 'androgyny ideal': the divine, unified, 'sexually

¹¹⁹ This B/B \flat semitone juxtaposition might be compared to the use of key symbolism in Britten's operas, where, according to Mervyn Cooke, 'the general idea seems to be that to "be flat" means to be weighed down by discipline, duty and conformity, whereas to "be natural" is to pursue freedom and dreams, and to remain faithful to one's private desires'. See Cooke, 'Be Flat or Be Natural? Pitch Symbolism in Britten's Operas', in Philip Rupprecht (ed.), *Rethinking Britten* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 102-24.

(He rocks her gently in his arms)

300 Fl. B.Cl. *pp* Timp. *pp* 301 Poco più

DOV *p* 302

Flo-ra, — do you like mu-sic? (Music — that's bitter - sweet.

2 soli Vcl. 2 soli D.B. *molto espr. pp* *poco* *pp*

DOV Do you e - ver - sing? Harp. *p* *gliss* *8va* *p*

pp *poco* *pp* Pr. *8va p* *sonoroso*

303 Adagio (♩=80)

FLORA

Hrns. *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

D.Bsn. + Solo D.B. *p*

304 FLORA *p*

"In grün will ich mich klei - den, in

pp (Vcl.)

Example 5.15. *The Knot Garden*, II, 9, introduction to 'Die liebe Farbe'.

complete' psychological self that was 'lost at some cataclysmic moment in the mythic past'.¹²⁰ For Jung, 'the ideal self [...] is neither masculine nor feminine, but an androgyne that through combination of masculine and feminine blurs gender distinctions'.¹²¹ As Kathryn Pauly Morgan notes, 'the essence of the androgynous vision' is 'I am she: I am he' – a statement that bears some similarity both to Flora's admission and the miller's 'hermaphroditism' as displayed in 'Die liebe Farbe'.¹²² According to Morgan, 'symbolizing [such] wholeness, completion and unity', is particularly 'tantalizing, compelling, and powerful [i]n times of atomistic individualism, of psychological and social alienation', such as the time in which Flora and Dov are stuck.¹²³

It is crucial to note, however, that Flora does not combine 'boy' and 'girl'; rather, she conceives of moving between these two symbolic positions. To describe either Flora or Dov as in any sense 'complete' at this point would also seem premature. In fact, they seem traumatised by societal inscriptions of gender and sexuality, and some distance from being psychologically 'whole'.¹²⁴ Perhaps Flora's and Dov's situation might be better understood from a Lacanian perspective. For Lacan, on Rose's account, while 'all speaking beings must line themselves up on one side or the other of [the] division [of sexual difference ...] anyone can cross over and inscribe themselves on the opposite side from that to which they are biologically destined'.¹²⁵ Lacan's work furthermore emphasises the 'fantasmic nature' of the 'either/or' situation of

¹²⁰ McGrath, 'Sexuation in Jung and Lacan', 11.

¹²¹ Carol Anne Costabile-Heming and Vasiliki Karandrikas, 'Experimenting with Androgyny: *Malina* and Ingeborg Bachmann's Jungian Search for Utopia', *Mosaic* 30, no. 3 (1997), 79.

¹²² Kathryn Pauly Morgan, 'Androgyny: A Conceptual Critique', *Social Theory and Practice* 8, no. 3 (1982), 245.

¹²³ *Ibid.* Morgan specifically cites the 1970s as a period of such individualism and alienation.

¹²⁴ Jung's theories on androgyny have been subjected to considerable scrutiny. In the early 1970s, 'many feminist scholars invoked the concept of androgyny as a possible means towards overcoming the constraints of a patriarchal society', and 'praised androgyny for its utopian potential' (Costabile-Heming and Karandrikas, 'Experimenting with Androgyny', 75). Other scholars, however, have criticised Jung's theories for being 'intricately tied to his own masculinist perception of gender differences' (*Ibid.*). According to Daniel Harris, for instance, 'the myth of androgyny has no value: as an ideal image of liberation from traditional sex-role stereotypes, it is false' ('Androgyny: The Sexist Myth in Disguise', *Women's Studies* 2, no. 2 (1974), 171).

¹²⁵ Rose, 'Introduction – II', 49.

sexual difference.¹²⁶ He writes that ‘man’ and ‘woman’ (or, in this case, ‘boy’ and ‘girl’) ‘are not positions able to satisfy us [...] The unconscious has a much clearer idea of what is going on than the truth that man is not woman’.¹²⁷ In sum, then, to follow Lacan, ‘man’ and ‘woman’, ‘male’ and ‘female’, ‘boy’ and ‘girl’ are no more than inadequate words, and do not assist a subject in achieving psychological completion (which, in any case, is an impossibility).

Flora and Dov have potentially come to this realisation, and rather than imbuing the ideas of ‘male’ and ‘female’ with any significance (à la Wagner and Jung), they realise the meaninglessness of these terms, and can envision the possibility of ‘crossing over’ and moving freely between them – or perhaps even beyond them.¹²⁸ In one essay, Tippett actually describes Dov as ‘sexually ambivalent’ or ‘bisexual’, even though on the evidence of *The Knot Garden* and *Songs for Dov* it seems clear that he is sexually attracted only to men. Here, however, Tippett might not be using ‘bisexual’ in its modern sense, to indicate Dov’s sexual preference; rather, he might be referring to Dov’s gender, or ‘emotional make-up’, as he puts it.¹²⁹ Perhaps Tippett’s reference to Dov’s ‘bisexuality’ could indicate how Dov – the ‘two-way man’ – realises ‘the availability to all subjects of both [male and female] positions’.¹³⁰ Both Dov and Flora, like Schubert’s miller, are subjects who refuse ‘to enter the regime of the norm, or Lacan’s symbolic order’.¹³¹ Their Schubert scene offers a critique of a modern society that would seek to categorise gender and sexuality in a symbolically violent manner, and a desperate attempt to escape such disciplining. Undoubtedly, it is one of the most richly allusive and psychologically significant moments in the whole opera. It is also, perhaps, one of the most deeply personal moments in Tippett’s whole career.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Lacan, ‘Seminar XXI, 6’ (unpublished typescript, 1973-4), 9. Quoted in Rose, ‘Introduction – II’, 49.

¹²⁸ See ‘The soullove of Flora and Dov’ and ‘Flora-Miranda, Tippett’s aspirational hysteric’ in the conclusion of this thesis for a further discussion of Flora’s and Dov’s ‘revolutionary’ approach to sexual difference in this scene.

¹²⁹ Tippett, ‘Dov’s Journey’, in *Music of the Angels*, 237.

¹³⁰ Rose, ‘Introduction – II’, 49.

¹³¹ Kramer, *Franz Schubert: Subjectivity, Sexuality, Song*, 6.

‘You know Fresca, we really belong to each other’

Paul Driver writes that Flora and Dov are ‘blown together, [like] two delicate flowers, to rest on each other’.¹³² Flora and Dov undoubtedly relate to each other, and feel safe in each other’s company; when Dov comforts Flora, for instance, she sings ‘I’m glad it’s you’. Tippett is clear that Dov’s and Flora’s closeness is the result of there being no danger of sex intruding into their relationship, which is based on ‘compassion and tenderness, almost love (they both know it isn’t physical)’.¹³³ He further observes that ‘with the exact number of couples (three) available in this opera, it might have been possible for [Dov] to go off and finally make a family life with [Flora] – but he cannot’.¹³⁴ It is possible that, for this platonic pairing, Tippett drew on his own emotionally intimate but non-sexual relationship with the bisexual musician Francesca Allinson in the 1930s and 1940s. Knowledge of their loving but doomed relationship certainly adds a final, shattering layer of poignancy to the Schubert scene in *The Knot Garden*.

Tippett and Allinson met as students, and over two decades lived together, holidayed together, and supported each other financially and emotionally, ‘shar[ing] each other’s troubles, ambitions, and dreams’.¹³⁵ Their relationship is characterised by Bowen as ‘sexless [but] intense and intimate’, and he describes Allinson in Flora-esque terms as ‘physically frail and psychologically hypersensitive’.¹³⁶ Tippett also writes that Allinson, like Flora, was ‘gentle’, ‘a love[r] of pretty things’, and a ‘lovely, lovely creature’.¹³⁷ According to Tippett, he ‘could talk openly and frankly’ about his sexuality with Allinson, and he describes their relationship in

¹³² Driver, ‘*The Knot Garden*’, 156.

¹³³ Tippett, ‘Dov’s Journey’, in *Music of the Angels*, 237. See ‘The soullove of Flora and Dov’ in the conclusion of this thesis for more on the ‘beyondsex’ nature of this relationship.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 163.

¹³⁶ Bowen, *Michael Tippett*, 2nd ed., 10.

¹³⁷ Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 186.

glowing terms in his autobiography, which contains a whole chapter devoted to their correspondence.¹³⁸

Early on in my relationship with Fresca, we discussed marriage and children, which she wanted as much as I did. We both of us appeared to have our turbulent homosexual sides, but our own relationship was one of great serenity. Once, walking with her in a London square, arm in arm, I said, ‘You know Fresca, we really belong to each other’.¹³⁹

He then writes, however, that ‘my problems ran deeper and all this came to nothing’.¹⁴⁰ In other words, like Dov, ‘it might have been possible for [Tippett] to go off and finally make a family life’ with Allinson – but, because of his sexual orientation, he could not.

In 1945, Allinson, suffering from depression caused by ill health and the Second World War, drowned herself in the River Stour in imitation of Virginia Woolf.¹⁴¹ She left Tippett a photograph of himself with a child, a copy of Shakespeare’s Sonnet 57 (‘Being your slave what should I do but tend/ Upon the hours, and times of your desire?’), and a suicide note.

Darling – it’s no good – I can’t hold on any longer. One has to be a better and a stronger character than me to be able to face a life of invalidism [...] You don’t know how long and how ardently I have longed to die. I should love to have talked it over with you – but that would have involved you in responsibility for my suicide and so it could [not] be. I have thought endlessly about whether it is wrong – and perhaps it is. But one would have to feel very sure of its wrongness to go on existing as a helpless unhelping unit in the terrible post-war years that are to come. I am going during Germany’s agony and don’t want to survive it. If we have to live many lives, may I live near those I now love again and make a better job of living. And may I love a

¹³⁸ Ibid., 113-87.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 56.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Eerily, according to Tippett, after he told Allinson that they ‘belong[ed] to each other’, she replied ‘You see that woman ahead of us. It’s Virginia Woolf’ (*Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 56).

bit better. I can't live without the warm unfolding of another person – and in this life I have smashed up my chance of that (in my love too). Darling, forgive me. I am so tired and have been for so many years.¹⁴²

According to Bowen, Allinson's suicide was 'the biggest personal blow Tippett ever suffered', and 'a boundary stone' in the composer's life.¹⁴³ In the immediate aftermath, Tippett wrote to his friend Ayerst:

I am too out of my mind to be coherent just yet [...] I can't adjust to it easily [...] I loved her more deeply than I knew when she was there. The memory is extremely sweet and fragrant. Her going has turned everything topsy-turvy [...] If she were cold or afraid I would or should have been there.¹⁴⁴

In another letter to Ayerst, he writes that he 'would not have wanted to prevent her, but to express the love felt and the help I might have offered'.¹⁴⁵

Five years later, once 'the personal wound began to heal', Tippett finally wrote a memorial piece for Allinson, *The Heart's Assurance*, a song cycle about 'love under the shadow of death' based on poems by Alun Lewis and Sidney Keyes.¹⁴⁶ Over forty years later, he confessed himself 'still unutterably moved when I hear it performed'.¹⁴⁷ In 1970 came *The Knot Garden*, a Shakespeare opera containing a scene in which a troubled, sensitive young woman apparently contemplates suicide by drowning, while being listened to and comforted by Tippett's operatic alter ego. The links between Allinson and Flora seem far too strong to be coincidental, and Flora's quotation of the German song 'Die liebe Farbe', originally penned for

¹⁴² Francesca Allinson, suicide letter, quoted in Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 185.

¹⁴³ Bowen, *Michael Tippett*, 2nd ed., 10.

¹⁴⁴ Tippett, letter to Ayerst, 08/04/1945, in *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 186.

¹⁴⁵ Tippett, letter to Ayerst, 10/04/1945, in *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 187.

¹⁴⁶ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 298.

¹⁴⁷ Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 187.

a character who commits suicide in a brook, seems tragically pertinent. The Schubert scene in *The Knot Garden* is an affectionate first meeting and moment of mutual recognition between two new friends, but it might also be regarded as a moving fantasy reunion between two tragically separated partners, and perhaps a chance for Tippett to finally address his feelings surrounding Allinson's death.

Chapter 6

ACT III: ‘CHARADE’, OR MOVING INTO AQUARIUS

Five of the characters in the opera have roles in the Charade: Mangus-Prospero, Dov-Ariel, Mel-Caliban, Flora-Miranda, Faber-Ferdinand. These roles are never absolute: they are dropped at need. Thea and Denise remain themselves. Anyone may be a spectator when not playing a scene in the Charade.

Tippett, *The Knot Garden* Act III libretto note

The Knot Garden's final act is dominated by a ‘play within a play’ (or ‘opera within an opera’): an ‘improvised’ performance of scenes from *The Tempest* organised by Mangus for a group therapy session.¹ The previous two chapters have demonstrated how instances of disidentification occur throughout *The Knot Garden*, from Mel’s and Dov’s playacting as Ariel and Caliban, to Flora’s adoption of her Alice persona, to the blues ensemble, to Flora’s and Dov’s Schubert song. This act’s Shakespeare charade, however, is the moment of disidentification that has the most profound and lasting effect on several of the characters. While the therapeutic process for Mangus’s patients is undoubtedly cumulative, and their improvement gradual and marked by several breakthroughs, the charade provides the final ‘tipping point’ for many of them – although its effects are by no means consistent from character to character.

¹ Tippett told Kemp that *The Knot Garden* was influenced by *Lila*, ‘a remarkable and little-known Singspiel of Goethe, in which the heroine’s psychological problems are cured by the technique of what is now known as psychodrama. Masterminded by a doctor known as “Der Magus”, Lila meets the figures of her fantasy world – who are her own families and friends disguised as fairies, demons, etc – and is restored to health and to her husband’ (Ian Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music* (London: Eulenberg, 1984), 495, n. 51).

Not all of Mangus's analysands adopt a *Tempest* persona during the charades. Thea and Denise achieve their psychological breakthroughs, such as they are, through observation, not participation. At the beginning of the charade, Mangus addresses them both:

MANGUS

(Putting on his cloak)

You must both hold with me

Not forever, but for now.

The play has bewildering moments.

(Circling his wand)

Imagine those walls are rocks,

The howling sea beyond.

This garden now an island.

The Knot Garden, III. 1

Mangus's twelve-note 'Tempest' motif is heard in the orchestral accompaniment when he adopts a familiar Prospero-like pose (see Example 6.1), and his vocal line begins with the second, third, and fourth notes of the row (F, C#, D). The full appearance of Mangus's motif at the start of the charades indicates how he is about to make another concerted attempt to act as 'the master' Prospero, conjure up a symbolic order, and insert his analysands into it. Thea, however, bursts Mangus's magus bubble by interrupting him and sarcastically mimicking his lines from the opening of the opera, including the elongated 'Pro-spe-ro-o-ho' that initially demonstrated his delusions of grandeur (see Example 6.2). Fed up with Mangus's egotism, Thea has apparently lost faith in his ability to remedy either her situation or those of the other patients.

340 (circling his wand)
MANGUS *poco f*

I - ma-gine those walls are rocks,

341 *poco f*

the

8va

howl - ing sea be - yond.

pf. Vins. *f*

pp (p) 3 (mf) 3 p sub. (mf) 3

Vins. + W.W. *f* pp pp 3 (p) 3

W.W.

Timp. 3 (mf) 3

Str.

Bass Drum 3 3

p *mf*

Example 6.1. *The Knot Garden*, Mangus's 'Tempest' motif, Act III opening.

Thea's doubts about Mangus are not necessarily detrimental to her psychological progress, however. Mangus, despite himself, seems to be carrying out a successful Lacanian treatment on Thea. Ironically, by ostentatiously attempting to act as 'the master' since the

(Ironic)
THEA *poco f*

Where you play Pros - - pe - ro, man of -

344 *Meno mosso* (♩ = 132) *f*

(8va) Hrns. *f con vigore*

Hrn. *mf* Pr. *f* (+ 8va)

THEA 345

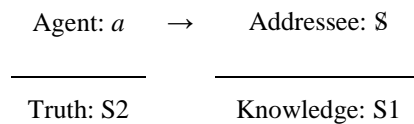
po - wer; to set the world to rights!

Pf. Hrns. *f non troppo*

(Hrn.) Trombs + Tuba

Example 6.2. *The Knot Garden*, III. 1, 'Where you'll play Prospero' (Thea).

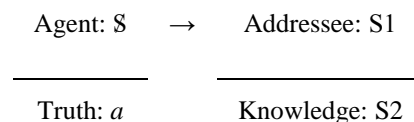
beginning of the opera, he has accidentally adopted the discourse of the analyst, which, as its name suggests, is the ideal discourse for a Lacanian analyst-analysand relationship. The analyst's discourse is the exact opposite of the master's discourse, and is formulated as follows:



In this scenario, the analyst poses as an object of desire (*a*) for the analysand (*S*). Mangus, regardless of Thea's continual resistance to him, is such an object for Thea, since at some point

she must have wished for him to repair her psyche and marriage. She has therefore, in the words of Kay, ‘invest[ed him] with magisterial authority, hoping to gain from him knowledge of what [her] mysterious inner treasure is’.² It is the Lacanian analyst’s task, however, ‘to be abject and unlovely in order that the patient should realize that the authority she is looking for in him does not exist, and that it is the nature of the subject to be an empty performance, lacking a central core’.³

Mangus, since he is not a Lacanian, has presumably not intended to teach Thea this lesson, but his arrogance and ineptitude have left her on the verge of gaining such knowledge in any case. Mangus’s and Thea’s relationship perfectly demonstrates how when an analyst adopts the analytic discourse, an analysand gradually and inevitably drops into the discourse of the hysteric. The formula for the hysteric’s discourse is a quarter turn anti-clockwise from the analyst’s discourse, which demonstrates their interdependence and the way in which discourse choice very much depends upon an individual subject’s perspective.



Here, the ‘hystericised’, split analysand (\$) addresses herself to the master-analyst (S1). She challenges the master to prove his or her worth and produce some hitherto covered solution. Through this demand, however, the hysteric realises that the master’s knowledge is lacking, that he does not have an explanation for everything, and that his power is arbitrary. This is exactly the movement that Thea performs in *The Knot Garden*. Following her initial demand to Mangus at some point prior to the opera’s beginning that he cure her troubles, she has discovered by Act III that he does not possess the answers she is seeking, and that these answers might not even

² Sarah Kay, *Žižek: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), 13.

³ Ibid.

exist. Her interruption of Mangus's twelve-note 'master' motif, and her appropriation and ridicule of his 'Pro-spe-ro-o-ho' line, indicates her awareness that his purported omnipotence and rationality is in fact a sham. She sees that Mangus is just as much of a split subject as everybody else, and that his constructed symbolic order is illusory. Thea does not remain a 'hysteric', however; rather, by the end of *The Knot Garden*, she becomes a ~~woman~~.

'I am no more afraid': Thea's Imaginary marriage

Mangus's first *Tempest* charade sees Mangus-Prospero and Flora-Miranda exploring the island, training Mel-Caliban, and freeing Dov-Ariel. The charades then veer off course for the first time, with Dov-Ariel attacking Mel-Caliban, apparently in retribution for Ariel's enslavement by Sycorax, but actually because of Dov's resentment towards Mel. Mangus-Prospero commands them to control themselves and 'obey' him, and Thea notes how, in this improvised play, 'Scenes turn in the hand/ Beyond [Mangus-Prospero's] book'. After the second charade, when Mel departs to reconcile with Denise, an angry Thea again insults Mangus, describing him as a 'dabblers: pimp: voyeur'. Mangus instructs Thea to watch the next charade between Faber-Ferdinand and Flora-Miranda. After Flora rejects Faber, Thea helps her estranged husband tidy up the scattered chess pieces. She symbolically throws the queen piece to him, and 'a burst of bright music greets the action' to indicate that their reconciliation is imminent (see Example 6.3).

Thea's subsequent aria, 'I am no more afraid', marks the conclusion of her therapy. Given the importance of the 'Tempest' motif and B and B-related tonalities to *The Knot Garden*'s construction, it is significant that Thea's opening statement, 'I am no more afraid', firmly settles on this note following a $\hat{4}-\hat{5}-\hat{1}$ motion, since this cadence suggests that her psychological journey is at an end. In fact, her vocal melody in this opening statement copies the E-F#-B ending of Mangus's main 'Tempest' motif, hinting that Mangus-Prospero, the analyst-master, might be held at least partly responsible for altering her psychological state, even if she has now rejected his authority. The opening of Thea's aria could also be regarded as

The image shows a musical score for a piano accompaniment. It is marked '256' at the top left. The score is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo and dynamics are marked 'gva' (grave) and 'f brillante'. The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff with a 'W.W.' (Wagnerian) marking and a bass clef staff. The bass line is characterized by a chromatic scale, with notes grouped in triplets and marked with asterisks and 'ed.' (e.g., *ed., *ed., *ed.). The treble staff contains a melodic line with various intervals and triplets.

Example 6.3. *The Knot Garden*, III. 7, 'A burst of bright music greets the action'.

a repudiation of Mangus's power, however. The accompaniment at the start of the aria echoes Mangus's twelve-note 'Tempest' motif: the large, unison intervallic leaps here recall the motif's character, and sound like an inversion of its pattern since an initial downwards motion contrasts with its opening upward drive. The unison accompaniment does not present an exact transformation of Mangus's theme, or even a new, uninterrupted twelve-note pattern. Yet within the opening 7 bars – or, to put it another way, up to the point where Thea has declared 'I am no more afraid' – the accompaniment does feature all twelve notes of the chromatic scale (A, F, C#, G, E_b, B_b, G_b, D, E, G#, C, B); albeit this sequence is broken up with other notes. The beginning of Thea's aria might therefore sound like a challenge to and reversal of Mangus's music, and his control.

Arguably, this opening implies, in Žižek's words, 'hysteria at its purest'.⁴ Now that Thea perceives the arbitrariness of identity and the symbolic order, she is able to appropriate and play with Mangus's 'alphabetic' musical language. She takes symbolic authority from the master, only to give it back to him immediately, and thus asserts herself as 'the one who rules over the ruler himself'.⁵ Still, if Mangus's 'Tempest' motif is representative of the 'symbolic order' – that is to say, the everyday linguistic realm that surreptitiously but violently forces human beings to create an essentialised identity – then Thea's appropriation of it in her aria

⁴ Slavoj Žižek, 'The Feminine Excess', in Žižek and Mladen Dolar, *Opera's Second Death* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 192.

⁵ Ibid.

might also suggest a willingness to re-enrol in, rather than resist, this order. In ‘I am no more afraid’, Thea primarily extols ‘the sanctuary of marriage – in other words, the safety of her previous life and her identity as Faber’s wife. She is apparently willing to forgive her philandering husband, although quite what Faber has done to warrant her forgiveness is unclear.

According to Kemp, Thea’s aria ‘conjur[es] up a picture of Thea floating in an experience so indescribably beautiful that it would be sacrilege even to acknowledge it’.⁶ The glissando woodwind, harp, and string accompaniment at the opening of the aria conjure an ethereal atmosphere, while Thea’s highly melismatic singing demonstrates her enrapturement (see Example 6.4). Thea’s ecstasy here could be regarded as an example of what Lacan calls ‘Other *jouissance*’, which is potentially accessible only to those who identify as ‘women’. This Other *jouissance* goes ‘beyond the phallus’, in that it is not predicated on attainment or possession.⁷ Unlike phallic *jouissance*, it is not insufficient, and its source is ambiguous. It furthermore remains ‘ineffable’ and beyond symbolic description, even for the person experiencing it.⁸ In Lacan’s words, this is a *jouissance* ‘that is hers [...] and doesn’t signify anything. [It] is a *jouissance* that is hers about which she herself perhaps knows nothing if not that she experiences it – that much she knows. She knows it, of course, when it comes’.⁹

Yet, while a woman is privileged to be able to access this special, mysterious Other *jouissance* along with standard phallic *jouissance*, in order to become a woman she must inevitably be ‘reduced to an object – *object a* – in [a man’s] fantasy’.¹⁰ In essence, the difference

⁶ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 427.

⁷ Lacan, ‘God and ~~Woman~~’s *Jouissance*’, in *Encore: On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge: Book XX: 1972-1973*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 1998), 74.

⁸ Fink, ‘Knowledge and *Jouissance*’, in Suzanne Barnard and Fink (eds.), *Reading Seminar XX: Lacan’s Major Work on Love, Knowledge, and Feminine Sexuality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 40.

⁹ Lacan, ‘God and ~~Woman~~’s *Jouissance*’, 74.

¹⁰ Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and *Jouissance** (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 117.

432 Andante (♩ = 72)
THEA (alone)

THEA

am no more a

THEA

- afraid. So

ten pp Str. Bells pp

Example 6.4. *The Knot Garden*, III. 7, 'I am no more afraid' (Thea).

between adopting a position as a ‘man’ or ‘woman’ is that of trying to ‘have’ or trying to ‘be’ the phallus.¹¹ According to Colette Soler,

All of the formulations that Lacan provided to specify the place of ‘woman’ make her a partner of the masculine subject: (1) being the phallus, that is the representative of what the man is missing; (2) being the object that serves as the cause of his desire; (3) being his symptom upon which his *jouissance* is fixated.¹²

Fink states that the Other *jouissance* that women can experience may in fact be prompted by ‘the *jouissance* that the Other gets out of us [...] or even our enjoyment [of being] the Other’.¹³ Accordingly, Thea’s experience of Other *jouissance* here appears to be instigated by the moment when she is reinstated as Faber’s sole ‘Other’, his only phallic object of affection, following his rejection by Flora.

The B section of Thea’s aria begins with her garden motif (see Example 6.5), and her singing ‘This morning my garden seemed a sanctuary’. It ends, however, with her rejecting the garden – which, to reiterate, is emblematic of her independent psychology and sexuality – and declaring that ‘Nature is us’: that is to say, that her marriage to Faber is ‘natural’.¹⁴ Tolling bells and a unison woodwind, harp, and string glissando at the end of the aria indicate that the marriage between Thea and Faber is on the verge of restoration (see Example 6.6). Thea’s rejection of her garden in order to accept a position as Faber’s partner aligns well with Lacan’s argument that ‘in order to be the phallus, that is to say, the signifier of the desire of the Other,

¹¹ Lacan, ‘The Meaning of the Phallus’, in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, trans. Rose (New York and London: Norton, 1985), 83. Lacan emphasises that although these symbolic positions ‘have the contradictory effect of on the one hand lending reality to the subject’, they are nonetheless ‘unreal’ (83-4).

¹² Colette Soler, ‘What Does the Unconscious Know About Women?’, in Barnard and Fink (eds.), *Reading Seminar XX*, 102. As Soler notes, it is questionable whether ‘feminists would be satisfied to be given this phallic being’ (102). For more on feminist responses to Lacan, see Chapter 5, n. 20, and Chapter 6, n. 22 in this thesis.

¹³ Fink, ‘Knowledge and *Jouissance*’, 38.

¹⁴ See ‘Thea’s lady garden’ in Chapter 4 of this thesis for more on the meaning of Thea’s ‘garden’.

437
THEA *meno mosso* (♩ = 116)

f This ——— mor - ning — my —

C.A. *p*

Horns *pp pes. poco pp*

Vlns. *pp poco pp*

Celli + D.B. *pes. pes.*

THEA

gar - den

8va *legg.* *3 3 3 3 3* *3 3 3 3 3* *poco*

(Vln.) *pp* *8va*

Example 6.5. *The Knot Garden*, III. 7, 'I am no more afraid', Thea's 'garden' motif.

442 THEA

p

I
C.A.

W W
+ Hrp.
+ Str.

pp legg. dolciss

THEA

443

am no more a -

sva - 7

(p) *mp* *(p)*

(she goes)

- fraid

sva - - - 7

ten.

Bells. *pp*

9

Example 6.6. *The Knot Garden* III. 7, 'I am no more afraid' ending.

[... a] woman will reject an essential part of her femininity'.¹⁵ As Soler notes, if a woman such as Thea “is the phallus”, her position in the sexual couple – where she is inscribed only by “allowing herself to be desired”, according to an expression Lacan uses at times – her position as the partner of masculine desire, leaves the question of her own desire unanswered’.¹⁶

A few scenes later, in the opera’s epilogue, Thea and Faber renew their relationship:

(Thea and Faber are alone in the garden. Thea is perhaps sorting seeds, Faber studying his papers. Or these things are just implied. The vast night gives a huge dimension to the dark behind them. After a while they begin to sing though not to each other)

THEA

I put away the seed packets.

FABER

I put away the factory papers.

BOTH

I encompass the vast night with an image of desire.

FABER

Now I stand up: Faber: man: maker: myself.

THEA

Now I stand up: woman: mother: myself.

BOTH

Our enmity’s transcended in desire.

¹⁵ Lacan, ‘The Meaning of the Phallus’, 84.

¹⁶ Soler, ‘What Does the Unconscious Know About Women?’, 105.

THEA

Memory recedes in the moment.

FABER

I am all imagination.

(They are about to move to each other)

BOTH

The curtain rises.

CURTAIN.

The Knot Garden, III. 10

Arguably, the renewal of Thea's and Faber's marriage has been inevitable since the moment near the start of the opera when Thea asked Faber 'what is it you want?' and 'demand[ed]' that he 'look into himself' (I. 4).¹⁷ By expressing these questions of desire and demand towards Faber, Thea highlights her continuing interest and investment in him, and identifies him as a potential phallic object for her, and vice versa. At the beginning of Act III, before the charades therapy has even begun, she cries 'Forgiveness./ Blood from my breast./ Here on this island/ I know no god but love'. Kemp describes Thea's attitude at this point as 'curiously improbable [...] and one of the least convincing moments of the opera'.¹⁸ Perhaps, however, Thea simply indicates here how she has always wanted a return to her previous arrangement, whatever the personal cost. Only now, though, is she willing to admit this fact to herself. Thus, in the middle of Act III, she can forgive Faber as soon as Flora no longer threatens to distract him. To use her words, her memories – of Faber's indiscretions, of the

¹⁷ See 'Faber: midlife crisis man-child' in Chapter 5 of this thesis for further analysis of this moment.

¹⁸ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 409.

breakdown of their marriage, of her unhappiness, of her independence in her ‘garden’ – ‘recede in the moment’, as she becomes Φ once again.

Notably, at the opera’s conclusion, Thea and Faber describe themselves and each other as transcendent ‘image[s] of desire’ – in other words, phallic personifications of the *objet a*. It seems unlikely that Faber is aware of his enslavement to the phallus and phallic *jouissance*, given his desperate actions over the course of the opera.¹⁹ By following the trajectory of the hysteric’s discourse during her therapeutic process with Mangus, however, Thea has quite possibly stumbled upon the knowledge that ‘it is the nature of the subject to be an empty performance, lacking a central core’, and that relationships and marriages are fantasies rooted in a fruitless search for wholeness.²⁰ She well knows that she and Faber, ‘two sick people [...] do not carry within themselves the things they seek in each other’.²¹ She will never be able to fulfil Faber’s desire for the *objet a*: as Lacan styles it, she is a ~~woman~~, because ‘her status as an absolute category and guarantor of fantasy (exactly *The woman*) is false’.²² Similarly, she

¹⁹ See ‘Faber: midlife crisis man-child’ in Chapter 5 of this thesis for an exploration of Faber’s personality and actions in *The Knot Garden*.

²⁰ Kay, Žižek: *A Critical Introduction*, 13.

²¹ S. J. McGrath, ‘Sexuation in Jung and Lacan’, *International Journal of Jungian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2010), 13.

²² Rose, ‘Introduction – II’, in Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality*, 48). When Lacan makes provocative comments such as ‘there’s no such thing as Woman’, or writes woman as ~~Woman~~, he is not saying that women do not literally exist or do not matter. Rather, these statements are, according to Rose, ‘the corollary of his accusation, or charge, against sexual fantasy’ (Ibid.). Still, it must be noted that, along with his phallogocentric language (see Chapter 5, n. 20), Lacan has a tendency for making seemingly misogynistic and patronising comments about women. For example: ‘Nothing distinguishes woman as a sexed being other than her sexual organ’ (‘On Jouissance’, in *Encore*, 7); ‘Woman serves a function in the sexual relationship only qua mother’ (‘The Function of the Written’, in *Encore*, 35); ‘Women don’t know what they’re saying – that’s the whole difference between them and me’ (‘God and ~~Woman~~’s Jouissance’, 73). Some feminist writers have nevertheless embraced and expanded upon Lacan’s work – Deborah Luepnitz even describes him as ‘the man many women hate to love’ (‘Beyond the Phallus: Lacan and Feminism’, in Jean-Michel Rabaté, *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 234). According to Emily Zakin, ‘what the Lacanian project [...] provides for feminism is not the idea of a malleable culture, susceptible to human mastery, as distinct from a fixed nature that escapes it, but the more disconcerting idea that human mastery, of ourselves, of others, of nature and culture, is itself illusory’ (‘Psychoanalytic Feminism’, *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. <http://tinyurl.com/zx7vur6>. Accessed 05/04/2017). For work by Lacanian feminists, see: Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990) and *Undoing Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004); Jane Gallop, *The Daughter’s Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1982); Elizabeth Grosz, *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1990); and Julia Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

realises that Faber will '[n]ever be hers as such. She may require a (biologically defined) man to embody, incarnate, or serve as prop for the phallus for her, but it is the phallus and not the man that will be her partner'.²³ Potentially, having gained this insight, Thea has simply chosen to redirect her desire for the *objet a* away from her garden and back towards the newly available Faber, for convenience's sake: in her words, she consciously 'put[s] away the seed packets'.

At the end of *The Knot Garden*, Thea has apparently been 'cured': she has achieved psychological comfort, and her marriage is fixed. From a Jungian perspective, this outcome is satisfactory, since the anima and animus have combined to form a perfect whole. According to Tippett scholars such as Morris and David Matthews, for instance, this ending sees Thea and Faber become 'an archetypal couple [... in] an elemental human situation', and marks 'the beginning of their maturation'.²⁴ Arguably, this happy outcome is in part the result of Faber's and Thea's age, since, according to Jungian theory, the contrasexual complex 'come[s] into play especially at mid-life because of the shifting nature of identity development in that era'.²⁵ Potentially, however, *The Knot Garden*'s ending is far from the wholesome ideal described by Matthews and Morris. To take an alternative, Lacanian perspective, it is arguable that, from her aria onwards, Thea chooses to wallow in the 'indescribable beauty' of the 'Imaginary' realm – that is to say, the realm that 'provides the illusion of stability, content, and wholeness'.²⁶ In the words of Adrian Johnston, the Imaginary encompasses

who and what one 'imagines' other persons to be, what one thereby 'imagines' they mean when communicatively interacting, who and what one 'imagines' oneself to be, including from the imagined perspectives of others – all of the preceding is encompassed under the heading of this

²³ Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 121.

²⁴ David Matthews, *Michael Tippett* (London: Faber & Faber, 1980), 84; Nicholas Morris, "'Simply the Thing I Am Shall Make Me Live": a Jungian Perspective on *King Priam* and *The Knot Garden*', in Geraint Lewis (ed.), *Michael Tippett, O. M.: A Celebration* (Tunbridge Wells: Baton, 1980), 100.

²⁵ Polly Young-Eisendrath, 'Gender and Contrasexuality: Jung's Contribution and Beyond', in Young-Eisendrath and Terrence Dawson (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Jung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 224.

²⁶ Kay, Žižek: *A Critical Introduction*, 169.

register [...] With his choice of the word ‘imaginary,’ Lacan indeed intends to designate that which is fictional, simulated, virtual, and the like.²⁷

It is not objectionable for a person such as Thea to occupy the Imaginary realm; in fact, interpellating oneself into it is a necessity of human existence, otherwise one would be forced to live in a world of constant psychological upset and isolation. As Johnston explains, ‘the phenomena of the Imaginary are necessary illusions [...] The Imaginary is an intrinsic, unavoidable dimension of the existences of speaking psychological subjects; just as an analysis cannot (and should not try to) rid the analysand of his/her unconscious, so too is it neither possible nor desirable to liquidate the illusions of this register’.²⁸ Nevertheless, to follow Malcolm Bowie’s description, if the ‘Imaginary’, ‘Symbolic’, and ‘Real’ realms are ‘an unholy trinity [that] could [just] as easily be called Fraud, Absence and Impossibility’,²⁹ then what some critics cite as Thea’s and Faber’s Jungian ‘maturity’ might alternatively be described as Lacanian ‘fraud’.

It is difficult to claim that the outcome of Thea’s journey through the knot garden is particularly positive, given that she has ended up in exactly the same place that she started and rejected her desire and independence. Like in the case of another hysterical but tamed ‘Moon’ woman, Turandot, one might ask ‘when the opera is over [...] what has happened? Nothing. Just a woman who gives up and gets [re]married’.³⁰ Thea’s journey through her knot garden is not exactly one of liberation, and the explicit pronatalism of her statement at the opera’s conclusion (‘woman: mother: myself’) is particularly jarring, especially given that Faber does not offer a comparable description of himself: he is ‘maker’ – a masculine creator, not a feminine carer.

²⁷ Adrian Johnston, ‘Jacques Lacan’, *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. <http://tinyurl.com/nv7stzm>. Accessed 05/04/2017. A heightened example of how a subject creates an Imaginary-Symbolic self would be in the construction of a social media page, where an individual presents an idealised, essentialised image of his or herself. The creation of such a page both masks and highlights how exactly the same process of construction takes place in everyday life.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Malcolm Bowie, *Lacan* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1991), 112.

³⁰ Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, tr. Betsy Wing (London: Virago, 1989), 100.

After a period of exploration and experimentation, Thea and Faber revert to an existence of essentialised gender positions (woman and man), traditional gender roles (mother and maker), and the safety of a conservative, arguably exhausted relationship model. They deal with the complexity and confusion of their lives by re-enrolling in the Imaginary-Symbolic realm; that is to say, by returning to what they know best and what society expects of them. To use Fink's words, 'by assimilating something, [Thea and Faber] have the sense of being someone', and 'imagine [themselves] as someone (an ego or self) who has accomplished a certain difficult task'.³¹ Or, as Soler puts it, they decide to 'put on an act [...] to "play the part of the woman" and "play the part of the man"'.³² In reality, however, there is no such thing as their sexual relationship. The 'imaginariness' of Thea's and Faber's marriage and identities is reinforced by a reference to the music of Thea's aria at the beginning of their concluding scene (see Example 6.7), and Faber's admission that he is 'all imagination'.

When 'the curtain rises' at the very end of *The Knot Garden* (see Example 6.8), the 'vibrant', 'glowing excitement of B major', as described by Kemp, might seem to be offering an optimistic musical conclusion.³³ Except the opera does not really end in B major; rather, following a rapid scale ascent, it concludes with a massive cluster chord centred on B. According to Whittall, the magnetic, 'underlying force' of *The Knot Garden*'s tonal stress on B is 'ambiguous'.³⁴ This ending might therefore be regarded as one of the moments of 'strong and irreducible ambiguity' that Whittall considers symptomatic of twentieth-century modernism.³⁵ It is not clear whether *The Knot Garden*'s ending is a 'happily ever after', or an enormous musical shrug of resignation. In light of the opera's potential alignment of B with the 'symbolic order',

³¹ Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 71.

³² Soler, 'What Does the Unconscious Know About Women?', 103.

³³ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 244-5.

³⁴ Arnold Whittall, *Music Since the First World War*, 2nd ed. (London: Dent, 1988), 223.

³⁵ Whittall, *Exploring Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 91. Whittall identifies such 'ambiguities' in the music of Debussy, Bartok, Janacek, Ligeti, Stravinsky, Messiaen, Schoenberg, Britten, Henze, Andriessen, and Boulez.

SCENE 10 EPILOGUE (Thea and Faber are alone in the garden. Thea is perhaps sorting seeds, Faber studying his papers. Or these things are just implied.)

505 *Andante* (♩ = 116) *p dolce* Ob. + C.A. b

506 (The vast night gives a huge dimension to the dark around them. After a while they begin to speak, though not to each other.) *mp* *ten.* *(p)*

507 *pp³ legg. dolciss* Pr. + Celesta Str. (Trem.)

Example 6.7. *The Knot Garden*, Epilogue introduction.

its ending might be read as a regressive acceptance of societal and psychological ‘normality’, with the full orchestra, *ff* cluster chord representing a violent yet cathartic reimposition of the Imaginary-Symbolic realm.³⁶

³⁶ *The Knot Garden*’s ambivalent ending is perhaps reminiscent of the moment of ‘delicate transfiguration’ at the end of Britten’s *Death in Venice* (1973) (Whittall, *Exploring Twentieth-Century Music*, 140). In that opera, Britten uses Wagner’s ‘Tristan chord’ (a half-diminished seventh chord on F) to represent Aschenbach’s unrequited yearning for Tadzio. According to Timothy L. Jackson, ‘the opera’s final measures provide the strategically withheld resolution’ to this ‘dysfunctional seventh chord’, and therefore suggest a post-mortem transfiguration of ‘homosexual pathos’ (*Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6 (Pathétique)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 97. Quoted in Whittall, *Exploring Twentieth-Century Music*, 140). Whittall, however, notes that Aschenbach’s is still a ‘lonely death, with no hint of Christian consolation’ (*Exploring Twentieth-Century Music*, 94).

513 THEA *f con forza* *p pes.*

The cur - (ur) (ur) - tain ri - ses.

FABER *f con forza* *p pes.*

The cur - (ur) (ur) - tain ri - ses.

w.w. *f con forza* *p pes.*

Trombs. *f* *molto* *p*

Pf. + D.B. *f*

Claves *f*

T-T *f sub.* *p*

Jazz-kit *f*

Tpts.

Hrns. 1

Bells *p*

Pf. (perc.) *p*

(gtr)

Cym. *p*

B.D.

in tempo al fine

Cel. *f*

Xylo *f*

(+ gtr)

w.w. *f*

Pf. *f*

(gtr)

Full Orch. *f*

Cym. *f*

B.D.

CURTAIN

Example 6.8. *The Knot Garden*, Epilogue, 'The curtain rises'.

‘Prospero’s a fake’

According to Fink, hysterics such as Thea led Freud to develop his psychoanalytic theory and practice, constantly ‘proving to him in his consulting room the inadequacy of his knowledge and know-how’.³⁷ Mangus, thanks in part to Thea’s sniping, also seems to develop as an analyst by the end of *The Knot Garden*, coming to a realisation of his professional failings. Given what is to come in the rest of this act, Mangus’s comment to Thea early in Act III that power resides not with him but ‘in the play’ might be considered an early admission of fallibility. He appears to recognise that Thea and Denise will soon no longer be his analysands, and that they are both on the verge of achieving some kind of breakthrough, since he remarks that they will hold with him ‘not forever, but for now’.

Being a Freudian ego analyst adhering to the discourse of the master, Mangus almost inevitably falls into the trap of ‘counter-transference’, which is caused by ‘the sum total of the prejudices, passions and difficulties of the analyst, or even of his insufficient information, at any given moment of the dialectical process’.³⁸ Counter-transference occurs when the analyst abandons analytic neutrality, and instead

gets caught up in the [...] game of comparing him or herself with his or her analysands, sizing their discourse up in terms of his or her own. ‘Are they ahead of me or behind me in their comprehension of what is going on here in the analytic setting or elsewhere? Are they submissive to my wishes? Do I have any control over the situation? Do I have the upper hand?’³⁹

³⁷ Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 134. Freud’s most famous case of counter-transference was with ‘Dora’ (Ida Bauer), a ‘hysterical’ patient who terminated her treatment early. For further details, see Freud, *A Case of Hysteria (Dora)*, trans. Anthea Bell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). For Lacan’s interpretation of this case, see ‘Intervention on Transference’, in *Feminine Sexuality*, 61-73.

³⁸ Lacan, ‘Intervention on Transference’, 71.

³⁹ Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 86.

Usually, as in Mangus's case, counter-transference is the result of 'wishing too much for the good of the patient', rather than any malevolent motive.⁴⁰ Lacan is adamant, however, that any personal feelings that might lead to counter-transference 'must be set aside by the analyst. They must not be revealed to the analysand, [since] that positions the analyst and analysand at the same level, as imaginary others for each other, capable of having similar feelings, hang-ups, insecurities, and so on'.⁴¹ If such feelings are not put to one side, analysands will grow to resent their analyst and attempt to disprove his or her theories (as Thea does with Mangus), eventually revealing the analyst to be 'an ordinary person like the analysand, who is not always right and who may even turn out to be dumber than the analysand'.⁴²

At certain points in the opera – for example in Act II when he oversees the action but does not participate – Mangus effectively distances himself from his patients, occupying something akin to an ideal Lacanian role. At other times, however, he interposes himself into the action in a Freudian manner quite spectacularly, apparently unable to restrain himself. Mangus's desire for control is particularly apparent during the charades, when he becomes frustrated by the breakdown of certain scenes – for instance, when he shouts at Dov and Mel. He also keeps Faber and Thea apart after the chess game, and removes Faber from the stage so that Thea can sing her aria and the action can develop in the way he intends. Most notably, when Mangus literally and indulgently plays Prospero in his favourite play in Act III, he ends up, through his own dreams of power, inadvertently subjecting himself to the same process as his patients and revealing himself to be as 'dumb' as them.

Thea, Denise, and *The Knot Garden*'s other characters are indebted to Mangus for putting them 'on the island', as it were, and (mis)guiding them through their individual and collective psychological labyrinths. Tippett himself notes that 'Mangus is not without success in

⁴⁰ Lacan, 'Intervention on Transference', 71-2.

⁴¹ Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 86.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 88.

sorting out the difficulties of the six other personalities on stage'.⁴³ Granted, the patients reach a point of resolution primarily through communicating with each other in the guise of their Shakespearian alter egos, and Mangus offers little in the way of diagnosis or assistance. Yet he, of course, is the person who came up with the idea of the *Tempest* charade, and the psychological wellbeing of several of his patients does improve; his influence over the other characters therefore cannot be discounted completely. 'But', Tippett asks, 'are the successes, if that's what we dare call them, of the [opera's] denouement really the product of Mangus's manipulation?' According to the composer, the answer is only 'partially'.⁴⁴ The patients reach their eventual resolution, their salvation, both because of and in spite of Mangus.

The end of Mangus's charades mirrors the moment in *The Tempest* when Prospero renounces his books, the source of all his control. Following Thea's aria, there is a scene between Dov-Ariel, Mel-Caliban, Mangus-Prospero, and Flora-Miranda, which ends with Dov-Ariel taunting Mel-Caliban. This charade's main function is to demonstrate Mangus's waning control over proceedings, since the next scene begins with him angrily dismissing his play and moving towards the footlights. He then speaks directly to the audience:

MANGUS

Enough! Enough!

We look in the abyss.

Lust for Caliban will not save us.

Prospero's a fake, we all know that;

And perhaps the island's due to sink into the sea.

Now that I break my staff and drown my book

⁴³ Tippett, 'Dreams of Power, Dreams of Love', in *Tippett on Music*, ed. Meirion Bowen (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 221.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

DOV, MEL, FABER

'Full fathom five, thy father lies'

VOICES OFF-STAGE

(*Spoken*)

'Ding-dong, Ding-dong'

MANGUS

(*Spoken*)

I'm just a foolish, fond old man,⁴⁵

Just like the rest of you,

Whistling to keep my pecker up...

The Knot Garden, III. 9

Mangus's late, humble expression of inadequacy means that *The Knot Garden* can be considered part of the trend in mid twentieth-century *Tempest* scholarship and performance for questioning Prospero's traditionally understood supremacy and genius. At *The Knot Garden*'s conclusion, the posturing psychoanalyst is left looking 'foolish' rather than grandiose. Like so many other Prosperos from this period, he ends his *Tempest* in a fragile, pensive mood.⁴⁶ In the words of Kemp, by this point, Mangus-Prospero 'is like everyone else: he too has reached an impasse. With [a] startling admission of arrogance and futility, Mangus's universe collapses like a pack of cards'.⁴⁷

Mangus's concerted attempts to act as Prospero and occupy the master's discourse – to cover up the fact that he, like all of his analysands, is a split subject – have now conclusively

⁴⁵ Mangus here references King Lear's line 'I am a very foolish fond old man' (*King Lear*, IV. 7), spoken when the old king has succumbed to madness but obtained a greater degree of clarity regarding his own predicament and the state of humanity.

⁴⁶ See 'Tempestuous times' I and II in Chapter 3 of this thesis for further discussion of Prospero's depiction on page, stage, and screen during this era.

⁴⁷ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 411.

failed. Because of his mismanaged and meandering *Tempest* charade, certain of his patients have begun to understand that his authority is arbitrary. They have therefore thrown him into the analyst's discourse, rather than the master's, and his power has inevitably dissipated. To put it another way, his plan has worked perfectly on the one hand, since his patients' mental states are generally improving, but all too well on the other, since he is made redundant. Now, as the opera and his analysands' therapy reach a conclusion, he accidentally becomes 'a waste product of the analytical scene'.⁴⁸

Tippett musically depicts Mangus's 'collapsing universe' by combining a few pointed quotations from throughout the opera. Bombastic references to Mangus's twelve-note theme accompany his dismissal of the charades and 'I'm but a foolish, fond old man' (see Examples 6.9 and 6.11), while tritely magical music taken from when he was conjuring the island at the beginning of Act III underscores 'Prospero's a fake' (see Example 6.10). Mangus's borrowing of Faber's 'jaunty' theme when he says 'whistling to keep my pecker up' (see Example 6.12) further underlines how his 'man of power' identity has in actuality never been any more stable than Faber's 'playboy' image, which Flora comprehensively undermines during the course of the charades.

A poet in a barren age

Tippett's unsympathetic treatment of Magnus-Prospero(-Schoenberg-Freud) might indicate that he no longer saw a productive role for 'falconers' – that is to say, artistic, psychological, social, or political leaders – in the modern world. By questioning Mangus-Prospero's authority and usefulness, Tippett furthermore casts doubt on his own privileged position as a 'creative artist' – to use his own phrase, 'one who creates order out of chaos'.⁴⁹ Inspired by the poetry of Hölderlin, a key and recurring question for Tippett in his career was 'what are poets for in a

⁴⁸ Kay, *Žižek: A Critical Introduction*, 14.

⁴⁹ Tippett, 'Poets in a Barren Age', in *Moving into Aquarius* (St Albans: Paladin, 1974), 148.

SCENE 9 FINALE

476 Più mosso (♩ = c. 168*)

(with an imperious gesture, Mangus-Prospero dismisses the charade and strides to the footlights)

MANGUS

(spoken; direct to the audience)

E - nough! E - nough! We
look in the a - byss.

Example 6.9. *The Knot Garden*, III. 9, 'Enough! Enough!' (Mangus).

478

MANGUS

Pros - pe - ro's a fake, we all know

Example 6.10. *The Knot Garden*, III. 9, 'Prospero's a fake' (Mangus).

482

VOICES (off stage)

DOV 'dong.'

'Ding-dong.'

FABER

MEL

MANGUS

I'm _____ but a fool-ish, _____ fond _____ old man, _____

Ft. Vin. + Brass

f *(mp)*

p *f* *p*

Example 6.11. *The Knot Garden*, III. 9, 'I'm but a foolish, fond old man' (Mangus).

483

VOICES (whistling)

(8va)

MANGUS

whist - ling _____ to keep my pecker _____ up; _____

+ 8va

(meno mosso)

Tpt. (nat.)

p legg.

Pf. (+ 8va higher)

Example 6.12. *The Knot Garden*, III. 9, 'Whistling to keep my pecker up' (Mangus).

barren age?’⁵⁰ In an era of extraordinary carnage, dead gods, and dead authors, exactly what wisdom or assistance could an artist give to an audience, and should such a figure even be listened to in any case? Tippett addresses these conundrums in a series of essays spanning about a decade and a half, from 1957 to 1971 (the year after *The Knot Garden*’s premiere), with titles such as ‘The Artist’s Mandate’ and ‘Poets in a Barren Age’.

I am a composer. That is someone who imagines sounds, creating music from the inner world of the imagination. The ability to experience and communicate this inner world is a gift. Throughout history, society has recognised that certain men possess this gift and has accorded them a special place. But if such men – poets if you like – are honoured, are the products of their imagination of any real value to the society which honours them? Or are we, particularly at this present point in our history, deluding ourselves that this may be so?⁵¹

Tippett writes of a ‘split’ between an ‘artist affirming absolute values’ (truth, in other words) and a society ‘which seem[s] bent on destroying itself’.⁵²

The climax of my sense of isolation came [...] when the noble Christian allies decided to put their faith in that masterpiece of technics – the atom bomb. Simultaneously, the concentration camps were opened. I found in these obscenities, as did most others, a most violent and enduring shock to my sense of what humanity might be at all. A denial of any and every affirmation which the poet might make, whether in the name of God or Mankind. What price Beethoven now? [...] The dream is broken, as it is time and again.⁵³

⁵⁰ Hölderlin poses this question in his elegy ‘Bread and Wine’. According to Tippett, Hölderlin was ‘prophetic of the European madness into which we have since fallen’ (‘Persönliches Bekenntnis’, in *Moving into Aquarius*, 119).

⁵¹ Tippett, ‘Poets in a Barren Age’, 148.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 153.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Tippett's concerns about the artist's role, broken humanitarian dreams, and the futility of art after the horrors of the Second World War align him with Adorno, who infamously claimed that 'writ[ing] poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric'.⁵⁴ There is a significant crossover between Tippett's and Adorno's writings. Both, for instance, criticise the ubiquitous brainlessness of mass culture (or 'the culture industry', to use Adorno's term).⁵⁵ Tippett, for his part, writes that 'all the mass based entertainment in the world cannot add up to a half pennyworth of great art', and bemoans that 'there is no question in our day of the artist receiving a true mandate from *society* to create. The mandate of society is to entertain, and that mandate is clear and uncomplicated'.⁵⁶ For both Tippett and Adorno, great art – in contrast to mass culture – is capable of portraying truth to society. Yet, according to Edward Venn, while Tippett's and Adorno's 'underlying ideology is in essence the same', it is 'obscured by differing surface manifestations'.⁵⁷

Adorno is essentially pessimistic about modern culture (for all that art might portray the truth, it is highly unlikely that society will improve, given the extent to which mass culture has permeated every area of society), whereas Tippett is optimistic. So, while Adorno seeks to demonstrate *how* music portrays the truth, it is with the knowledge that few people will ever benefit. Tippett, on the other hand, believes that the truth-content of art will have a knock-on effect [...] For Adorno, Auschwitz is the ultimate symbol of our society's utter failure, from which we can never recover. Tippett, the optimist, without wishing to downplay the terrible significance of the concentration camps, can never fully let go of his dream. For, if it is a dream, it is one that we still must aspire to, and the concentration camps are, for Tippett, a vivid demonstration of how far we still have to go, and how far apart the individual and society have

⁵⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Wieber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 34.

⁵⁵ See Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944; London: Verso, 1997).

⁵⁶ Tippett, 'The Artist's Mandate', in *Moving into Aquarius*, 128-9.

⁵⁷ Edward Venn, 'Idealism and Ideology in Tippett's Writings', in Suzanne Robinson (ed.), *Michael Tippett: Music and Literature* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2002), 49.

been sundered. It is for art to repair some, if not all of the rift; Auschwitz is there as a symbol to remind us of the terrible consequences of the divided man.⁵⁸

Despite ‘all of the horrors of the twentieth century’, then, ‘and the ravages on the soul committed by society, Tippett still retains his faith that art will transcend it all’.⁵⁹ ‘Must I stop singing, like Hölderlin’, he asks defiantly, ‘because of the fragility of all aspiration?’⁶⁰

Tippett frequently ‘stresses the distinction between the creative artist and the common man; namely, that the creative artist is more in touch with the world of imagination’.⁶¹ He emphasises the importance of artists to rectifying the ‘madness’ of positivistic, violent modernity through visionary work, and claims that it is an artist’s ‘special and innate gift [...] to reach down into the depths of the human psyche and bring forth the tremendous images of things to come’ for audiences.⁶² It might be, then, that *The Knot Garden* advocates a more productive role for creative artists than Tippett admits. Despite Tippett’s claim that, in *The Knot Garden*, the ‘romantic notion of the creative artist as someone who can solve mankind’s problems, dies hard’,⁶³ Mangus’s influence over the opera’s proceedings cannot be discounted, even if his power turns out not to be as great or absolute as he might have hoped. Furthermore, Tippett’s own authorial voice is strongly apparent in *The Knot Garden*, owing to his domination of the creative process. Tippett was, notoriously, both librettist and composer for all of his operas, and his methods did not allow for significant input from any other creative voice until a work’s ‘text’ (that is to say, its libretto and music) was complete. Ultimately, *The Knot Garden*

⁵⁸ Ibid., 49-51.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 44.

⁶⁰ Tippett, ‘Poets in a Barren Age’, 155.

⁶¹ Venn, ‘Idealism and Ideology in Tippett’s Writings’, 41-2.

⁶² Tippett, ‘The Artist’s Mandate’, 129. For more on Tippett’s Jungian thoughts on ‘images’, see ‘Tippett, Jung, Lacan’ in Chapter 3 of this thesis, and David Clarke, ‘The Significance of the Concept “Image” in Tippett’s Musical Thought: a Perspective from Jung’, in *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett: Modern Times and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 13-35, and *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 21, no. 1 (1996), 82-104.

⁶³ Tippett, ‘Dreams of Power, Dreams of Love’, 220.

and Tippett's other operas demonstrate that he still believes in the value of individual visions from creative artists such as himself.

Perhaps Tippett's view of the creative artist's role might best be understood from a Lacanian angle. According to Fink,

In Lacan's view of the analytic setting, the analyst is not called on to play the 'good object', the 'good enough mother', or the strong ego which allies with the patient's weak one. Rather, the analyst must, by maintaining a position of enigmatic desire, come to serve as object in the subject's fantasy in order to bring about a reconfiguration of fantasy, a new stance in relation to jouissance, a new subject position.⁶⁴

Tippett's ideal creative artist is not a 'master', an all-knowing dictator or sorcerer – which is the role that Mangus attempts to assume. Rather, like a good Lacanian 'analyst', the creative artist is a learned guide, a mediator, or 'midwife' (to use Tippett's term), who can be jettisoned once a subject has achieved insight – which is the role that Mangus accidentally ends up fulfilling.⁶⁵ They are someone with special knowledge and privilege, who can 'reach down into the depths of the human psyche' and open up knowledge for others, but not someone who is omnipotent, able to magically rectify the ills of an individual or humanity at large, or whose judgements should necessarily go unquestioned or be prized above that of the collective good.

⁶⁴ Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, xiii.

⁶⁵ Tippett, 'Moving into Aquarius', in *Moving into Aquarius*, 42. In Tippett's next opera, *The Ice Break*, the 'psychedelic messenger' Astron dismisses an inebriated crowd who hail him as a god with the words 'Saviour?! Hero?! Me!! / You must be joking'. This moment shares a great deal in common with Mangus's 'Prospero's a fake' speech. According to Bowen, Astron's lines are 'germane both to the message of [*The Ice Break*] and Tippett's own stance as an artist'. Astron 'reflects the composer's desire only to be treated as a messenger, not as a divine figure whose message is sacred: for the alternative usually leads to dogmatic self-righteousness and intolerance' (Bowen, *Michael Tippett*, 2nd ed. (London: Robson, 1997), 131).

‘We sense the magic net’: Holy Theatre

Tippett’s thoughts on the prophetic, helpful role of the creative artist concord closely with those of Heidegger, a contemporary whose philosophy also ‘stands in an unavoidable relationship to the poetry of Hölderlin’.⁶⁶ According to Heidegger, ‘it is the task of the poet to help us see once more the bright possibility of a true world. That is what poets are for, now’.⁶⁷ For Heidegger, like Tippett and Adorno, great art is the only thing capable of prompting a confrontation with the alienating techno-capitalism that constitutes the destitution of modernity. On Julian Young’s account, for Heidegger, great art can reveal

‘what is holy and what unholy’, ‘the shape of destiny for human beings’, the broad outline of the ‘simple and essential decisions’ which constitute, for us, the proper way to live, our [...] fundamental *ethos* [... The great artwork] ‘sets up’ a world, brings it out of inconspicuousness and into salience, places it ‘on display’ [...] Experienced as the self-disclosure of an unfathomable ‘mystery’ it acquires radiance, becomes, as one might also say, *numinous*, a ‘holy’ place.⁶⁸

Heidegger’s discussions of ‘holiness’ in art are strikingly similar to Brook’s almost simultaneous delineations of ‘Holy Theatre’ in his influential 1968 theatrical manifesto, *The Empty Space*.⁶⁹ Put simply, Brook’s Holy Theatre is the ‘Theatre of the Invisible-Made-

⁶⁶ Martin Heidegger, ‘Only a God Can Save Us: The *Spiegel* Interview (1966)’, trans. William J. Richardson, in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, ed. Thomas Sheehan (New Jersey: Precedent, 1981), 216.

⁶⁷ Albert Hofstadter, ‘Introduction’, in Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, ed. and trans. Hofstadter (New York: Harper Collins, 1971), xv.

⁶⁸ Julian Young, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 24-45. Heidegger emphatically affirms that he does ‘not see anything about modern art that points out a way [for us ...] There is still no thinker speaking who is “great” enough to bring thought immediately and in clearly defined form before the heart of the matter and thereby [set it] on its way. For us today, the greatness of what is to be thought is [all] too great. Perhaps the best we can do is strive to break a passage through it – along narrow paths that do not stretch too far’ (‘Only a God Can Save Us’, 219).

⁶⁹ See Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (London: Penguin, 1968). In recent years, musicologists have begun to incorporate Brook’s ideas into their explorations of certain composers’ musico-theatrical work. See, for example, Jonathan Cross, ‘Ritual Theatres’, in *The Stravinsky Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

Visible'.⁷⁰ Like Tippett, Brook recognised that the nihilistic Western society of the mid twentieth century was in desperate need of new rituals and experiences to capture 'the invisible currents that rule our lives': 'More than ever, we crave for an experience that is beyond the humdrum. Some look for it in jazz, classical music, in marijuana and in LSD [...] The need for a true contact with a sacred invisibility still exists'.⁷¹ Brook claims that the theatre offers the best chance for unveiling answers to this sense of collective *ennui*:

The stage is a place where the invisible can appear as a deep hold on our thoughts [...] The theatre is the last forum where idealism is still an open question: many audiences all over the world will answer positively from their own experience that they have seen the face of the invisible through an experience on the stage that has transcended their experience in life.⁷²

He states that the aim of his Holy Theatre is to 'jolt' a spectator 'into new sight, so that he [*sic*] wakes up to the life around him'.⁷³ Ultimately, Brook hoped to encourage audiences to ask 'Do we need liberation? From what? In what way?'⁷⁴

Tippett, like Heidegger and Brook, firmly believed in the 'holy', truth-revealing potential of artworks. In 'What I Believe', which was quoted from previously in Chapter 4 in order to exemplify Tippett's awareness of the 'Death of God', Tippett confesses to faith in some form numinous dimension, and states, in a distinctly Brook-like fashion, his confidence in the potential of theatre in particular to unleash spiritual awareness upon an audience:

Press, 1998), 132-69, and David Beard, 'Corporeal Music', in *Harrison Birtwistle's Operas and Music Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 278-354.

⁷⁰ Brook, *The Empty Space*, 47.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 53-4.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 47-8.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 96.

I believe in a reality of the physical world outside, experienced through the senses and formulated generally by the intelligence. I believe also in a reality of the spiritual world within, experienced, in my own case, by some intuitive, introspective apprehension of a kind which, in the past, was formulated generally by dogmatic, revelatory received religions [... We need] a new ritual, in which we are all there, fully defined in terms of sex, space, and time. My intuition is that such a ritual (which might lack a liturgy or dogma) would come, if not *from*, certainly *through* the theatre – using theatre in its widest and most universal sense. For truly, ‘the question is [...] one of a world vision that makes the sacred possible at all’.⁷⁵

Tippett and Brook were part of the same artistic and social milieu, and Tippett avowedly took inspiration from Brook’s work and ideas. In a 1954 letter, he describes Brook as the only English director ‘so imaginative and exciting that he overcomes his youth and reaches out towards real flair and graft’.⁷⁶ He also sought Brook’s opinion before beginning work on his second opera, *King Priam*.⁷⁷ In an essay written towards the end of his life, Tippett cites *The Empty Space* as a crucial influence on his work and a potential guide for future musico-theatrical practitioners:

A composer dreaming on things to come is probably best occupied thinking how to fill that empty space, and can certainly derive stimulus, as I have, from Brook’s example and ideas. What Brook calls ‘The Deadly Theatre’, subordinating artistic innovation to a network of legal and financial transactions, is more prevalent than ever before. The musical theatre tradition [...] has tended of late to become an excuse simply for investment in the technology of the spectacular. Dramatic and musical contents are reduced to an anodyne level, but the lighting, special effects, and so on are amazing. What remains, in artistic terms, is an empty shell [...] On

⁷⁵ Tippett, ‘What I Believe’ (1978 postscript), in *Music of the Angels: Essays and Sketchbooks of Michael Tippett*, ed. Bowen (London: Eulenberg, 1980), 52-4. Tippett’s final quote is taken from Walter A. Strauss, *Descent and Return: the Orphic theme in Modern Literature* (Massachusetts: Harvard, 1971), 12.

⁷⁶ Tippett, letter to David Webster, 27/07/1954, in Thomas Schuttenhelm (ed.), *Selected Letters of Michael Tippett* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 321.

⁷⁷ Tippett, ‘The Birth of an Opera’, in *Moving into Aquarius* (St Albans: Paladin, 1974), 66.

the other hand, a wonderful realm of creativity beckons. The extension of the realm of notional archetypes is made possible just by starting with an awareness of established theatrical genres – what Brook calls ‘The Rough Theatre’, ‘The Holy Theatre’, and ‘The Immediate Theatre’. These are not tightly defined exclusion zones, let alone a final exhaustive list. One of their excitements lies in their potential for intermixture and development through new genres of presentation [...] My dream is indeed that there will be a new plurality of theatrical genres beyond my immediate apprehension.⁷⁸

Given Tippett’s admiration of Brook, it is unsurprising that some of the director’s theatrical philosophies seemingly found their way into his work. According to Bowen, for example, in Tippett’s final opera, *New Year*, ‘the predominantly extrovert, wild activity of Act II (“rough theatre” in Peter Brook’s parlance), is [...] followed by the restrained ceremonials of Act III (“holy theatre”).⁷⁹ Such a description applies equally well to Act III of *The Knot Garden*, with the ‘extraordinary change of gear’ between improvisatory, chaotic, ‘rough’ charades and the characters’ subsequent ‘holy’ moment of realisation.⁸⁰ In these closing moments, after Mangus’s ‘Prospero’s a fake’ speech initially breaks the ‘fourth wall’ of the stage, all of the other characters bar Thea and Faber join him to directly address the audience. Tippett recalls how, for this ‘climax of forgiveness’ in the opera’s initial performances, director Peter Hall ‘was able to bring all the characters out to the front, turn off the film and stage-lighting so that one just saw the bare ropes, and bring up the house lights: when this scene ended, they retreated to the stage, the house lights faded and ropes were transformed into a knot garden again. Real theatre’.⁸¹ Hall’s direction at this point is highly reminiscent of Brook’s use

⁷⁸ Tippett, ‘Dreaming on Things to Come’, in *Tippett on Music*, 308-9. The title of this essay is taken from Shakespeare’s Sonnet 107 (‘Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul/ Of the wide world dreaming on things to come...’).

⁷⁹ Bowen, *Michael Tippett*, 2nd ed., 139. Bowen’s comment could also apply to *The Knot Garden*’s overall dramatic structure, in which ever more intense psychological exploration finally gives way to ‘restrained ceremonials’.

⁸⁰ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 411.

⁸¹ Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues* (London: Pimlico, 1991), 222.

of harsh lighting in his productions at this time, such as his 1962 Royal Shakespeare Company *King Lear* and his 1968 Roundhouse *Tempest*, and it is surely not coincidental that Hall was artistic director of the RSC while Brook was directing his Brecht-inspired *Lear* for the company. By employing Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekten* (alienation effects) such as direct address and harsh lighting, Hall and Brook aimed to emulate Brecht in ‘stripping [a theatrical] event of its self-evident, familiar, obvious quality and creating a sense of astonishment and curiosity’ in their audience.⁸²

With the audience alert, *The Knot Garden*’s characters offer a lesson from Tippett about how humanity might best progress. Tippett admired the sentiment of The Beatles’ song ‘All You Need is Love’ (1967), and in a moment reminiscent of that song’s message, the *Knot Garden*’s ensemble call for a rejection of self-absorption and worry in favour of love and engagement with other people.⁸³

ALL

If, for a timid moment

We submit to love,

Exit from the inner cage,

Turn each to each to all

The Knot Garden, III. 9

⁸² Bertolt Brecht, from ‘A Short Organum for the Theatre’ (1949). Quoted in Peter Brooker, ‘Key Words in Brecht’s Theory and Practice of Theatre’, in Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 191. This sudden switch between ‘rough’ and ‘holy’ theatre also characterises the end of Act II, when the chaos of the ‘labyrinth’ duets segues into Dov’s and Flora’s scene of quiet contemplation. Flora’s Schubert song breaks the fourth wall of the stage and through its tonal clarity and atemporality creates a diegetic, musical *Verfremdungseffekt*, which, in true Brechtian fashion, strips a theatrical event of its ‘self-evident, familiar, obvious quality’ and creates ‘a sense of astonishment and curiosity’ in its audience. Dov’s subsequent song, ‘I was born in a big town’, functions in a similarly ‘holy’ fashion, and is accompanied by a lighting change that summons an idyllic rose garden. Denise’s Act I aria and the ensuing blues ensemble might also be regarded as ‘alienating’ dramatic and musical moments.

⁸³ Tippett, ‘Art and Man’, in *Music of the Angels*, 28. Tippett deems The Beatles to be ‘intelligent young men’.

The vocal writing at this moment is highly illustrative. The characters begin singing ‘If’ one at a time, building to a dissonant crescendo before suddenly stopping and singing the remainder of the first two lines in *piano* unison. Initially, they are accompanied by swooping strings, before the orchestra drops out and *pianissimo* woodwind mimics the characters on ‘for a timid moment’. Musically, then, there is a move from loud, grating individuality (notably underpinned by a B minor chord that now carries a well-established link to psychological tempestuousness), to tentative, quiet, homorhythmic close harmony. An increase in volume and an expansion from a tight cluster chord to a chord spanning two octaves graphically exemplifies the characters ‘opening up’ to love (see Example 6.13). A B pedal note underpins them, perhaps indicating that a collective, faltering psychological realisation is occurring at this point. The move from jarring dissonance to something approaching unified, revelatory consonance is then repeated for the next two lines, when the characters exit their inner cage of psychological individualism and ‘turn’ (in a musical, mental, and literal sense) to each other as one (see Example 6.14).

Following this ‘turn’, Dov briefly quotes Tippett’s 1962 setting of Ariel’s song inviting Ferdinand to love and dance, ‘Come unto these yellow sands’, which encapsulates the conclusion’s themes of music, compassion, and forgiveness. The characters acknowledge their artificial surroundings, ‘within this theatre, upon this stage’, further distancing the audience in a Brechtian fashion. The music at this point is also violently alienating. Following Dov’s tranquil Ariel quotation, the characters sing in unison, syllabically, and *con forza*, accompanied by loud trumpet and timpani interjections (see Example 6.15). These words also recall Shakespeare’s meta-theatrical reference to the Globe Theatre in Prospero’s ‘Our revels now are ended’ speech, which Mangus will quote from (‘Leave not a wrack [*sic*] behind’) when all of the characters leave the stage and the world of the knot garden ‘dissolves’.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Kemp suggest that Tippett’s use of cinematic ‘dissolve’ music to shift between scenes (‘a criss-cross of lines which blots out what has just happened and clears the air for something new’) might have been inspired by *The Tempest*, in which ‘dissolve’ is a recurring image (*Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 213).

488 Allegretto (♩ = 88)

DENISE

489 *f* *p*

If, ——— if ———

FLORA

f

If, ———

DOV

MEL

MANGUS

mf *p*

fp *fp*

pf *pp*

(*f*)

DENISE

FLORA *p*

DOV *p*

MEL *f* *p*

MANGUS *fp*

mf *p*

fp *fp* *fp* Timp. (*p*)

490 DENISE *p sub.* *ff* *mf* *dolce*

for a ti-mid mo-ment we sub-mit to love,

FLORA *ff* *p sub.* *mf* *dolce*

for a ti-mid moment we sub-mit to love,

DOV *ff* *p sub.* *mf* *dolce*

for a ti-mid mo-ment we sub-mit to love,

MEL *ff* *p sub.* *mf* *dolce*

for a ti-mid mo-ment we sub-mit to love,

MANGUS *ff* *p sub.* *mf* *dolce*

for a ti-mid mo-ment we sub-mit to love,

mp

pp *p*

Example 6.13. *The Knot Garden*, III. 9, ‘If, for a timid moment...’.

292

DENISE

491

molto

f *p*

E - - - xit, e - - -

FLORA

molto

f *p*

E - - - xit, e - - -

DOV

molto

f *p*

E - - - xit, e - - -

MEL

molto

f

E - - -

MANGUS

molto

mf p *mf* *p* *sva* *p*

fp *ff* *trns.* *fp*

DENISE

492

ff *p sub*

xit from the in-ner cage,

FLORA

ff *p sub*

xit from the in-ner cage,

DOV

ff *p sub*

xit from the in-ner cage,

MEL

p *ff* *p sub*

xit from the in-ner cage,

MANGUS

fp *ff* *p sub*

xit from the in-ner cage,

E - - - 3 - - - 3 - - -

f

pp *poco* *3*

fp *Timp.* *pp* *w.w.*

Example 6.14. *The Knot Garden*, III. 9, 'Exit from the inner cage...'

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system features five vocal parts (DENISE, FLORA, DOV, MEL, MANGUS) and instrumental parts (Tpt. (sord), w.w., piano). The vocal parts are in 3/4 time and feature a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with a triplet of sixteenth notes. The lyrics are: "turn each to each to all". The instrumental parts include a trumpet part with a sord and a piano part with a w.w. and a *poco f* section for the strings. The second system features five vocal parts (DENISE, FLORA, DOV, MEL, MANGUS) and instrumental parts (piano, El. Guit., Hrp & Pf.). The vocal parts are in 3/4 time and feature a *molto* tempo. The lyrics are: "'Come, come, come, un - to". The instrumental parts include a piano part with a *molto dim.* section and an electric guitar part with a *p* section.

Example 6.14 (cont.) *The Knot Garden*, III. 9, 'Exit from the inner cage...'

Musical score for Example 6.15, showing vocal parts for DENISE, FLORA, DOV, MEL, and MANGUS, and piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are in 4/4 time and feature the lyrics "wi-thin this theatre u-pon this stage" with a "f con forza" dynamic marking. The piano accompaniment includes parts for Clarinet (Cl.), Trumpet (Tpt.), Horns (Hrns.), and Timpani (Timp.), with dynamics ranging from p to f.

Example 6.15. *The Knot Garden*, III. 9, 'Within this theatre...'

PROSPERO

The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
 The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
 Ye all which it inherit, shall dissolve
 And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
 Leave not a rack behind.

The Tempest, IV. 1

Next, the title of Goethe's poem *The Magic Net* is referenced: according to Tippett, this allusion provides *The Knot Garden* with 'its most fundamental metaphor':⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 84.

ONE AFTER THE OTHER

Here, here, here, here, here

ALL

We sense the magic net

That holds us veined

Each to each to all

DOV

'Come unto these yellow sands'

The Knot Garden, III. 9

Again, the characters enter one after the other on 'here', before each individual strand is brought together in a net-like fashion (see Example 6.16).

According to Heidegger, it is impossible and undesirable for an artwork to portray truth explicitly, since such a gauche and plain presentation would render the holy – the 'other world' that is beyond full human comprehension – unholy. In the words of J. P. E. Harper-Scott,

Heidegger maintains that this 'other side' of the world we ordinarily see presented to us in the objects and relationships around us – the totality of our material investments – is forever unknowable, yet it is vital to grasp the sense in which it shapes and transcends the presentation we know [...] It is precisely because it *cannot* be symbolized, represented by language or objects, that this holy mystery of being *should not* be symbolized or made present. This is the error of metaphysics and aesthetics. It is also, Heidegger might have said, the error of fantasy films like *The Wizard of Oz* or the *Matrix* trilogy that represent this world beyond the horizon [...] *merely as another collection of beings*, of things the viewer can literally see, which are 'realistic' in the way anything else on the cinematic screen is – they have physical properties, can be encountered

The musical score is for the opera *The Knot Garden*, Act III, Scene 9, titled 'Here... We sense the magic net'. It features five vocal parts: DENISE, FLORA, DOV, MEL, and MANGUS. The lyrics for all parts are: 'here, now, beyond the end-game, here...'. The score includes dynamic markings such as *più f*, *ten.*, *molto*, *p*, *fp*, and *(f)*. The instrumental ensemble includes Strings (Str.), Horns (Hrns.), Clarinet (Cl.), and Timpani (Timp.). The score is marked with measure number 495.

Example 6.16. *The Knot Garden*, III. 9, 'Here... We sense the magic net'.

496 DENISE

ff *p sub. distinto*

here, we sense the ma - gic net that holds us veined

FLORA *p sub. distinto*

here, we sense the ma - gic net that holds us veined

DOV *p sub. distinto*

here, we sense the ma - gic net that holds us veined

MEL *p sub. distinto*

here, we sense the ma - gic net that holds us veined

MANGUS *p sub. distinto*

here, we sense the ma - gic net that holds us veined

ff *pp sub.*

w.w.

DENISE *f p f* *molto*

each to each to all

FLORA *f p f* *molto*

each to each to all

DOV *f p f* *molto*

each to each to all

MEL *f p f* *molto*

each to each to all

MANGUS *f p f* *molto*

each to each to all

mf pp *f appass.* *molto* *pp*

Soli Str.

Example 6.16 (cont.) *The Knot Garden*, III. 9, 'Here... We sense the magic net'

by the human characters, and so on. The problem resolved by great art is to ‘thematize’ the world [...] without falling into the trap of making it ‘real’.⁸⁶

Adhering to Heideggerian standards, *The Knot Garden* appropriately does not represent its ‘magic net’ in any concrete fashion; the other world, the holy, the truth, the ‘real’, whatever one might call it, is not seen. Rather, the characters ‘sense the magic net’. To quote Paul Driver, ‘the transcendent shadows and glints through the confused doings of the modern men and women presented, and takes them dimly by surprise. A clear perception of its significance is not permitted them; they are merely to be bewildered by it into a provisional and partial cognisance of broader scope to their lives’.⁸⁷ Musically, too, there is no clichéd, grandly revelatory moment, only a series of attempted, stuttering movements from disunity to unity. In a similar fashion to many of Britten’s sacred and secular stage works, *The Knot Garden* ends with ‘a kind of release in which humanity is humbled [...] by divine grace [...] and] the fulfilment of release which comes when human protagonists accept their own flawed natures’.⁸⁸

Just what, then, is this half-glimpsed, transcendental, and ‘fundamental’ ‘magic net’ that might transform humanity? A potential answer lies in a 1974 postscript that Tippett provides for the second edition of his book *Moving into Aquarius*. This essay almost perfectly encapsulates *The Knot Garden*’s concerns, confusions, and conclusions, and anybody wishing to gain a quick insight into Tippett’s inspirations and aesthetics could do worse than read these few paragraphs, which offer a distillation of his thought, and contain a typically idiosyncratic mix of social commentary, technological fear, and New Age optimism interspersed with references to Brecht, Mozart, Goethe, Shakespeare, Blake, and Jung. Tippett initially notes how modern society is struggling to deal with what he calls ‘the religious problem’ – in other words, the post-

⁸⁶ J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism: Revolution, Reaction, and William Walton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 208-9.

⁸⁷ Paul Driver, ‘*The Knot Garden*’, in Lewis (ed.), *Michael Tippett, O. M.*, 155-6.

⁸⁸ Whittall, *Exploring Twentieth-Century Music*, 90-1.

Auschwitz ‘Death of God’.⁸⁹ Not only is there now no longer any miracle of divine intervention at the request of private prayer, even if accompanied by the most steadfast faith and exemplary righteousness, but there is also no true Christian satisfaction any more to be drawn from the pleasure of divine reward as the price of divine retribution’.⁹⁰ Furthermore, ‘the same inability to achieve moral authority is to be found even in so-called secular religions’, such as Marxism.⁹¹ Hiroshima, meanwhile, ‘has pinpointed the ethical ambivalence of a supposedly neutral, rational, empirical, pure science’, which presents a ‘threat to our survival’.⁹² The best an artist can hope to achieve in the face of such terrifying events is a ‘catharsis’, rather than a full resolution.

If we cannot make God, that is to say our particular ‘local’ righteousness, any longer an alibi for the brutalities we use against an alien righteousness; and if no received religion or ideology that we know can dispense with the claim to exclusivity of such righteousness, then our state might seem desperate. The way forward might seem like universal anarchy and despair.⁹³

‘And yet’, Tippett writes, citing people’s capacity for joy and love even in the concentration camps, ‘humanity *cannot* go out; it *must* go on’.⁹⁴ He quotes Caliban’s famous speech, ‘Be not afeard...’, which is ‘sung... out of [Caliban’s] darkness’, as evidence of humanity’s capacity to dream and ‘dream again’ even in the face of great oppression.⁹⁵ After this reference to a metaphysical speech from *The Tempest*, Tippett moves on immediately to discuss ‘the same rich vein of dreams’ in Jung, specifically a letter of Jung’s from 1929.⁹⁶

⁸⁹ Tippett, ‘Postscript’, in *Moving into Aquarius*, 164.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 165.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 166.

⁹⁵ *Caliban’s Song*, a setting of these words, was Tippett’s last ever composition in 1995.

⁹⁶ Tippett, ‘Postscript’, 166.

We live in the age of the decline of Christianity, when the metaphysical premises of morality are collapsing [...] That's why the young are experimenting like young dogs. They want to live experimentally, with no historical premises. That causes reactions in the unconscious, restlessness, and longing for the fulfilment of the times. (This is called 'Chiliasm'). When the confusion is at its height a new revelation comes, i.e. at the beginning of the fourth month of world history.⁹⁷

That is to say, in Tippett's words, 'at the year 2000 AD the 2,000-year world "month" of Pisces – shall we say, of ideological purity and fratricide – goes over gradually into the "month" of Aquarius – shall we say, of compassion and attempted union of the opposites'.⁹⁸ 'People', according to Jung, 'must look at everything and *think* about it and communicate with the heaven that dwells deep within them'.⁹⁹ 'That', writes Tippett, 'would surely be "moving into Aquarius" with dignity and power'.¹⁰⁰

For Tippett, spirituality or 'holiness' was synonymous with Jungianism: as Clarke observes,

in his perception of modern man as alienated from a world dominated by instrumental reason, and his search for some form of God-term with which to fill the spiritual vacuum (impelled rather than inhibited by his agnosticism), [... Tippett was] intuitively aware of the hazards of anachronism which such a metaphysical stance would entail. For all his objections to scientific empiricism, he seems to be implicitly aware that his affirmations of the ineffable must be seen to have some material basis if they are to be perceived as authentic to his times, and not as a retreat into esotericism or mysticism. It is here that the psychoanalytic movement – and Jung in

⁹⁷ Jung, letter from 1929, quoted in Tippett, 'Postscript', 167. Jung's comment about 'the young [...] experimenting like dogs' bears similarity to Brook's claim that people are 'crav[ing] for an experience that is beyond the humdrum, and seeking it 'in jazz, classical music, in marijuana and in LSD'.

⁹⁸ Tippett, 'Postscript', 167.

⁹⁹ Jung, letter from 1929, quoted in Tippett, 'Postscript', 167.

¹⁰⁰ Tippett, 'Postscript', 167.

particular – comes to the rescue, offering the possibility of an epistemological shift from the metaphysical to the psychological.¹⁰¹

In both his 1974 ‘Postscript’ essay and the conclusion to his 1970 opera, Tippett presents dreaming, psychological exploration, and compassion, inspired by *The Tempest* and Jung, as the answer to modern humanity’s great crises. ‘The magic net’ of *The Knot Garden*’s finale is a metaphor for the Jungian Collective Unconscious, which, according to Tippett, can provide truth, empathy, and togetherness for modern individuals feeling disorientated and isolated in a violent and ‘godless’ world. The final act of *The Knot Garden* furthermore suggests that Tippett, to repeat Venn, ‘retains his faith that art will transcend it all’.¹⁰² Contrary to Tippett’s own words, it does not lay to rest ‘any lingering belief that humanist art could achieve that moral power over and within humanity which religious art, and, indeed, traditional religion itself had failed to engender’.¹⁰³ In fact, *The Knot Garden* arguably implies that ‘supreme art like that of Shakespeare may sometimes do for us what religion did for earlier epochs’,¹⁰⁴ since *The Tempest* is the vehicle that allows *The Knot Garden*’s characters to glimpse the transcendental truth of the Collective Unconscious and, in Tippett’s phrase, ‘move into Aquarius’. In addition to potentially acting as an edifying, ‘holy’ artwork for its intended audience on its own terms, then, *The Knot Garden* also appears to present *The Tempest* as a ‘holy’, unifying artwork for the modern age.

¹⁰¹ Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 15.

¹⁰² Venn, ‘Idealism and Ideology in Tippett’s Writings’, 44.

¹⁰³ Tippett, ‘Postscript’, in *Moving into Aquarius*, 163.

¹⁰⁴ Wilfred Mellers, ‘Tippett at the Millennium: A Personal Memoir’, in Clarke (ed.), *Tippett Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 194.

Conclusions

To begin this conclusion, it seems appropriate to return to the thesis's titular conjoining of Shakespeare with modern British opera, and the question posed in Chapter 2 about 'how Shakespeare's plays helped to establish and develop a national operatic tradition'. Arguably, Tippett's *Tempest* opera – along with Britten's and Searle's contemporaneous creations, and the British Shakespeare operas that followed in their wake – actually demonstrate how, beyond a certain point in the twentieth century, the idea of 'British opera' does not stand up to much scrutiny, other than as an arbitrary geographical marker. Moreover, notwithstanding Shakespeare's status as Britain's foremost cultural signifier, and the undoubted ability of his name and work to attract an audience, it seems misleading to imply that Shakespeare, or at least certain ideas about Shakespeare, were deployed cynically in the service of deliberately constructing a 'national operatic tradition' in twentieth and twenty-first century Britain. In sum, with the exception of *At the Boar's Head* and *Sir John in Love*, there is very little overtly 'British' about British Shakespeare operas, and their composers' employment of Shakespeare does not seem to have served an obviously nationalistic purpose. To overstate a distinctively 'British' quality in these operas would be a mistake, which might prevent future fruitful comparison with Shakespeare adaptations from other locales, and draw attention away from other important aspects of their composers' engagements with Shakespeare.

According to Rupprecht, by the time of *The Knot Garden*'s composition, 'the possibility of an essentially British music [...] was more than ever to be doubted or rudely denounced'.¹ As noted in Chapters 2 and 3, both Tippett and Britten were keen to escape the apparent provincialism of Vaughan Williams's generation. The dark, confusing, erotically

¹ Philip Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism: The Manchester Group and their Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 446.

charged worlds of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Knot Garden* certainly differ on both a dramatic and musical level to Vaughan Williams's and Holst's more nation-focused, rustic Shakespeare operas; although, as Chapter 2 demonstrates, these sometimes socially and sexually subversive works should not be stereotyped straightforwardly as 'merrie England' folk nostalgia pieces. There seems to be no sense, for instance, of Tippett drawing on Shakespeare for *The Knot Garden* in order to espouse a distinctively British identity, or interrogate uniquely British problems. Nor is there any sense of him competitively attempting to 'reclaim' Shakespeare from continental composers – a charge that could possibly be levelled at Britten, who parodies Italian number opera for the workers' play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The younger Manchester group, at this time, were apparently 'much taken [...] with ideals of supra-national modernity, and far more involved with avant-garde developments in Germany, France, or Italy'.² Davies, for instance, stated that 'there is no longer any place for nationalism in our music: our problems are fundamental, general, international' – a description that quite easily fits *The Knot Garden*, along with several later Shakespeare operas.³ Arguably, however, Tippett was even more ambivalent about achieving 'Britishness' in his operas than his younger peers. Rupprecht suggests that the Manchester School's 'turn to opera' in the 1960s might 'be interpreted in broader cultural terms, as a reinvestment in evocatively British subjects – the seaside Punch, Arden of Faversham, the Taverner myth in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*'.⁴ For Tippett to compose an opera based on Shakespeare might seem like a similar reinvestment in national identity. *The Tempest*, however, is not 'evocatively British' in the same way as the material of these British-set operas, since it follows the familial feuds of Italian politicians on an unidentified exotic island. Granted, *The Tempest* was written by Britain's most famous writer, and thanks to the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games ceremonies has arguably

² Ibid., 21.

³ Peter Maxwell Davies, 'Problems of a British Composer Today', *The Listener*, 08/10/1959. Quoted in Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 131.

⁴ Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 257.

become linked to current ideas about Britishness.⁵ Nevertheless, it is not a ‘British’ story, especially when compared to Shakespeare’s history plays or certain of his comedies. Furthermore, Chapter 3 notes, by this point in history *The Tempest* was a thoroughly and somewhat uniquely globalised work, having been adapted and ameliorated by artists from around the world, particularly in colonial and postcolonial situations.

The Knot Garden retains *The Tempest*’s ‘ambiguous geography’, replacing Prospero’s unnamed island with a ‘garden’ on the edge of an ‘industrial city’.⁶ Tippett appears to have been deliberately unspecific about his opera’s location (which, it must be remembered, is largely a psychological metaphor) in order to provide his work with a broader relevance. *The Knot Garden*’s setting could feasibly be on the outskirts of any labyrinthine, Western metropolis, British or otherwise. The opera’s characters, apart from Mel the American, are also never explicitly identified with any particular locality – all that can be observed is that they are predominantly white, middle-class, sing in English, and are apparently familiar with Shakespeare, which perhaps suggests a British or American setting. Their language, however, is not a reliable indicator of place, but simply the result of their composer-librettist’s native tongue. The operatic filter, after all, means that Greeks sing in French, French bohemians sing in Italian, and gods sing in German – to give just a few examples. There are furthermore no overtly ‘British’ peculiarities in Tippett’s music. It could even be argued that the opera’s blues moment provides it with more of an American aesthetic than a British one – although, as Chapter 4 demonstrates, this ‘blues’ is by no means ‘authentic’ from the perspective of race,

⁵ Erin Sullivan observes how, in 2012, ‘in the midst of the frenzied national branding exercise that has become a – perhaps *the* – defining feature of “mega-events” like the Olympic Games, Shakespeare was working overtime, standing in as a symbol of British cultural prestige, social inclusion, national achievement, creative potential and citizen empowerment all at once’. *The Tempest*’s centrality to the Olympic and Paralympic games opening ceremonies means that it was often *Tempest* doing this work on Shakespeare’s behalf. See Sullivan, ‘Olympic Performance in the Year of Shakespeare’, in Paul Edmondson, Paul Prescott, and Sullivan (eds.), *A Year of Shakespeare: Re-living the World Shakespeare Festival* (London: Arden, 2013), 3-11.

⁶ According to Vaughan and Vaughan, all that the play reveals is that Prospero’s island, ‘if plotted literally, must have been within a hundred or so miles from a line between Naples and Tunis’ (Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, in Vaughan and Vaughan (eds.), *The Arden Shakespeare (Third Series): The Tempest* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 48).

geography, or class. It was also noted in that chapter that Tippett considered the blues – like Shakespeare – to be ‘universal’, rather than particular to one place or people.

These observations are not intended to downplay Shakespeare’s importance to either *The Knot Garden* or the wider British operatic repertory in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Nor is it a call to cease scholarly investigation into modern British Shakespeare operas. The significant number of recent British operas written on Shakespeare’s plays demonstrates his works’ centrality to British opera and culture more broadly during this period. In every case, it is worth questioning exactly why a composer has chosen to engage with one (or more) of Shakespeare’s famous works (and everything that comes with it) at a particular moment in time. As was observed at the outset of this thesis, study of the performance, adaptation, and reception of Shakespeare’s now almost mythological oeuvre offers a remarkable and vital prism through which to view social, political, and cultural change at global and local levels. The collective study of ‘modern British Shakespeare operas’ can, therefore, help to provide a more nuanced picture of Shakespeare, music, opera, and socio-political history within the ideological context of modern Britain.

Furthermore, as this thesis has attempted to demonstrate, a thorough, multidisciplinary exploration of a single Shakespearian musical work – an exploration that is crucially attuned to music’s ability to exemplify ‘abstract concepts [and] intellectual processes’⁷ – can significantly broaden understanding of Shakespeare’s plays, individual musical pieces, a composers’ wider life, work, and aesthetics, and broader currents in national and international music, opera, Shakespearian music, Shakespeare performance, and social history. Fundamentally, in the case of *The Knot Garden*, it seems that Shakespeare was used not to assist with a performance of Britishness, but to help Tippett achieve his aim of – in Eliot’s words on Shakespeare – ‘transmut[ing] his “personal and private agonies into something rich and strange, universal and

⁷ Gary Schmidgall, *Shakespeare and Opera* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 260.

impersonal”⁸. Whether Tippett was successful in this endeavour, however, is a matter of some debate.

Tippett's *Tempest*: an opera of its time?

While Tippett regarded Shakespeare's work as 'absolutely universal', his relationship with Shakespeare and *The Tempest* was also absolutely personal.⁹ Along with being one of the most vital influences on his work, Suzanne Robinson suggests that Shakespeare was an 'amulet' for Tippett 'on a lifetime's journey fraught with "all the insecurity, incoherence, incompleteness and relativity of our everyday life"¹⁰. If this is the case, then *The Tempest* seems to have functioned as a particularly important 'amulet' for Tippett, as demonstrated not only by his continual returns to the play throughout his career, but also the remarkably personal nature of his engagement, especially in *The Knot Garden*. To paraphrase Tippett's own words on Shakespeare from the beginning of Chapter 3, he seemingly poured a great deal of himself into Shakespeare's play, and took plenty out of it. As Chapter 5 outlines, Tippett's expression of an autobiographical empathy with Dov, 'the [gay] musician who expresses heartbreak', suggests a particularly important affinity with both *The Tempest* and the 'hermaphroditic' character of Ariel. The inclusion of a 'farewell' scene to Francesca Allinson, meanwhile, and the incorporation of other figures and scenarios inspired by people and events from his life, are further features that mark this *Tempest* opera out as a deeply private artistic creation. *The Knot Garden* also seems to encapsulate many of Tippett's thoughts on art, politics, and society, as evidenced through his myriad writings.

⁸ T. S. Eliot, 'Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca', quoted in Ian Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music* (London: Eulenberg, 1984), 210. 'Rich and strange' is a reference to Ariel's song 'Full Fathom Five' in *The Tempest*.

⁹ Michael Tippett, quoted in Meirion Bowen, *Michael Tippett* (London: Robson, 1982), 71.

¹⁰ Suzanne Robinson, in Robinson (ed.), *Michael Tippett: Music and Literature* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2002), 14.

It is partly correct, then, for Puffett to surmise that *The Knot Garden* is ‘bound to a [...] specific man’s psychology’.¹¹ In Robinson’s words, *The Knot Garden* is a work in which ‘the private remains, both present and absent: present to those privileged few who have access to its codes, and absent because it has not yet been declared and remains deniable’.¹² In fact, following Barthes, *The Knot Garden* might even be described as a work ‘tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions’.¹³ Arguably, as well as being a rare example of an opera about psychoanalysis, *The Knot Garden* offers something of a psychoanalysis of its own composer. Clarke argues that ‘if Tippett charted his lifetime’s progress towards personal resolution in the symbolic world of his dreams, we can perhaps trace an analogous journey through the symbolic (and, as we know, often dream-like) world of his operas’.¹⁴ He specifically cites *Dov*, and by inference *The Knot Garden*, as an important step for Tippett on this autobiographical, therapeutic journey. While Clarke cautions against ‘being too literal-minded in imputing any overly causal relationship between [Tippett’s] personal, social and creative process’, it must nevertheless be acknowledged that *The Knot Garden*, owing to its autobiographical qualities, might all too easily be reduced to ‘the status of psychological symptom’, as Livingston puts it.¹⁵

Nowadays, it is also common for reviewers to consider *The Knot Garden* inextricably tied to the time of its creation. The opera’s distinctive Sixties colloquialisms, references, and characters are often presented as a hindrance to it ever achieving canonical status, regular performance, or continuing significance. Whittall, for instance, writes that *The Knot Garden* and its successors demonstrate ‘an art whose range of cultural reference and allusion reinforces its

¹¹ Derrick Puffett, ‘Tippett and the Retreat from Mythology’, *The Musical Times* 136, no. 1823 (1995), 10.

¹² Robinson, ‘“Coming Out to Oneself”: Encodings of Homosexual Identity from the First String Quartet to *The Heart’s Assurance*’, in Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Michael Tippett* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 99.

¹³ Roland Barthes, ‘The Death of the Author’, in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Noonday, 1977), 143.

¹⁴ David Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett: Modern Times and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 233.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 234.

restricted appeal'.¹⁶ Puffett also considers the opera to be 'bound to a specific time and place'.¹⁷ More scathingly, Lebrecht calls *The Knot Garden* 'a rambling indulgence in late-Sixties psychobabble, unrelieved by so much as one credible character'.¹⁸ Clements, for his part, states that the opera itself 'will [n]ever seem more than a period piece, wedded to the late 1960s when it was written':

With a libretto that contains lines such as 'honey, make love to me' and 'play it cool', there are moments [...] when it feels as if we are watching *Austin Powers – The Opera* rather than a significant work by one of Britain's most admired composers of the twentieth century. What seemed to many of us a quarter of a century ago so touching and psychologically acute, so richly allusive (musically and textually), is now contrived and embarrassing – especially given its setting in a cosily bourgeois world in which all personal hang-ups and soured relationships can be put to rights with a spot of free love and the expensive help of a psychoanalyst.¹⁹

Clements further wonders whether Tippett is the 'late-[twentieth]-century equivalent of Rutland Boughton', whose work is 'so rooted in its era that when taken out of it can only seem hopelessly, squirmingly dated'.²⁰

The Knot Garden's slangy libretto and somewhat stereotypical, 'cosily bourgeois', Sixties characters might well seem embarrassing, particularly to early twenty-first century audiences who are still familiar with the opera's era and its 'Austin Powers' clichés. 'Retreating' from the more obvious mythology of his first two operas, as Puffett puts it, Tippett self-consciously sets *The Knot Garden* in the present, uses the vernaculars of the era, engages

¹⁶ Arnold Whittall, *Exploring Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 118.

¹⁷ Puffett, 'Tippett and the Retreat from Mythology', 10.

¹⁸ Norman Lebrecht, 'Michael Tippett: A Composer to Forget', *La Scena Musicale*, 22/12/2004. <http://tinyurl.com/o6aptew>. Accessed 06/04/2017.

¹⁹ Andrew Clements, 'The Knot Garden: Theatre Royal, Glasgow', *The Guardian*, 21/01/2005. <http://tinyurl.com/z9bagob>. Accessed 06/04/2017.

²⁰ Clements, 'A Composer of His Time', *Opera* (January 2005), 28.

with the psychosocial concerns of his society, and features a smorgasbord of distinctly modern characters. It is perhaps of little surprise, then, that *The Knot Garden* has apparently dated quickly, and that an opinion has arisen that its idiosyncrasies and mid-twentieth century concerns should consign it to the operatic scrapheap. Maybe Tippett's distinctive and didactic personality is also too visibly on display in *The Knot Garden*. Then again, it does seem odd to censure an artist for creating work inspired by his experiences and beliefs, 'writing works of social protest', and 'mixing up moral considerations with aesthetic ones'.²¹ Composers, after all, are humans too.

It also seems unfair to criticise Tippett for drawing on familiar character types and using contemporary language to address the concerns of his time and place, rather than writing for the future in some eternally accessible, perpetually acceptable language. There is a particular irony in criticising the historically specific, now 'outdated' language, setting, and characters of a Shakespeare adaptation, since plenty about Shakespeare's own plays might now be considered embarrassing, difficult, or alien for modern audiences: the way his characters dress, the words they speak, their use of candles rather than electricity, the fact that they send letters rather than text messages, the way that they fight with swords rather than machine guns, and so on. Just as Shakespeare's drama, like all art, is 'mark[ed] out immediately as the product of the age in which it was written' by 'the subject matter it deals with, the forms it takes and the language it uses', so it is equally inevitable that Tippett's work is identifiable as the product of its composer and its time.²² Still, many artworks from previous centuries have survived to the present, despite the fact that they inevitably reflect their authors' societies and languages. In some cases, too, these works (operas especially) have actually had to overcome a translation barrier. It should therefore cause no real critical offence that Tippett's characters sometimes talk a little bit strangely, or that he addresses the issues of his day.

²¹ Puffett, 'Tippett and the Retreat from Mythology', 11-14.

²² Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare's Universality* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), xi.

Many of Shakespeare's modern adapters, audiences, and reviewers appear unbothered by the fact that he uses the language of his time and depicts characters who are, to a certain extent at least, the products of a specific, transient societal context. Instead, they elect to focus on the continuing applicability of Shakespeare's drama to current times. Perhaps, with growing distance from *The Knot Garden*'s period of creation, discussions of this opera will similarly move away from its 'Sixties-ness', and its supposed embarrassments will become less significant. Although, it must be noted that, for all Lebrecht's, Clements's, and Puffett's protestations, the problems and characters that Tippett deals with in *The Knot Garden* are not at all irrelevant to our own urban, technocentric, late-capitalist society, and many of the opera's psychological, ethical, and social insights are still pertinent. In the words of Clarke, 'what Tippett engages with in many of his major works [...] is nothing less than the social, epistemological and psychological conditions of Western modernity' – and the features of Western modernity have not changed vastly since 1970.²³ Issues such as virtual reality, technology, mental health, gender identity, sexuality, relationship politics, racial tension, the pastoral and the urban, faith and nihilism, the loss of collectivism, the role of leaders, and the value of art are not threatening to disappear anytime soon. If anything, they have actually become far more pronounced in the years since *The Knot Garden*'s first appearance. *The Knot Garden*, then, to use Clements's words, still is 'psychologically acute'.

Nevertheless, to describe Tippett simply as a 'man of his time', as so many eulogisers and critics do, and focus only on his works' reflective, historical qualities, is to condemn him to the same fate as Shakespeare in the hands of historicist critics, which is 'to languish in the prison house of the past'.²⁴ Historicising *The Knot Garden* – that is to say, unpicking biographical and societal titbits, and focusing on how Tippett's work specifically represents

²³ Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 2.

²⁴ Ryan, *Shakespeare's Universality*, 3-5. Clarke dismisses the recurrent 'a man of our time' label as 'nothing more than a publicity slogan' (*The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 3). For examples of its use, see: Michael Berkeley, 'A Man of Our Time', in Geraint Lewis (ed.), *Michael Tippett, O. M.: A Celebration* (Tunbridge Wells: Baton, 1980), 19-20; Covent Garden gallery, *A Man of Our Time: Michael Tippett* (London: Schott, 1977); and Jessica Duchon, 'A Man of Our Time', *New Statesman*, 01/01/2005. <http://tinyurl.com/ld8t7ej>. Accessed 06/04/2017.

him, his world, its language, and its people – is undoubtedly valuable, since it helps to elucidate the work's genesis, its major themes, and its contextual relevance. Yet such an approach tells only half the story of this work. For the opera contains instances when it transcends the level of operatic autobiography and its commonly ascribed status as a time capsule for the late Sixties, and points towards the possibility of alternative, better futures. Beyond its ongoing relevance to a contemporary audience, *The Knot Garden* might also be regarded as a 'universal' – and, furthermore, a distinctly Shakespearian – work.

The Knot Garden's revolutionary universality

According to the standards of several critics cited in the first two chapters of this thesis, it might be difficult to argue that *The Knot Garden* is a particularly 'Shakespearian' opera. Certainly, Tippett's opera does not display the sort of 'fidelity' to its Shakespearian source that Schmidgall would regard as essential to a successful, or perhaps even 'legitimate', Shakespeare opera.²⁵ As the opening chapters make plain, musical attempts to engage with and change Shakespeare's stories and texts have sometimes been met with considerable hostility, and Tippett takes more liberties with Shakespeare's work than many other composers. He significantly alters *The Tempest's* plot and text, placing Shakespeare's almost sacrosanct verse next to a variety of other quotations as well as his own idiolect. Perhaps, like many *Tempests* from this period and after, *The Knot Garden* might be regarded as more of an 'appropriation' of Shakespeare's play than an 'adaptation'.²⁶

The foregoing exploration of *The Knot Garden* has also highlighted how Tippett's opera raises several intriguing questions about *The Tempest* that might rebound back onto Shakespeare's play. It queries the patriarchal treatment of Miranda and the nature of Ferdinand's and Miranda's relationship, highlights the gender trouble caused by the fluid character of Ariel, and challenges the legitimacy of Prospero's authority, ultimately declaring

²⁵ Schmidgall, *Shakespeare and Opera*, xviii-xx.

²⁶ See Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

him a 'fake'. It also applies pressure to any notions that *The Tempest's* ending is a wholly happy one, as Tippett's cast of characters, like Shakespeare's, head off into uncertain futures. At the same time, however, *The Knot Garden* also seems to treat Shakespeare's work with a great deal of reverence, as demonstrated by a conclusion which suggests that the function of Shakespeare's work in the modern day might be to act as some kind of guiding, binding moral force. It would certainly be a mistake to declare that *The Knot Garden* is 'un-Shakespearian' on the basis that it does not only use Shakespeare's language, incorporates *The Tempest's* characters and structure into an updated, psychoanalytic setting, and confronts certain assumptions about the play. In fact, this obscure British opera might prompt consideration of exactly what it means to be a 'Shakespearian' composer – if such a thing can even be said to exist, that is.

If, as Chapter 6 suggests, *The Knot Garden's* dramaturgy, like many of the opera's 'music theatre' equivalents from the same period, is an attempt to contrast and combine 'Holy' and 'Rough' elements, then by transference it is also an attempt to emulate Shakespeare. Brook's ideas in *The Empty Space* are drawn predominantly from Shakespeare's work; at one point, he concedes that 'in the second half of the twentieth century we are faced with the infuriating fact that Shakespeare is still our model'.²⁷ According to Brook, Shakespeare's plays perfectly marry the primitivism, metaphysics, subjectivity, and heightened rituals of Holy Theatre with the intelligence, objectivity, social consciousness, and colloquialisms of Rough Theatre.

It is through the unreconciled opposition of Rough and Holy, through an atonal screech of absolutely unsympathetic keys that we get the unforgettable impressions of [Shakespeare's] plays. It is because the contradictions are so strong that they burn on us so deeply. Obviously, we can't whistle up a second Shakespeare. But the more clearly we see in what the power of Shakespearian theatre lies, the more we prepare the way.²⁸

²⁷ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (London: Penguin, 1968), 107.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 96-7.

Recently, Kiernan Ryan has explored this ‘atonal screech’ between the everyday and the transcendent in a polemic on the ‘universality’ of Shakespeare’s work. Ryan sets himself in opposition to historicist scholars who – like many Tippett critics – insist that ‘Shakespeare is categorically not for all time, but inextricably of his age’.²⁹ By contrast, he argues that Shakespeare’s plays do in fact possess ‘a timeless, universal quality’.³⁰ He does not dispute the fact that Shakespeare’s plays – like Tippett’s operas – thoroughly evidence their historical milieu through their language, characters, structure, subject matter, and so on. In fact, Ryan argues that the plays’ deep and detailed anchorage in their time is an integral part of their universality: Shakespeare’s plays are only ‘authentically utopian’ because they are ‘grounded in the recollection of Shakespeare’s world and time’.³¹ The ‘revolutionary universalism’ of Shakespeare’s plays comes from the way that they subvert their historical period, ‘implicitly demand the complete transformation of the terms on which people live’, and ‘reveal the *potential* of all human beings to live according to the principles of freedom, equality and justice’.³²

This profound commitment to the *universal human potential* to live otherwise is the secret of the plays’ proven ability to transcend their time. This is what drives their radical dissatisfaction with Shakespeare’s world, divorcing their vision from the assumptions and attitudes that held sway in modern England, and opening them up to the future and the prospect of the world transfigured. That prospect – the tidal pull of futurity that inflects their language and form at every turn – is what propels Shakespeare’s plays beyond the horizon of his age to speak with more authority and power than ever to ours. The timelessness of the plays springs from their refusal to make complete sense in the terms of their time, which they view from the vantage point of a future we ourselves can only imagine.³³

²⁹ Ryan, *Shakespeare’s Universality*, 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

³² *Ibid.*, 9.

³³ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

Ryan deems *The Tempest* to be one of Shakespeare's most visionary works, since in it Shakespeare 'refuses to underwrite the ruling suppositions of his time, reaching forward instead to social formations that still exceed the reach of our own'.³⁴ Perhaps the prime example of a farsighted, utopian moment in *The Tempest* is Gonzalo's speech in Act II, when the old advisor muses on a future world free of financial inequality, servitude, and hunger. Gonzalo's vanity eventually and amusingly leads him to make himself sovereign of his ideal, sovereignless society, and he is mocked for his confusion by Sebastian and Antonio, who cry 'God save his majesty' and 'long live Gonzalo'.

GONZALO

I' the commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things; for no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
And use of service, none; contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
No occupation; all men idle, all;
And women too, but innocent and pure;
No sovereignty;--

SEBASTIAN

Yet he would be king on't.

³⁴ Ryan, *Shakespeare: The Last Plays* (London: Longman, 1999), 13.

ANTONIO

The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning.

The Tempest, II. 1

According to Ryan, however, Gonzalo's flawed logic and Antonio's and Sebastian's ridicule do not invalidate the seductiveness of this utopian vision, 'only the premise on which it is based and the means by which it is to be achieved'.³⁵ The speech's main point 'is not that the creation of a genuine commonwealth of truly "innocent people" is impossible, but that the fundamental obstacle to its creation is sovereignty and the unequal distribution of property, wealth and power that sovereignty entails'.³⁶ The speech therefore still opens up a conceivable but distant world where life is 'the polar opposite of what it used to be'.³⁷

Eliot, whom Tippett described as his 'spiritual and artistic mentor',³⁸ similarly notes how, in Shakespeare's works, 'a hidden and mysterious pattern of reality emerges as from a palimpsest'.³⁹ According to Robinson, Eliot 'recognized that Shakespeare demonstrated in [his] plays an ability to transcend the details of ordinary life in order to realize a dimension that [...] we see only out of the corner of the eye, or while drowsing in sunlight'.⁴⁰

The very substantial achievement of Shakespeare, in Eliot's mind, was 'to see *through* the ordinary classified emotion of our active life into a world of emotion and feeling beyond, of which I am not ordinarily aware'. Shakespeare's genius lay in his perception of humanity and

³⁵ Ryan, *Shakespeare's Universality*, 44.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 48.

³⁸ Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues* (London: Pimlico, 1991), 188.

³⁹ Eliot, quoted in Robinson, 'The Pattern from the Palimpsest Convergences of Eliot, Tippett, and Shakespeare', in John Xiros Cooper (ed.), *T. S. Eliot's Orchestra: Critical Essays on Poetry and Music* (New York: Garland, 2000), 155. For a substantial exploration of Eliot's influence on Tippett, see Oliver Soden, 'Tippett and Eliot', *Tempo* 67, no. 226 (2013), 28-53. Robinson suggests that Eliot might be regarded as 'a sort of vicarious librettist' for Tippett, since 'his voice is discernible in many of Tippett's texted works' (*Michael Tippett: Music and Literature*, 5).

⁴⁰ Robinson, 'The Pattern from the Palimpsest', 155.

such skill as to have unveiled ‘these strange lands of more than natural darkness and more than solar light’.⁴¹

If Eliot understood Shakespeare in this quasi-mystical fashion, then it is reasonable to assume that Tippett did too, particularly when one considers the evidence of his *Tempest* opera. In *The Knot Garden*, Tippett emulates what Ryan describes as *The Tempest*’s illustration of the ‘battle between utopian possibility and dystopian reality’.⁴² Like Shakespeare’s plays, Tippett’s opera ‘dramatizes the intractable reality of [its] world in [...] vividly realized, sensuous detail’, so much so that it ‘transport[s] our imaginations back to the age in which [it was] written, an age whose indelible imprint can be traced in every line’ and bar:⁴³ hence critics’ fixation with its so-called ‘Austin Powers’ features. *The Knot Garden* is not, however, simply and embarrassingly ‘of its time’, but a work that, like its source play, is driven by a ‘radical dissatisfaction with [Tippett’s] world’, and ‘divorc[es] its vision from the assumptions and attitudes that held sway in [it]’.⁴⁴ It ‘refuses to underwrite the ruling suppositions of [its] time’, and ‘reach[es] forward instead to social formations that still exceed the reach of our own’.⁴⁵

The Knot Garden’s Jungian conclusion, for example, sees the characters briefly step away from the confusion of their arbitrary historical locale, in order to acknowledge ‘the[ir] place in the world and the socially conditioned identity to which chance has consigned [them]’.⁴⁶ They see their insubstantialness, and ‘are transported to a domain beyond time’, where they glimpse the Collective Unconscious, and submit to love and empathy.⁴⁷ Like Prospero in his ‘Our revels now are ended’ speech, which Mangus pointedly quotes at the end

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ryan, *Shakespeare’s Universality*, 43. This split is even more pronounced in Tippett’s final opera, *New Year*, which is set across the two worlds of ‘Somewhere Today’ (dystopia) and ‘Nowhere Tomorrow’ (utopia).

⁴³ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁵ Ryan, *Shakespeare: The Last Plays* (London: Longman, 1999), 13.

⁴⁶ Ryan, *Shakespeare’s Universality*, 50.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

of the opera, *The Knot Garden*'s characters employ the first-person plural ('We are such stuff as dreams are made on', 'We sense the magic net'), and therefore adopt 'a universal human standpoint from which to view the collective destiny of our kind'.⁴⁸ This moment of productive, collective psychological eucatastrophe might be regarded as a Jungian 'cision, [a] cut that [...] eject[s] a prior state of existence and chart[s] a new series of possible futures'.⁴⁹

The Tempest's 'visionary utopianism' and 'radical detachment' is therefore writ large in *The Knot Garden*'s unashamedly transcendental, 'holy' ending.⁵⁰ According to Clarke, Tippett's operas wed a 'twentieth-century realist and materialist consciousness to the nineteenth century's aspirations to the ideal and the absolute'.⁵¹ Perhaps, however, this Tippettian blend should not just be regarded as a joining of Romantic and modern (perhaps even postmodern) aesthetics, but a distinctively Shakespearian mix. According to Philip Brett, this utopian impulse is also a distinctive feature of Britten's work. He writes that Britten, in his operas, 'offers not only a rigorous critique of the past but possibly also the vision of a differently organized reality for the future', suggesting a potential point of future Shakespearian comparison between these two composers.⁵²

The soul of Flora and Dov

Arguably, however, the concluding group realisation of the Collective Unconscious is not actually *The Knot Garden*'s most revolutionary moment. Rather, this is the scene in which an ostracised and confused young woman sings a consolatory Schubert song. Flora's rendition of 'Die liebe Farbe' opens up an escapist schism in both the opera's narrative and the real world;

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ S. J. McGrath, 'Sexuation in Jung and Lacan', *International Journal of Jungian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2010), 5.

⁵⁰ Ryan, *Shakespeare's Universality*, 24.

⁵¹ Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 5.

⁵² Philip Brett, 'Britten, (Edward) Benjamin', *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*. <http://tinyurl.com/pnmqlg7>. Accessed 06/04/2017.

Gloag aptly describes its effect as akin to ‘a window [being] opened’.⁵³ Paralleling moments of ‘revolutionary universality’ in Shakespeare’s work, Flora’s song concertinas time, creates ‘temporal vertigo’, and invites its audience to step away from their ‘mental and emotional thralldom to the selves and lives that bind us’.⁵⁴ Flora takes her audience back in time for her Schubert song, yet the world it summons is prophetic; her nineteenth-century quotation, to use Ryan’s phrase, is a ‘memory of the future’.⁵⁵ In their scene, Flora and Dov dream of a world in which they can be happy, a world without rigid gender binaries, essentialist identity, and sexual categorisation – however impossible it might seem. They occupy the world Tippett knew all too well, and which had caused him, at various points, considerable personal distress: a world of – among many other things – severe sexual difference, gender clichés, homophobia, and misogyny; a world that is arguably not so different from our own. Yet both Flora and Dov temporarily escape the pressures of their categorised existence through song, and implicitly encourage *The Knot Garden*’s audience to follow them into this ‘brave new world’.

Although Dov and Flora – like Gonzalo – eventually, inevitably, and crushingly return to their current, real-world misery, a utopian vision of a world beyond gender, sexuality, and the symbolic order has been summoned, and they and their audience cannot simply forget it. Perhaps Flora and Dov – Flora especially, since it is she who actually ‘crosses over’ into the past and another, fluidly gendered identity – might be considered examples of what Lacan calls ‘mystics’. Such people, regardless of their biological sex, are able to situate themselves on either side of the sexual binary, and ‘get the sense that there must be a *jouissance* that is beyond’.⁵⁶ Flora’s Schubert song might furthermore, in Žižekian terms, be regarded as an ‘act’: a moment that offers ‘a violent disruption of the *status quo*’, and ‘might make it possible to

⁵³ Gloag, ‘Tippett’s Operatic World’, in Gloag and Jones (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Michael Tippett*, 256.

⁵⁴ Ryan, *Shakespeare’s Universality*, 42-9.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁶ Jacques Lacan, ‘God and Woman’s Jouissance’, in *Encore: On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge: Book XX: 1972-1973*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 1998), 76.

puncture the prevailing ideology and effect political change'.⁵⁷ After it, the opportunity lies ahead of Dov and Flora (and their audience) to take the radical, exemplary step of rejecting essentialised concepts of gender and sexuality – or perhaps rejecting these categories altogether.

As Chapter 5 shows, Dov and Flora are likely at least in part to be a depiction of the relationship between Tippett and Francesca Allinson, which – in Tippett's words on his characters – is 'based on 'compassion and tenderness, almost love (they both know it isn't physical)'.⁵⁸ It seems, from Tippett's remarks, that he regards such platonic love, a relationship without sex, as in some sense inferior: 'almost love', not real love. Perhaps, though, Dov's and Flora's relationship could be seen more positively, being based on what Lacan calls 'an ethics that is manifestly "beyondsex"'.⁵⁹ Dov and Flora could be regarded as a perfect example of a pairing who 'soulove' each other.⁶⁰ In such a relationship, 'sex is not involved. Sex doesn't count here'.⁶¹ Instead, these 'friends [...] recognize and choose each other', and develop 'a bond of love' that allows them to bear 'what is intolerable in [their] world' together.⁶² Dov and Flora might even be considered an example of what Žižek calls a 'revolutionary couple'. In this pairing scenario,

while the two lovers hold hands, they do not look into each other's eyes; they look together outwards, to some third point, their common Cause. Perhaps there is no greater love than that of a revolutionary couple, where each of the two lovers is ready to abandon the other at any moment should the revolution demand it. They do not love each other less than the amorous

⁵⁷ Sarah Kay, *Žižek: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), 6.

⁵⁸ Tippett, 'Dov's Journey', in *Music of the Angels: Essays and Sketchbooks of Michael Tippett*, ed. Bowen (London: Eulenberg, 1980), 237.

⁵⁹ Lacan, 'A Love Letter', in *Encore*, 85.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, 84-5.

couple bent on suspending all their terrestrial links and obligations in order to burn out in a night of unconditional passion – if anything, they love each other more.⁶³

A more obvious ‘revolutionary couple’ in Tippett’s operas would be Jo Ann and Pelegrin in *New Year*, who declare their love for each other before parting into the separate realms of Somewhere Today and Nowhere Tomorrow so that Jo Ann can spread the message of ‘One humanity, one justice’ on Earth. Dov’s and Flora’s ‘Cause’ is not so explicitly outward looking or political. Rather, in the aftermath of their mutual confession of sadness and gender confusion, their shared but separate focus turns to revolution at a far more personal (but no less impactful) level.

The significance of tonality to this revolutionary moment should not be overlooked. As Gloag notes, ‘Die liebe Farbe’ ‘brings tonality back into the post-tonal soundworld of [*The Knot Garden*...] The explicit tonal reference makes this a highly individual moment in the opera’.⁶⁴ Atonality is the norm in *The Knot Garden* – even those moments that ostensibly follow a tonal structure, such as the blues ensemble, are hardly consonant in nature. Furthermore, Mangus’s ‘Tempest’ motif, the opera’s central musical building block, encompasses all twelve notes of the scale and is redolent of psychological turmoil and symbolic violence. It is not for nothing that Kemp places *The Knot Garden* at the beginning of Tippett’s ‘expressionist’ phase, a ‘disturbing’ and ‘violent’ period defined by ‘angular lines’, ‘abrupt gestures’, and a ‘high level of dissonance’.⁶⁵ Flora’s sudden, calm, B-minor interjection is therefore all the more surprising for being set within and against the context of *The Knot Garden*’s dominant musical idiom: her Schubert song is an oasis in the middle of a tempest. A similar effect is apparent in Adès’s *Tempest*, where ‘the clouds open’ for Caliban’s ‘Friends don’t fear’ aria, which is presented in a sparkling A major in contrast to the opera’s predominantly atonal, muddy soundscape. In this aria, Caliban sings of his own alternative reality, his ‘dreams’. In the words of Ross, the effect

⁶³ Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End of Times* (New York: Verso, 2010), 109.

⁶⁴ Gloag, ‘Tippett’s Operatic World’, 259.

⁶⁵ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 401.

of Caliban's aria – like that of Flora's song – is 'of light flooding the scene, of warmth rushing in'.⁶⁶

Tippett's deployment of tonality in *The Knot Garden* is also comparable to Britten's. In *Death in Venice* (1973), for instance, Aschenbach's logical serialism contrasts with Tadzio's sensuous tonal clarity, in a similar manner to how Mangus's violent, twelve-tone 'master' motif, which generates so much of *The Knot Garden*'s material and atmosphere, juxtaposes with Flora's moment of tonal dreaming. Tadzio and his exotic tonality represent Aschenbach's alternative reality (his rose garden, or 'warm south', as Dov might put it), and his longing for this new beginning overrides rationality and decorum. Aschenbach, like Dov and Flora, 'separate[s] from the prevailing standards of his time and place', a move which is paralleled by a drift towards tonality.⁶⁷ Tippett's and Britten's music might even be interpreted as a 'hysterical' reaction to the serialist 'master' discourse in twentieth century music, since both composers display Schoenberg's idiom in all its dogmatic arbitrariness, and highlight the palliative, utopian qualities of tonality. In Brett's words, tonality might be seen as one of the ways in which Tippett and Britten 'access[ed] powerful messages from beyond the pre-verbal barrier, even perhaps occasionally of breaking that barrier, at a time when musical modernism was setting up barbed wire fences everywhere and driving 'art' music increasingly into the cold unfeeling camps of masculine intellect and order'.⁶⁸

In Britten, Tippett, and Adès, tonality appears to represent some kind of forbidden, unobtainable, utopian ideal, in which the opera's subjects are free from the constraints of the symbolic order and the 'master' discourse, and are able to indulge in gender liminality, deviant sexuality, or otherworldly escape. Perhaps tonality in these works might even be equated with the Lacanian 'real'. According to Brett, for instance, many of Britten's works, through their focus on childhood, explore the idea of the Lacanian 'pre-symbolic' stage, and 'the difficulty

⁶⁶ Alex Ross, 'Rich and Strange: Thomas Adès's *The Tempest*', *The New Yorker*, 01/03/2004. <http://tinyurl.com/6nraea>. Accessed 06/04/2017.

⁶⁷ Whittall, *The Music of Britten and Tippett* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 260.

⁶⁸ Brett, 'Britten, (Edward) Benjamin'.

and pain' of entry into the symbolic order.⁶⁹ Furthermore, as Chapter 5 notes, Caliban is the most childlike character in *The Tempest*, who is forced into the symbolic order but is still able to most closely approach the 'real' through the visceral beauty and horror of his language. Flora, too, is *The Knot Garden*'s most childlike character, and the one most resistant to fixed identity.

Flora-Miranda, Tippett's aspirational hysteric

Unfortunately, by the end of *The Knot Garden*, Dov, one half of *The Knot Garden*'s potential 'revolutionary couple', still pines for Mel: he therefore does not reject his previous identity and attachments, and is unable to recognise and escape the pull of the Φ/a . After the opera, he sets off to explore gender, sexuality, and the urban-pastoral spilt further in *Songs for Dov*. In some ways, however, this post-*Knot Garden* song cycle, in which Dov 'become[s] a grown man' and 'put[s] away his youthful exhibitions of self-pity', is a depressing affair.⁷⁰ By 'becoming a grown man' over the course of three songs, Dov rejects the gender fluidity of his earlier years, when he was aligned with Mignon the 'boy-girl' and Ariel the 'girl-boy'. His journey to artistic self-assurance is linked closely to one of gender discovery, with the performer-composer ultimately conforming to traditional gender expectations in order to achieve wider acceptance.

Flora, by contrast, undergoes a truly revolutionary and seemingly permanent transformation within the course of *The Knot Garden*. Starting out as a frightened girl, she defiantly sheds her prescribed gender identity through song, and rejects the patriarchal oppression embodied by Faber. In Act III, she demonstrates an admirable commitment to her Schubertian ideal, and emerges as *The Knot Garden*'s real Lacanian hero. By the end of the opera, Thea is content to be Faber's phallic object, whether she is aware of this position or not. Flora, however, does not consent 'to be actualized as [Faber's] symptom'.⁷¹ For a short time,

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music*, 434.

⁷¹ Colette Soler, 'Hysteria in Scientific Discourse', in Suzanne Barnard and Fink (eds.), *Reading Seminar XX: Lacan's Major Work on Love, Knowledge, and Feminine Sexuality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 52.

before Faber returns to Thea, Flora ‘becomes the active agent of [his] castration’, as Thea once was.⁷² Flora then leaves the knot garden with no sense of fixed, essentialised self, and goes off into her ‘brave new world’ knowing that ‘it is the nature of the human subject to be an empty performance, lacking a central core’.⁷³ Potentially, Flora might be regarded as the being about whom Lacan speculates, who is ‘beyond the fault line of sexual difference [... who], while not external to the symbolic, cannot be contained within it’.⁷⁴ Her ‘refusal of the phallic term brings with it an attempt to reconstitute a form of subjectivity free from division, and hence a refusal of the notion of symbolisation itself’.⁷⁵ Arguably, by the end of the opera, Flora is operating according to ‘an entirely different logic’ to the rest of the characters.⁷⁶ ‘I’m free: I’m free’, Flora declares at the end of this charade. Indeed she is, and the audience is left with no idea where she will go from here: her possibilities are boundless.

The Knot Garden, then, as well as being a prime example of the psychosexual strain in twentieth-century *Tempest* interpretation, might also take its place alongside works like Margaret Laurence’s *The Diviners* (1974), Suniti Namjoshi’s ‘Snapshots of Caliban’ (1984), Sarah Murphy’s *The Measure of Miranda* (1987), Constance Beresford-How’s *Prospero’s Daughter* (1988), and Marina Warner’s *Indigo* (1992) as a radical, modernised refocusing on Miranda’s journey in *The Tempest*. While some of these other Miranda figures ‘remain trapped by the patriarchal structure’, however, Flora emphatically escapes it during *The Knot Garden*’s final act.⁷⁷ She is, in some ways, the anti-Miranda. In fact, by the end of *The Knot Garden*, Flora is perhaps no longer Miranda but Ariel, set free from the bonds of her previous existence to become a being of no fixed identity. Flora and Ariel – who are unmoored, ‘mobile, unfixe,

⁷² Ibid., 53.

⁷³ Kay, *Žižek: A Critical Introduction*, 13.

⁷⁴ Barnard, ‘Tongues of Angels: Feminine Structure and Other Jouissance’, in Barnard and Fink (eds.), *Reading Seminar XX*, 171.

⁷⁵ Jacqueline Rose, ‘Introduction – II’, in Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Rose, trans. Rose (New York and London: Norton, 1985), 56.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Vaughan and Vaughan, *The Tempest*, 109.

[and] subversive’ – might be regarded as examples of what Kristeva, following Lacan, describes as subjects constantly ‘in process’ or ‘on trial’ in the symbolic order, always playing with and constructing new identities.⁷⁸

Even though she is unquestionably one of Tippett’s most precocious female characters, Clarke surprisingly leaves Flora off his list of Tippett’s ‘aspirational female visionaries’ – which includes Jenifer from *The Midsummer Marriage*, Denise, the Third Symphony soloist, Jo Ann, and Nadia from *The Ice Break*.⁷⁹ According to Clarke, these women ‘desire to be somewhere other than where they are’, which ‘often brings with it more than a hint of alienation from their social situation’:⁸⁰ a description that fits Flora perfectly. Thea might also be included in this group, although her mezzo voice, mothering of Flora, garden obsession, and sexual frankness arguably make her an example of Clarke’s ‘Earth Mother’ typology, which sometimes ‘shade[s] into a more sexualised version of the “eternal feminine”’ stereotype.⁸¹ Clarke notes how Tippett’s portrayal of such women is ‘not always untainted by misogyny’, which is ‘especially clear in the more embittered, “masculinized” variants of the type’.⁸² The ‘hysterical’ political and personal ambitions of Thea and Denise, for instance, are denied, and their identities are forced into hegemonic constructions of ‘woman’ (or ~~woman~~). Flora and Jo Ann, however, escape such treatment, and emerge as their opera’s heroines. Perhaps Clarke’s single ‘female visionary’ category should actually be split into two. A first group would contain ‘dramatic’ sopranos and mezzo-sopranos such as Hecuba, Denise, Gayle, and Regan, whose instability, masculinity, and contemptuousness renders them an obvious danger to those around them, and in some cases provokes their containment or misery. A second group would then feature ‘lyric’

⁷⁸ Toril Moi, introduction to Julia Kristeva, ‘Revolution in Poetic Language’, in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 89.

⁷⁹ Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 261.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

sopranos such as Jo Ann and Flora, whose outward ingénue characteristics mask a nascent radical spirit.

In some – although, it is important to state, not all – cases, Tippett’s treatment of women might be compared with Britten’s. According to Ellen McDonald, ‘for the most part [Britten] confines his women to traditional roles and stereotypes’;⁸³ Clarke similarly notes ‘a propensity in Tippett’s dramatological thinking to arrange his characters (males included) according to certain gender typologies – constructions that are at least as much cultural as they are universal, natural or essential’.⁸⁴ McDonald argues that Britten’s female characters are ‘often identif[ied ...] with the society that restricts or even destroys his main characters’, and that Britten ‘does not allow his women the power to act constructively; they remain either oppressors (powerful but destructive) or oppressed (sympathetic but powerless)’.⁸⁵ She states that Britten does not ‘sympathize with any of his female characters as victims of oppression’, and offers ‘no portrayal of a woman who breaks out of her social restrictions’: ‘[Britten’s] operas extend [...] sympathy to women only rarely and equivocally’.⁸⁶ Here, Tippett’s operas seem to contrast with Britten’s quite sharply. While they unquestionably contain female characters who stereotypically act as either oppressor or oppressed and do not escape this situation, they also, to borrow McDonald’s words, extend sympathy to women frequently and unequivocally, and include portrayals of women who ‘break out of [their] social restrictions’. As such, in Clarke’s words, they offer a ‘critical resistance to patriarchally determined models of subjectivity and its construction in history’.⁸⁷

⁸³ Ellen McDonald, ‘Women in Benjamin Britten’s Operas’, *The Opera Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (1986), 83.

⁸⁴ Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 261.

⁸⁵ McDonald, ‘Women in Benjamin Britten’s Operas’, 83.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁸⁷ Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 266.

Tippett's Lacanian posthumanism

The progressive, Shakespearian, 'revolutionary universality' on display in *The Knot Garden* appears to demonstrate how Tippett was 'a figure who [... held] tenaciously to the emancipatory ideals of liberal humanism'.⁸⁸ According to Clarke, Tippett's humanism is characterised by the distinctly Jungian notion of 'the whole man', and is epitomised by the Jungian dream world of *The Midsummer Marriage*, with its archetypal symbols and happy conclusion of individuation.⁸⁹ Clarke argues, however, that Tippett's next four operas actually offer an 'immanent critique on Tippett's part of his "new humanism":⁹⁰ 'in *King Priam* and beyond [Tippett] begins to wrestle with a dark "anti-self"; an agon breaks out between his old humanistic side and a form of antihumanism'.⁹¹ In *The Knot Garden*, Tippett's opera about psychoanalysis, this 'agon' seems to be between two competing schools of thought: Tippett's beloved Jungianism, with its aim of achieving wholeness, and the 'dark "anti-self"' of contemporary Lacanian thought, with its notions of irretrievably split subjects and unsatisfying phallic objects. As this thesis has repeatedly shown, in *The Knot Garden*, Tippett's thoughts on personality, relationships, and sexuality regularly seem to align with the theories of the psychoanalyst who stated that 'man cannot aim at being whole', and argued the Jungian notion of 'the "total personality" [is a] premise where modern psychotherapy goes off course'.⁹²

Does *The Knot Garden*, then, align with the Lacanian stance that 'a humanist position offers only false hope on the basis of false theories'?⁹³ Like *King Priam*, *The Knot Garden* 'unflinchingly portrays the reality of human conflict' – albeit this conflict is psychological and interpersonal, rather than a literal war – and 'reveals humanity in a decentred position in relation

⁸⁸ Ibid., 223.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 5. In 1950, while composing *The Midsummer Marriage*, Tippett wrote to Eric Walter White that 'somewhere at the back of my mind is a dim unformulated notion of some new humanism – or fresh idea of the limits & quality of the human person – The Whole Man, as I call him' (*Tippett and His Operas* (London: Barrie & Jenkins), 63. Quoted in Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 39).

⁹⁰ Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 5.

⁹¹ Ibid., 240.

⁹² Lacan, 'The Meaning of the Phallus', in *Feminine Sexuality*, 81.

⁹³ Mitchell, 'Introduction – I' in Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality*, 25.

to the [‘]natural[’] [symbolic] order’.⁹⁴ Such a depiction of humanity does seem to concord with the Lacanian premise of an ‘empty subject living in a disenchanted world’.⁹⁵ As Clarke notes, however, Tippett is rarely ‘able to go all the way down the road of antihumanism’.⁹⁶ It would certainly be erroneous to say that *The Knot Garden* offers a wholesale, Lacanian-style rejection of Tippett’s Jungian humanism. The opera’s optimistic, Jungian conclusion seems to demonstrate ‘a humanism within which the divine still has a role’, while the reestablishment of Thea’s and Faber’s relationship arguably offers ‘an archetypal symbol of integration’.⁹⁷ *The Knot Garden*’s ending might be said to negate the opera’s previous Lacanian perambulations, revealing modern humans to be simply “‘lost soul[s]’”, shipwrecked in the disenchanted universe of modernity’ – or, to put it another way, lost in the labyrinth – ‘trying to rediscover their place in ‘the pre-modern universe of wisdom and its sexo-cosmology, the universe of harmonious correspondences between the human microcosm and the macrocosm’.⁹⁸

Tippett, however, does not emphatically sweep away all of *The Knot Garden*’s confusing, pessimistic action with one big Jungian brush. As Chapter 6 notes, when ‘the curtain rises’ at the end of the opera, the audience is left unsure whether Thea’s and Faber’s reconciliation is a positive, mature, Jungian development, or a futile psychological regression – or if it is perhaps both things at once. In the words of Edward O’Shea, this reconciliation is potentially more of a ‘problematic step backwards’ than a positive progression, as Faber and Thea renounce their complex modern identities in order to return to a more ‘primitive condition’ and attempt to stabilise their relationship.⁹⁹ If anything, *The Knot Garden*, like Britten’s (and Shakespeare’s) *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, demonstrates the remarkable ‘exchangeability of

⁹⁴ Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 91.

⁹⁵ McGrath, ‘Sexuation in Jung and Lacan’, 4.

⁹⁶ Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 92.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁹⁸ McGrath, ‘Sexuation in Jung and Lacan’, 6. McGrath’s quote is taken from Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder: On Schelling and Related Matters* (London: Verso, 2002), 209.

⁹⁹ Edward O’Shea, ‘Modernist Versions of *The Tempest*’, in Patrick M. Murphy (ed.), *The Tempest: Critical Essays* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 556.

love partners' or 'objects of desire'.¹⁰⁰ It arguably shows that a person's partner is not 'the One', or an 'other half'; instead, as Kott puts it, 'he or she just happens to be the nearest'.¹⁰¹ Mangus-Prospero, meanwhile, the master-analyst-artist in whom so much trust and power was invested, has 'drowned his book' and conceded his vulnerability, becoming a Lacanian 'beggar-clown'. And while the other characters might have come to a tentative acknowledgement of their situations and their interconnectedness, for several of them the opera does not provide a happy, fulfilling conclusion. It is worth questioning just how many of them achieve individuation and locate, to paraphrase the opera's Shakespearian epigraph, the simple thing they are that will let them live. Like in *The Tempest*, it is also by no means clear what will happen to them once they leave their current bizarre, hermetic location and re-enter the real world.

In *The Knot Garden*, then, Jungian 'affirmation exists alongside a [Lacanian] position which makes tangible a post or antihumanist world picture'.¹⁰² The opera, with its constant conflict and interplay of Lacanian and Jungian ideas, demonstrates how Tippett's 'strategy was not to dismiss [humanism] but to subject it to dialectical scrutiny, such that positing it also meant negating it'.¹⁰³ It therefore seems to accord with Clarke's thesis that Tippett, in his later operas, offers a 'posthumanism' that 'is characterized by ambivalence' – or modernist ambiguity, as Whittall terms it.¹⁰⁴ Although Whittall does not level such a charge at Tippett, it might well be tempting to accuse this composer of 'preach[ing] simplistic sermons about the benefits of social cohesion'.¹⁰⁵ As William Braun notes, Tippett's 'Age of Aquarius aesthetic [...] has always been easy to mock'.¹⁰⁶ Such a summation, however, would do a disservice to *The Knot Garden's* intricate, dialectical explorations of the fractured state of modern society

¹⁰⁰ Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, 2nd ed., trans. Boleslaw Taborski (London: Methuen, 1967), 176.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett*, 94.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 108.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 92; Whittall, *Exploring Twentieth-Century Music*, 91.

¹⁰⁵ Whittall, *Exploring Twentieth-Century Music*, 91.

¹⁰⁶ William R. Braun, 'Midsummer in Autumn', *Opera News*. <http://tinyurl.com/h42jv2o>. Accessed 06/04/2017.

and the incompleteness of human subjectivity. *The Knot Garden*, like *The Tempest*, sometimes tantalises with the utopian propositions of ‘wholeness’ and a drastically changed society. At the same time, however, it recognises the difficulty – perhaps even the impossibility – of ever achieving such dreams in a nihilistic, desolate time, and furthermore ponders if these visions are even desirable. Echoing perhaps the most famous speech in its Shakespearian source play, *The Knot Garden* emphasises the ephemerality of societal constructions and the human subject, and, in Tippett’s words, ‘the fragility of all aspiration’ at this point in modern history.¹⁰⁷

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

¹⁰⁷ Tippett, ‘Poets in a Barren Age’, in *Moving into Aquarius* (St Albans: Paladin, 1974), 155.

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